

TRUTH B-P CHURCH
Adult Sunday School

THE SEVENFOLD WILL OF GOD

LESSON EIGHT: THE PRECEPTIVE WILL

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the English dictionary, the word “precept” means a command or principle intended especially as a general rule of action. The preceptive will of God refers to God’s command revealed in His Word – the Bible. Some are confused between the preceptive will and directive will. The preceptive will is God’s command while the directive will is God’s direction. Though different, both aspects are nonetheless related closely to each another. The directive will operates within the boundary of God’s command. God revealed His will in His precepts, commands, and instructions for our holy living. This is called the preceptive will of God—what God commands and expects from His people in their daily walk according to the Holy Scriptures. 1 Thessalonians 4 is the chosen text for our study on the preceptive will of God.

II. COMMAND TO BE OBEDIENT (1–2)

Apostle Paul began the chapter with a pastoral appeal. He addressed the church in Thessalonica as believers who had already been taught how to walk and please God. In other words, they knew the preceptive will of God. However, Apostle Paul urges them to “abound more and more.”

A. From Knowledge to Application

Apostle Paul uses the metaphor “**walk**” to describe the Christian life. To walk in God’s will means to make decisions about life in obedience to God. Before one can obey God, he must know His command first. Otherwise, it is impossible to obey God. Knowledge first, and then followed by application.

B. Based on Divine Authority

Apostle Paul wrote that the instructions he gave were “**by the Lord Jesus.**” This means the preceptive will of God is not based on human wisdom or tradition. It is based on divine authority. This gave weight to what Apostle Paul instructed the believers. To obey these commands is to obey God. To reject them is to disobey Him.

C. Spiritual Growth Expected

“**Abound more and more**” implies there is always room for spiritual growth in our Christian life. When one decides that he has grown enough, it only shows how he has completely misunderstood what spiritual life is all about. No man can say, I have grown enough. There is no end to our spiritual growth. God expects His children to keep growing in His grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ until He calls them home.

III. COMMAND TO BE SANCTIFIED (3–8)

Apostle Paul wrote down one of the clearest declarations of God’s will: “**This is the will of God, even your sanctification.**” He focused on practical holiness, focusing mainly purity in one’s moral and physical life. Sanctification refers to being set apart for God, separated from sin, and dedicated to holy living. It is a lifelong process.

To abstain means to keep away, to distance oneself deliberately. Apostle Paul's instruction is not to manage sin or excuse it, but to abstain from it. The will of God includes a decisive break from behaviours that defile the body and dishonour God. Apostle Paul calls believers to "know how to possess his vessel" in sanctification. This indicates self-control, stewardship of the body, and intentional purity. The body is not a tool for indulgence but a vessel to be kept holy.

The will of God includes how we treat one another. Exploitation, manipulation, and taking advantage of others violates God's will. God is the avenger in all such things. Violating God's preceptive will brings consequences, for God Himself upholds the sanctification of His people.

IV. COMMAND TO LOVE (9–10)

True sanctification must lead to love for one another. This is another major perspective of God's preceptive will. Love must be guided and stipulated according to God's Word. It must not be left to man's opinion and understanding. Holiness without love becomes legalism. Love without holiness becomes sentimentalism.

V. COMMAND TO LIVE RIGHTLY (11–12)

To live rightly is to live a quiet, responsible, and honourable life. These instructions might seem mundane, yet they form a powerful testimony for Christ's sake. Idleness and public disorder must not be found among believers. Apostle Paul elevates diligent labour as part of God's will. Work is not merely practical—it is spiritual. A believer who works faithfully demonstrates integrity, avoids unnecessary dependence on others, and sets a good testimony before the world.

VI. COMMAND TO BE PREPARED FOR CHRIST'S RETURN (13–18)

It is God's preceptive will for all believers to prepare for the return of Christ. The believers in the church of Thessalonica were grieving the death of their loved ones and they needed to be assured of what is coming ahead. For there is hope in Christ's coming. Apostle Paul did not want to leave them in ignorance. As such, the best comfort offered for them is the soon return of Christ.

Ignorance can lead to fear. Apostle Paul provided clarity so believers may grieve with hope. God's preceptive will includes providing His people with understanding that strengthens their hearts. Apostle Paul comforts the believers with the certainty that those who have died in Christ are not lost. There is a future reunion, a future resurrection, and a victorious unfolding of God's plan. This is the infallible comfort promised from the preceptive will of God.

VII. SUMMARY

1 Thessalonians 4 gives us a comprehensive view of the preceptive will of God. It is revealed clearly. It is not hidden. It is not mysterious. It is written in black and white, engraved in the pages of Scripture. God's preceptive will is revealed in His commands, His expectations, and His instruction for our holy living. God's will is not merely something to discover—it is something to obey.

We who are born again, as we walk in these precepts, we will grow in our sanctification, love, and spiritual maturity. We reflect the character of Christ and His image to the world. We are to encourage one another until the day our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

May we, like the Thessalonian church, walk in the will of God and abound more and more in sanctification, love for one another and be prepared for the return of Christ. May God help us. Amen.