

## GOD'S WORD IS HIS WILL

- A. Introduction: We've been talking about becoming God-inside minded for a number of weeks. As part of this discussion we're considering the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
1. The night before Jesus went to the Cross, at the Last Supper, much of His interaction with His disciples was aimed at preparing them for the fact that He would soon return to Heaven.
    - a. Jesus had been with these men for over three years, leading, guiding, and teaching them. Now that He was leaving, they would continue to have His guidance through the Holy Spirit. John 16:13
    - b. When we're talking about guidance, we're talking about looking to God to give us direction in the affairs of life. For a Christian, there's the added element of what is God's will in this situation?
  2. John 16:13--Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. He will speak to us what He hears from Jesus. The same evening Jesus made this statement about guidance from the Holy Spirit He defined Truth as a Person (Himself, John 14:6) and as the Word of God (John 17:17).
    - a. The Holy Spirit is here to reveal the Living Word of God, Jesus, to us and to give us revelation from the written Word of God, the Bible. As He does so, He guides us in the affairs of life.
    - b. The Holy Spirit will lead us to do what Jesus, the Living Word, wants us to do. He will lead us in line with the written Word of God, the Bible.
  3. There is much misinformation and lack of information about how the Holy Spirit guides us. We are working on sorting it out so we can better cooperate with Him as He leads and guides.
    - a. In the last lesson we discussed one of the biggest mistakes people make as they try to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. They look to their physical circumstances to figure out what God is doing and saying. However, God does not guide us through physical circumstances.
      1. He instructs to conduct our lives by faith not sight. It would be a huge contradiction if He tried to communicate information to us through what He's told us not to use to guide our lives. II Cor 5:7--For we guide our lives by faith, and not by what we see (20<sup>th</sup> Cent).
      2. The Holy Spirit guides us into truth. Truth, in both Greek and English, means the way things really are, the reality behind the appearance. God's Word shows us the way things really are.
    - b. When we talk about being led by the Holy Spirit, we're talking about knowing and following the will of God for our lives. Therefore, before we can discuss how the Holy Spirit leads us, we must understand some things about the will of God. That's our topic in this lesson.
- B. Lots of people credit God as the source behind their actions, insisting that He told them what to do. But that is a subjective experience that may or may not be true. Everything (including supernatural experiences and voices) must be judged in the light of the Bible. The Bible is the only 100%, objective, accurate revelation from God. If what you think He told you doesn't agree with the Bible, you didn't hear from God.
1. We'll discuss that statement in more detail in upcoming lessons. But for now, consider this point. God's will is expressed through His Word, specifically His written Word. The Bible is a revelation of God's purposes, intents, and desires.
    - a. Its two major divisions, the Old and New Testaments, were given these names because testament is another name for will. You've heard of people making out their last will and testament so that when they die it's clear how they want their affairs settled. A will expresses what someone wants.
    - b. God has both a general will and a specific will for us. The general will includes the information in the Bible. The specific will includes issues not directly addressed in Scripture such as where to live or who to marry or what career or ministry to pursue.
  2. People are usually more interested in the specific will than in the general. But God's specific will is much easier to discern if you know His general will. (We'll elaborate in later lessons.)
    - a. The Bible has principles of wisdom that help us make wise choices in the specifics of life. Ps 119:105; Prov 6:20-23--Every day and all night long their counsel (God's Word) will lead you and save you from harm. When you wake up in the morning, let their instruction guide you into a

new day. For their advice is a beam of light directed into the dark corner of your mind to warn you of danger and to give you a good life (TLB).

b. And, since the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible (He is the voice behind it), the more familiar you are with His voice in the Scriptures, the easier it is to hear his voice for directions in the specifics of your life. II Tim 3:16; II Pet 1:21

3. When the subject of the will of God comes up, people tend to talk about being in the will of God. That can be misleading. The Bible speaks of doing the will of God rather than being in the will of God.

a. Consider these verses. Each one speaks of doing God's will: Matt 6:10; 7:21; 12:50; John 4:34; 6:38; 7:17; Eph 6:6; Heb 10:7, (Ps 40:8); 10:36; 13:21; I John 2:17; etc.

1. We could say it this way: When you do the will of God you are in the will of God. According to Jesus, God's will can be summed up in two commands. Matt 22:36-40--Love God with your whole being (with everything you've got) and your neighbor as yourself (or treat others the way you want to be treated, Matt 7:12). (More lessons for another day)

2. The New Testament makes many very specific statements about the will of God for believers.

A. I Thess 4:3,4--For this is the will of God, that you should be consecrated — separated and set apart for pure and holy living; that you should abstain and shrink from all sexual vice; that each one of you should know how to possess [control, manage] his own body (in purity, separated from things profane, and) in consecration and honor. (Amp)

B. I Thess 5:18--Thank [God] in everything — no matter what the circumstances may be, be thankful and give thanks; for this is the will of God for you [who are] in Christ Jesus.

(Amp)

b. As we cooperate with God's general will (His written Word), that puts us in a position to learn His specific will for our lives. If we do our part God will do His part.

1. Our part is to walk in agreement with His general will and obey Him. His part is to get us to the right place at the right time, or to His specific will.

2. Prov 3:6--In everything you do, put God first, and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success (TLB); At every step you take, keep Him in mind, and He will direct your path (REB); Have mind of Him wherever you go, and He will clear the road for you (Moffatt).

4. I realize this isn't what people want to hear when they're trying to figure out what God wants them to do. But if His written Word is a revelation of His will (and it is), what makes you think that you'll get direction for specifics concerning His will when you aren't concerned with His general will?

a. We'll discuss this in more detail as we work through our series, but let me give you an example of how God's general will and specific will work together and how we cooperation with Him.

b. When we need guidance from God and direction for our lives, this is what many of us do: We beg Him over and over to tell us what to do, to show us what to do. And we talk like this: I don't know what to do! I don't know where to go! I don't know what my ministry is! I don't know who to marry! I don't know what job to take! etc., etc.

1. The problem with this is that you're in disagreement with God's general will. The Bible says repeatedly that it's God's will to lead and guide us. Ps 16:11; 31:15; 32:8; 37:23; 48:14; 73:24; 139:10,23,24; Prov 3:6; Isa 58:11; John 10:27; Rom 8:14; James 1:5; etc. etc.

2. God works in our lives by His grace through our faith. Faith (or persuasion) comes from God's Word. His written Word shows us what He has done, is doing, and will do. Faith, in its most basic form, is agreement with God. Faith expects Him to do what He said He'd do. His Word persuades us of the reality of what He says, despite what we see or feel.

3. When you need specific direction, get into agreement with what God, in His general will, says about guiding you: Thank you Lord, I am your sheep and I know your voice. I won't follow the voice of a stranger. I acknowledge you in all my ways and you are directing my path.

My times are in your hands. You order my steps. You are showing me the path of life.

c. This isn't a technique or formula you use to get something from God. It's an acknowledgement of

His truthfulness, His reliability. He has promised to lead and guide us, so we thank and praise Him for it before we see or feel it. As the Good Shepherd, He leads us and guides us. Ps 23:1,2

- C. Discerning God's specific will in your life is much easier to do when you understand His general will or overall plan for your life. He created you to become His son or daughter through faith in Christ and then be conformed to the image of Christ, the perfect son. Eph 1:4,5; Rom 8:29
1. You must understand that being Christ-like in your behavior is much more important than finding your ministry or your place in the body of Christ. Dealing with un-Christ-like traits in your character is far more important than which job you take or what house you buy or who you marry.
    - a. Col 4:12 is the only New Testament passage that comes close to talking about being in the will of God. However, Epaphras wasn't praying about a new donkey cart or a big promotion on the job at the local amphitheater. He was praying that they would be fully conformed to the image of Christ.
    - b. Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians were all written by Paul at about the same time. We must consider what Paul's reference to Epaphras meant in the context of these three epistles. Note that Epaphras prayed that the Colossians would stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.
      1. Perfect, in the Greek, is a word meaning complete, in the sense of that which has reached its end. Paul used this word in Col 1:28 when he said he preached to men in order to present every man complete in Christ (Rotherham); mature through union with Christ (Williams)
        - A. Epaphras was a teacher in the church at Colossae. Paul referred to him as "his dear fellow-servant" and "a faithful minister" of Christ (Col 1:7;4:12). It's reasonable to presume that his goal in teaching was similar to Paul's. Paul's mission was to see men conformed to the image of Christ (made complete, reach the desired end). Paul is the one who was inspired to write that God's will for us is conformity to Christ (Rom 8:29).
        - B. In Eph 4:13--Paul said that God gifts men to proclaim the gospel and teach the Scriptures: that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood—the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection—the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ, and the completeness found in Him. (Amp)
      2. Complete in the Greek is a different word and it means to make replete (abundantly supplied). Paul used this word a number of times in Ephesians and Colossians. It is translated filleth, filled, fullness in the KJV in Eph 1:10, 23; 3:19, 4:13; 5:18; Col 2:10; Col 4:12
        - A. One of Paul's themes in these epistles is that believers would be filled up with the fullness of God. We did a lesson on it a few weeks ago as part of our study of God in us.
  - B. The Holy Spirit is in us to empower us to do whatever God asks of us, and to transform us and fully restore us to all God intends: sonship and conformity to the image of Christ.
  2. You may have trouble discerning the specific will of God in a particular situation because of attitudes or traits in your soul (your mind and emotions). God's written Word (which reveals His general will) can expose them, along with motives that keep us from discerning God's specific will. Heb 4:12
    - a. Much of our desire to know the will of God is self-focused, not God focused. You must understand Jesus died so that we would no longer live for ourselves but for Him. II Cor 5:15
    - b. Matt 6:9-10--When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He instructed them: Go to God your Father, worship Him, and then express your desire that His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
      1. This is the starting point in prayer: I want your will, Lord, above everything else. This doesn't mean passive resignation to everything that comes down the pike. We use our authority to resist the devil and his strategies. We stand our ground in the day of trouble. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb. (Lessons for another day)
      2. This is ardent desire to see God's will, His purposes, His intentions come to pass and see His reign established on earth as it is in Heaven. This means the reign (kingdom) of God established in the hearts of men through the new birth. It means His visible reign (kingdom) established on this earth when Jesus comes again.

3. In this same passage Jesus said that if we desire His will above all, we'll have what we need to live this life. Matt 6:33

c. For many of us, wanting to know the will of God for our lives comes out of immature or even wrong motives. We want to know, do, or be in the will of God, not because we love God and want to please Him, not because we want to see His kingdom advance in the earth, but for our sake.

1. We want to know the will of God because we want to know what is best for us, what will bring us the most blessing, as opposed to what will most advance His kingdom.

2. Or, we are motivated by fear. We want to know the will of God so we don't make a mistake and reap what we sow, so we don't make God mad at us, so we don't bring a curse in our lives, etc., etc. (There's so much inaccurate teaching concerning reaping and sowing, curses and blessings, and so forth, and it wrongly affects how we live. Lessons for another day.)

3. The Bible also gives us principles of wisdom to use to make wise choices, wise decisions. Often, people are waiting for some spectacular sign to tell them what to do in a particular situation. But, they don't get it because God has already given us instructions in His Word that help us know what to do.

a. There are lots of examples we could choose from to discuss. But, for the purpose of illustration, consider these few points.

1. The Bible says we're not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (II Cor 6:14). So, wisdom would dictate that it's not the will of God for a Christian to date or marry an unbeliever. You don't need a specific word from God because you have His general will.

2. The Bible says that in the multitude of counselors there is safety (Prov 24:6). If you are facing a big decision wisdom says get counsel from trusted, trustworthy people.

b. We all want some type of supernatural sign from God. But, in most decisions, that is not how guidance comes to us. Instead, we gather all the facts we can and make the most reasonable decision based on principles from the Word of God. All the while we maintain the attitude: "I'll change course immediately if you tell me to do so, Lord".

c. We fret over whether or not we should buy the blue chair or the red chair because "we don't want to miss God!" However, God is much more concerned with how you're treating the people serving you in the furniture store. Do they detect the sweet savor of Christ in you (II Cor 2:14). Does it enter your mind to pray for them that God would send laborers into their lives to share the gospel with them (Matt 9:37,38). Are you a light in dark place (I Pet 2:9)?

D. Conclusion: God's written Word makes it clear that it is His will that we be conformed to the image of Christ. If you make it your aim to grow in Christ-like character through reading and obeying the Bible, you'll get better at making wise choices in your life. You'll recognize His leading and direction, and you'll end up where you're supposed to be. Lots more next week!