

From My Bible

Sermon Notes
& Outlines

The Will of God

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Introduction

These messages are compiled from study notes and outlines of my own and many others. I hope they are a help to you.

I'm sure that all of us have at times "*borrowed*" or "*used*" a sermon we heard or read somewhere along the way. A thought, a word, or an idea jumped out to us from another preacher and we took that thing and ran with it. You have probably used an outline from a preacher brother but ended up preaching something that was uniquely different. Same idea, it just came out differently when you preached. Using your own thoughts, experiences, and illustrations.....the message became your own.

I heard an old-time preacher once say, "*Any message worth preaching ought to be worth preaching again!*" Well, I have certainly preached some sermons again and again. I have borrowed from others to preach theirs again too. Please use these messages as the Lord leads and preach His Word over and over again!

I make no claim of complete originality for this material. Also, please remember that these messages are not expected to substitute for your own personal study of the Word of God! The thoughts and ideas are given as a catalyst to help begin your ideas on a given passage of Scripture or trigger a seed thought to get you going. It is my prayer that the "*stuff*" contained here will further kindle the fire of God's message that is already in your heart. Your own thinking, praying, and studying will be necessary to guide you into the delivery of His Word to your own people.

May these sermons become *messages* from the Lord that He uses in your own life as He has used them in mine.

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We Can Know the Will of God

“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

John 7:17

Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible

John 7:17

Verse 17. *If any man will do his will.* Literally, if any man *wills* or is *willing* to do the will of God. If there is a disposition in anyone to do that will, though he should not be able perfectly to keep his commandments. To do the will of God is to obey his commandments; to yield our hearts and lives to his requirements. A disposition to do his will is a readiness to yield our intellects, our feelings, and all that we have entirely to him, to be governed according to his pleasure.

He shall know. He shall have *evidence*, in the very attempt to do the will of God, of the truth of the doctrine. This evidence is internal, and to the individual it is satisfactory and conclusive. It is of two kinds.

1st. He will find that the doctrines which Jesus taught are such as commend themselves to his reason and conscience, and such as are consistent with all that we know of the perfections of God. His doctrines commend themselves to us as fitted to make us pure and happy, and of course they are such as must be from God.

2nd. An honest desire to obey God will lead a man to embrace the great doctrines of the Bible. He will find that his heart is depraved and inclined to evil, and he will see and feel the truth of the doctrine of *depravity*; he will find that he is a sinner and needs to be born again; he will learn his own weakness, and see his need of a Saviour, of an

atonement, and of pardoning mercy; he will feel that he is polluted, and needs the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Thus we may learn,

That an honest effort to obey God is the easiest way to become acquainted with the doctrines of the Bible.

Those who make such an effort will not cavil at any of the doctrines of the Scriptures.

This is evidence of the truth of revelation which every man can apply to his own case.

It is such evidence as to lead to *certainty*. No man who has ever made an honest effort to live a pious life, and to do all the will of God, has ever had any doubt of the truth of the Saviour's doctrines, or any doubt that his religion is true and is fitted to the nature of man. They only doubt the truth of religion who wish to live in sin.

We see the goodness of God in giving us evidence of his truth that may be within every man's reach. It does not require great learning to be a Christian, and to be convinced of the truth of the Bible. It requires an honest heart, and a willingness to obey God.

It Is God's Will

It is God's Will that ALL:

1. Be Saved. (2 Pet.3:9)
2. Be Spirit filled. (Eph. 5:16,17)
3. Speak & sing spiritual songs. (Eph. 5:19)
4. Show thanks (Eph. 5:20)
5. Submit to one another. (Eph. 5:21)
6. Sanctify ourselves (I Thess. 4:3-4)
7. Suffer. (1 Pet. 4:12,13, 19)

God's Will-Simple, Serious, Sweet

Text - Acts 9:1-6

Introduction: It is noteworthy to me that as soon as Saul was converted he began paying attention to something he had never shown an interest in before: *the will of God*. Before salvation, he was intent on stamping out Christianity by persecuting its members. He cared nothing for God, Jesus, the church or the Bible and scripture describes him as *“breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.”* But something happened to Saul that day on the Damascus Road that happens to every sinner when he gets saved. Saul gained a new interest in God’s will. His first words were, *“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do.”*

When a person gets saved, the will of God should become top priority for his life. A person may struggle with acceptance and obedience to that will but their desire should be to do the will of the Lord. God has a will for every one of our lives and that will is not debatable. He does not ask for your input or advice in the matter - it is not yours to ever alter the plan. He does not send you a rough draft for your approval. There is no Plan A and Plan B. Furthermore, your success and happiness depends on what you do with God’s will. You will live a most miserable life if you insist on *‘doing your own thing’*.

Therefore, we should resolve to never make a decision without knowing God’s will in the matter. Here are three simple things about God’s will.

The Will of God Is A Simple Thing

Some have the idea that-the will of God is a mystery or secret God doesn’t want us to know. They think it is a puzzle

or a riddle we have to figure out. But if one would read the Bible a bit they would discover that the will of God can be known.

I understand that there are times when we struggle to get the mind of the Lord in a particular matter, but most of our struggling with **God's will is not so much in trying to learn it as in trying to accept it.** I am convinced that a lot of praying over God's will is no more than just arguing with God and trying to get him to see things our way.

One big obstacle that seems to always get in the way is that God's will always requires a measure of faith to perform it. **The will of God is simple but rarely easy.** Faith is a wonderful concept and a beautiful thing to talk about but to some that is about as far as it goes. Living by faith makes a good song but we are not too sure it would actually work in real life. Faith is something Lester Roloff and George Mueller lived by but not something we would care to get involved in.

The Will of God Is A Serious Thing

God is serious about His will; He intends for all His children to obey Him. You best not play around with the will of God; it is not something to trifle with. *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."* (*Ephesians 5:17*). The wisest thing you can do is to understand and do God's will. It would be awfully unwise for you to miss God's will in areas such as marriage, college, career, church, ministry, financial decisions, etc.

The will of God is not something you can approach casually or carelessly or nonchalantly or flippantly. The will of God is serious. It is no longer about what you -want- but what God

wants; It does not matter what you think is best for your life; it matters what God thinks is best for your life.

The Will of God Is A Sweet Thing

Now the task God has called you to may not be a pleasant one and the place of service He has chosen for you may not be the most desirable one but **it is sweet and satisfying to be in the center of God's will**. It is sweet to know that you are living your life according to Divine dictates and that your Heavenly Father is pleased with you.

There is **protection** in the will of God. There is **provision** in the will of God. There is **peace** in the will of God. Surrender produces peace and if you are struggling with God's will then you need to surrender. Then and only then will you have sweet peace.

Great Bible Verses On God's Will

Introduction: Remember that nothing is the will of God if it is not in accordance with the Word of God. The Bible is not a book of rules, but rather it is a book of principles. Too often we want to make a list of rules to govern our lives rather than living by Biblical principles. God is not pleased by our following rules - anymore than we are pleased when our children do, just what we say instead of living like we want them to.

However, He does desire that we follow His Word. This is the way to His Will. If you are not familiar with His Word you stand little chance of becoming familiar with His Will.

Mark 3:35 For whosoever shall do **the will of God**, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Acts 13:36 For David, after he had served his own generation by **the will of God**, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

Romans 1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by **the will of God** to come unto you.

Romans 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to **the will of God**.

Romans 15:32 That I may come unto you with joy by **the will of God**, and may with you be refreshed.

1 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through **the will of God**, and Sosthenes our brother,

2 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by **the will of God**, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

2 Corinthians 8:5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by **the will of God**.

Galatians 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to **the will of God** and our Father:

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by **the will of God**, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Ephesians 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing **the will of God** from the heart;

Colossians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by **the will of God**, and Timotheus our brother,

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all **the will of God**.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is **the will of God**, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

1 Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is **the will of God** in Christ Jesus concerning you.

2 Timothy 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by **the will of God**, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,

Hebrews 10:36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done **the will of God**, ye might receive the promise.

1 Peter 2:15 For so is **the will of God**, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

1 Peter 3:17 For it is better, if **the will of God** be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

1 Peter 4:2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to **the will of God**.

1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to **the will of God** commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

1 John 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth **the will of God** abideth for ever.

Three Green Lights for God's Will

Texts – John 15:27 / Ps. 119:105 / Rev. 3:8

Introduction: *I never want to make a major decision without a series of three green lights. The concept is not complicated to grasp - a red light means stop, a green light means go.*

First of all there is the green light of: Peace in Prayer

Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 15:27).

There is a peace that comes through prayer which is the peace that only God can give. So as you pray for the will of God and you begin to understand what may be the will of God, look for His peace which follows. The great prayer warrior from the 19th century, George Mueller, explained that if peace comes after three specific petitions then he is prepared to formulate a conclusion that what he is praying about is of God.

The second green light is: A Word from the Word

The Psalmist revealed: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

If you live with an open Bible, God talks to you. If you live with a closed Bible, you will not hear from God. If you believe God is leading you in a certain direction and that direction violates Scripture on precept or principle, then upon the authority of the Word of God, I can tell you that it is not of God!

When praying for the will of God, look for either a statement of Scripture that vindicates the subject you are asking of God or a principle illustrating the subject. For instance, when we moved to the Jesup, Georgia area nearly thirty years ago, God used a verse to like this one to confirm His plan: *“Blessed be the Lord: for He hath shewed me His marvelous kindness in a strong city”* (Ps. 31:21). On the other hand, when God revealed to me that Sharon was to be my wife, the principle of receiving my heart’s desire kept coming to me again and again. This principle is given in Psalm 37:4. In other words, I did not see my wife’s name in Scripture telling me she was God’s will, but the heart’s desire was just as real as if God said, *“Here she is!”*

The third green light is: A Design in the Door

Jesus said, *“...behold, I have set before thee an open door...”* (Rev. 3:8). In the same way that there was an open door from the wardrobe closet in the Chronicles of Narnia by C. S. Lewis which led to a magical land, there is an open door in the circumstances of life that God places in front of you. **The key to going through the right open door is obedience.** We must obey God in the little things. Our prayer life, Bible reading or study, and service for Him may appear to be little daily activities, but they become very big when we are praying for direction.

Circumstances are designs in the doors of life that bring you through to God’s success. Be determined to do the will of God! I never move until all three lights are green.

It Is God's Will For You To Go To Heaven

Text - 2 Peter 3:9

Introduction: Some people have some odd ideas about finding God's will. One lady was interested in knowing God's will sat by a window with her Bible open and allowed the breeze to open the pages and she chose a verse a random by allowing her finger to fall on a verse. She read the words, "*Judas went and hanged himself.*" Horrified, she closed the Bible and tried again. This time her finger found these words, "*Go and do thou likewise.*" Even more dismayed, she quickly tried a third time and the wind-and-finger method led her to a verse that said, "*Whatsoever thou doest, do quickly.*"

David declared in Psalms 40:8... "*I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.*" That should be the desire of our hearts as well. As we study God's will two perspectives stand out:

1. The Ingredients of God's Will

The Bible declares several things explicitly to be God's will. If we are going to know God's will we must understand what the Bible says is the will of God. Then we are should devote some time studying...

2. The Importance of God's Will

Let's start at the beginning That's where to start. We need to learn first and foremost that it is God's Will that each of us go to Heaven.

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-*

ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

How do I know it is His will? Look at our passage. We can know it is God's will that you go to Heaven because...

I. God's Promises Say So

Our text begins with a mention of a promise of God. The particular promise Peter is writing about is the promise about the coming of the Lord. Peter says that one of the reasons he has written this letter is to remind believers of the fact that in the last days scoffers would ask, "*Where is the promise of His coming?*" Peter responds to the scoffers by making a significant declaration about the Lord's promises.

Look again at the first part of our text. "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness;*" Peter is saying, The Lord keeps His promises. He is not slow or late in the keeping of His promise concerning His coming. Mark it down His coming will be right on time. The Bible contains countless promises of God. Promises about His presence, His protection, His power, His provision. Peter refers to the promises of God in chapter 1:4 as being the "*great and precious promises of God...*"

Look again at our text and you will see that it is God's will for you to go to Heaven because...

II. God's Patience Says So

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

I am glad the Lord is more patient that we are...AMEN?

Not long ago, I heard a story about a truck driver who stopped at a restaurant in Broken Bow, Nebraska. The waitress had just served him when three swaggering, leather-jacketed motorcyclists—types—entered and came up to the truck driver, apparently looking for a fight. One grabbed the hamburger off his plate; another took a handful of French fries; and the third picked up his coffee and began to drink it. The trucker did not respond as one might expect. He calmly stood, picked up his check, walked to the front of the room, put the check and his money on the cash register, and went out the door. The waitress followed him to put the money in the till and stood watching out the door as the big truck drove away into the night. When she returned, one of the thugs said to her, “*Well, he’s not much of a man, is he?*” She replied, “*I can’t answer that, but I can tell you this he’s not much of a truck driver. He just ran over three motorcycles out in the parking lot.*”

Finally it is God's will for you to be saved because...

III. God's Plan Says So

1. It is not God's plan for anyone to be turned *away*.
2. It is God's plan for everyone to be turned *around*.

Conclusion: I read this illustration some time ago, *“Mother, please,”* exploded the teenager.” *“I’ve heard all the religion business I can take. You and Daddy are always bothering me about it. I’m not interested!”* The girl stamped her foot and marched out of the room, slamming the door. Her mother sank wearily to a chair. What more could she do? Finally she decided to call the pastor. The pastor listened to the problem and made an appointment to see the girl alone. When the pastor called on the girl the parents left the room and he turned sympathetically to the girl. *“I think it’s a shame,”* he said, *“that your mother and father pester you so much about religion.”* The girl, who had been braced for a lecture, smiled in relief. Now this is the kind of preacher I like, she thought. He’s willing to leave me alone if I am not interested. *“I have a suggestion,”* said the pastor. *“Suppose I persuade your parents and friends not to mention the subject of God to you for a whole year.”* The girl was startled. *“A year,”* she gasped. *“I don’t know whether it would be safe to wait a whole year. I might die before then.”* *“That’s true,”* agreed the pastor. *“A year is too long. Suppose we make it six months?”* The girl pondered a moment and then replied that six months might not be safe either. *“Well, then,”* proposed the pastor, *“how about three months? I’ll arrange it so you won’t be bothered about God for three months.”* The pastor stood up and started to leave, but the girl stopped him. *“I don’t think it would be safe,”* she said, *“to put it off at all. Please pray with me now.”* Promptly they got down on their knees and the teenager asked Jesus into her heart.

Because it is God’s will for everyone to go to Heaven then ... make sure you are going... make sure others around you are going too!

It Is God's Will To Be Spirit Filled

Texts - Ephesians 5:17-18, Galatians 5:16-25

Introduction: Knowing God's Will... is that possible? Absolutely! As a matter of fact, as we study this topic, we are considering another ingredient of God's will. It is God's will for you to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I. The Christian Is To Walk In The Spirit's Presence

1. The Fact of the Spirit's Presence
2. The Function of the Spirit's Presence

II. The Christian Is To Live In The Spirit's Power

Notice the outcome of living in the Spirit's power. The Christian living in the Spirit's power...

1. Defeats the Spirit's Foe
2. Develops the Spirit's Fruit

God's Will and Eternity

Text - Matthew 7:21-23

Introduction: The words of Jesus tell us of three sobering things .

I. The Declaration

Several years ago the Cincinnati Reds went to Canada to play the Montreal Expos. At the airport as they were going through customs in preparation for their flight back to the United States, one of the players was asked if he had anything to declare. Never having been out of the States before, the player didn't realize that the customs agent was trying to determine if the player had purchased anything he was taking back to the States. In response, to the question, "*do you have anything to declare?*" The ignorant player sincerely said, "*I declare that I am proud to be an American!*" Apparently the customs agent was not amused.

Jesus makes a declaration in our text that is not anywhere in the neighborhood of amusing. His declaration might be better characterized as sobering or shocking.

Notice carefully what Jesus declares in verse 21 Jesus says...

"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven."

Wow, did Jesus really say that?

Jesus reveals a very sad but true reality. Jesus says that not everyone that professes to be a Christian is actually a Christian. In other words, it is one thing to claim or say that Jesus is our Lord, but that alone does not make it true.

When I preach at youth camp during the summer I often preach a sermon that I simply call: What Is A Christian? When I begin the sermon I walk to the platform, smile at the audience and then proceed to make noises like.... Errrrr, rum, rum, rum, and then a squeal like I am burning rubber and run around the tabernacle....yes I have run the aisles at camp. I will do that for a minute or so and then I will stop and ask one of the cool guys, what am I? And every time they say, "You're a car." And I say, "are you nuts? I am not a car. I am a person. Don't you know what a car looks like?" And on and on I go. I then make the point... I might sound like a car. I might even spend the night in a garage. I could even say that I am a car, but that doesn't make me a car. The same is true about being a Christian. I might sound like a Christian... go where Christians go..do what Christians do, I might even call myself a Christian but none of those things make me a Christian.

Jesus says that the evidence that one is saved, the evidence that one is going to Heaven isn't what one claims or says, but it is what one does.

Look again at verse 21 and notice that Jesus identifies those who will enter Heaven as those that...

"...doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven."

Remember we are learning about the importance of the God's Will. Don't miss this. God's will is important

because Jesus says doing God's will is essential to going to Heaven!

Some read verse 21 and conclude that Jesus is contradicting Himself and multiple passages of scripture about salvation.

For instance someone might say, I thought Jesus said John 3:16... And what about Acts 16:30-31 where Paul was asked by the Philippian Jailer, "*What must I do to be saved?*" Paul said, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved...*" What about Ephesians 2:8?

Jesus is not contradicting any of those passages. Jesus is not teaching that we do God's will to be saved, but that those who are saved, do God's will!

In Mark 3:31-35 Jesus makes it clear that only those who do God's will have a right to claim a relationship with Him.

The context of the story is this. Jesus is in Capernaum in a house. He has been doing miracles and preaching basically nonstop for a good deal of time. The crowds were flocking to Jesus and He was so busy that He and the disciples had not eaten for some time. Apparently, the Lord's mother Mary heard what was going on and along with a delegation of her other sons they came to coax Jesus out of the house and so they could take him back to Nazareth.

"31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.”

Jesus loved His mother very much. He loved his half brothers as well. Notice however that Jesus says that to be related to Him is more than genetics. We are in the Lord's family if we are doing the will of God.

Again... Jesus is not saying that good works (doing God's will) results in salvation. Jesus is saying that when one is truly saved the result is doing God's will.

The fact is that if Jesus is our LORD... (Master) then we are going to do what He wants us to do.

In Luke 6:46 Jesus asked this question. *“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”*

Such a declaration should cause us to examine our own claims and our own hearts.

Do the commands of Christ mean more than any of our pleasures or pursuits?

II. The Day

“22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”

The day... the day in which we will give an account.... The day of judgment.

Jesus says that at the judgment

Used the name of Jesus to carry out their own self centered purposes.

III. The Dismissal

“23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Note...Never means never... that is the problem

Final Separation.... Depart That is a command that even the most stubborn rebel will obey....

God's Will and Prayer

Text - 1 John 5:14-15

Introduction: What a great and powerful passage of Scripture. Let's make some initial observations...First...

1. A Great Promise

Notice the Christian is promised that God will hear and act in response to our praying.

2. A Challenging Condition

The promise that God will hear and respond to our praying is based on us meeting the condition of praying "*according to His will.*"

How can we make sure that we are praying according to the Will of God?

I. We Must Desire God's Will

Our text assures us that if we will pray according to the will of God, then God will respond to, "*the petitions that we have desired of Him.*" The desire itself is foundational to effective praying. Why? Because our desire expresses what is in our heart. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said: (Matthew 6:9-10)

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.

Jesus is saying to us that when we pray, our main desire should be to see God's Will done. For many believers that idea is in opposition to what they believe prayer to be.

Prayer is not an exercise in which we attempt to talk God into doing something we want Him to do. Prayer is the awesome experience of actually seeing God's will and then asking Him for it.

We need to recognize that only prayer that is in accordance to God's Will is acceptable. Someone may ask, does that mean that in my praying I am limited to the will of God? The answer is yes, but don't be worried about it. For you or me to be worried about being restricted by the Will of God is like a minnow worrying about being hemmed in by the ocean.

Praying in God's will doesn't mean less blessings, but more and greater blessings. Psalms 37:4... *Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

II. We Must Discern God's Will

If we are going to pray in God's will then we must know what His will is. Let's take time to deal with a common misconception about the will of God. God NEVER planned for His will to be a mystery to us. That is simply not true.

Notice what Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:17. *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."* God intends for every child of God to understand and do the will of God.

Paul's words tell us two very important things.

Number one... They tell us that there is such a thing as the Will of God.

Number two... They also tell us that we can understand what the Will of God is.

Those facts being true, then how can we discern God's will? In the Word of God there are some specific things that are explicitly said to be the will of God.

For example, it is God's will for:

- 1) All to be saved (II Pet. 3:9).
- 2) Christians to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:17,18)
- 3) Christians to abstain from sexual impurity (I Thess. 4:3)
- 4) Christians to submit to proper authority (I Pet. 2:13-15)
- 5) Christians to be thankful (I Thess. 5:18)
- 6) Christians to suffer for well doing (I Pet. 3:17)

In John 15:7 Jesus connects prayer and the word. Jesus said, *"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* The Lord is teaching us that if we are yielding to the word of the Lord, then our requests will be in harmony with the will of God.

As Paul said in Colossians 3:16, we need to... *"Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly..."* If the word of Christ is going to dwell in us richly then we must do more than treat the Word of God as a guest in our hearts, we must allow God's Word to master our hearts and govern our lives. We must submit to its authority.

Psalms 119:105 tells us that God's word is "*a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*" Let's learn that by reading and studying the Word of God we discover God's will revealed there. From the Word of God you can discern the Will of God. However there are times when the Bible does not specifically address an area of our concern. For example... the Bible is not going to tell you specifically whether or not to buy the Ford Van or the Chevy Van, so what do we do?

Lastly, if we are going to be certain that we are praying according to God's will then...

III. We Must Do God's Will

Truthfully there is not much sense in praying if we really don't intend to do anything. Remember God knows our hearts. He knows if we truly want His will to be done.

Let's take a little test? Here's the issue. Would you be willing to do anything you found to be God's will for you?

Perhaps you might be thinking that it depends on what it is. Why should God's will be frightening to us? When we come to prayer we need to surrender to God's Will. God will respond.

Conclusion: On the night prior to our Lord's crucifixion He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "*Not my will but thy will be done.*" In His humanity Jesus recoiled from the awfulness of sin and what its ultimate consequence would be, separation from God. Yet in his humanity Jesus submitted to the Father. Let's follow Jesus' footsteps.

God's Will and Making Decisions

Text - James 4:13-17

Introduction: It seems to be human nature to resist certain limits. You see a sign that says, “*Keep Off The Grass*” and what do you want to do? You want to step on the grass. We really hate being told... *Don't!* Sounds depressing doesn't it. In our text, we are given three don'ts concerning God's Will.

For example in verse 13 we learn that...

I. We Must Not Dismiss God's Will

I think about a story I read about a man who was riding his motorcycle along a country road. He stopped to talk to a preacher in a churchyard. The preacher asked where he was going. He told him that he was going to town to sell his motorcycle. The preacher said, “*You ought to say, 'I'm riding into town to sell my motorcycle if it be the Lord's will.'*” The man rolled his eyes, laughed, and roared off toward town. He thought to himself, “*Sell my motorcycle if it's the Lord will? Lord's will or not, I'm selling my motorcycle.*” Later that afternoon the preacher saw the fellow coming down the road stumbling and staggering. His pants were torn exposing skinned knees. His arm was in a sling. His shirt was half torn off his back. His hair was a mess. His elbows and forearms were covered in blood. “*What happened?*” asked the preacher. The fellow replied, “*After I left you I was on my way to town and a big storm came up. I tried to outrun it, but the rain began to fall like lumps of lead. As I was going around a big curve I hit some loose gravel and the motorcycle slid out from under me. I skidded more than a hundred feet on the pavement. I managed to get up, and walked to a nearby farmhouse. As I*

walked up to the door, a frightened woman pointed a shotgun in my direction. I started running and she started shooting. I ran through the brush and briars and got all scratched up. As I stood there picking buckshot from my backside, lightning struck a tree and fell on me.” The preacher looked at him and asked, *“Where are you going now?”* The man replied, *“I’m going home...if it be the Lord’s will.”*

Many of us are more like the guy with the motorcycle than we would like to admit. Notice that our passage is not condemning the making of plans. It is saying that we should not make plans without considering God’s will.

In verse 13 James cites the example of merchants of his day who would say, *“To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:”* These guys acted as if they were omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent in that they planned the WHERE and the WHEN and the WHAT of their lives without consulting God.

Notice in verses 15 and 16 that James tells us what their attitude should have been: *For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.*

We often get into trouble when we make decisions on our own while dismissing the will of God.

A good example of that in the Bible is the story found in Joshua, chapter 9. As Joshua and the children of Israel were conquering the Promised Land, there was a particular tribe of people called the Gibeonites who approached them. Although they lived just around the mountain, they sent a

delegation to Joshua and pretended to be from a far away country. They took moldy bread with them, and their wineskins were cracked, their clothes ragged, and they had put worn and patched sandals on their feet as though they had traveled for many days. They wanted to trick the Israelites into making a peace treaty with them. Joshua 9:14 says that the leaders of Israel investigated their appearance, but did not inquire of the Lord.

Joshua's failure to pray before making the decision led to Israel's being caught in an unhealthy and unholy pact with a Canaanite tribe which was a thorn in Israel's side for the next 400 years. We should not make decisions without consulting the Lord about them. Let's learn the lesson, don't dismiss God's Will.

Then we see...

II. We Must Not Delay God's Will

James points out in verse 14 that the person who makes their plans without any consideration of what God's will is had better factor into the equation the foolishness of presuming on the future.

Look at what the Bible says in vs. 14:

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

James is making it clear that time and life should not be taken for granted. As someone has said, "Yesterday is a cancelled check, tomorrow is a promissory note, and today is all the cash we have."

All the time we are guaranteed is now!

Proverbs 27:1 instructs: *“Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”*

James rebuke of the merchants who in their dismissal of God’s will failed to take into account the uncertainty of time serves as a great reminder to us.

Life is uncertain. Life is brief. Therefore, we must as Paul says: *“Redeeming the time...”* (Eph. 5:16). We must not delay in doing what we know to be the will of God!

There are so many applications that could be made but let me ask just one more question in this regard. Are you certain of your salvation? If not make certain today! That is why the Bible says: *“...now is the accepted time, Behold, now is the day of salvation!”*

We have seen that we should not dismiss God’s will and that we should not delay God’s will. There is one final thing here in verse 17. The Bible says:

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. This verse is teaching us that...

III. We Must Not Defy God’s Will

Verse 17 makes it abundantly clear that that sin is more than doing what we know is wrong, it is also the failure to do what is right. When we know what the Lord would have us do, but we deliberately choose not to do it, then we defy God’s Will.

The Old Testament prophet Jonah is a prime illustration of defiance of the Will of God. Notice Jonah 1:1-3:

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

You remember the story. God said, “GO!” Jonah said, “NO!” The wind did BLOW. The sailors yield, “WOE!” And the whale SWALLOWED! Jonah had no excuse. The Lord clearly proclaimed His Will to Jonah. Jonah rejected God’s plan.

In this story Nineveh represents GOD’S WILL. Tarshish, the place Jonah headed toward represents DEFIANCE.

Where are you headed? Nineveh or Tarshish? God's will or defiance? Make the right decision today and surrender to His will. You'll be glad you did.

God's Will and Your Testimony

Text - Romans 12:1-2

Introduction: God's will can be remembered by the acrostic, G-A-P. It is Good. It is Acceptable. It is Perfect. I want you to think with me on how God's will affects your testimony. This idea of “*perfect*” means a “*completeness*”, a “*maturity*”, a coming of Age”, i.e. growing up. Thus the “*perfect*” thing to help us mature as believers, grow up as Christian, and be “*complete*” is the will of God.

Our testimony is our spiritual reputation. We leave a testimony behind everywhere we go. Notice in our passage, the very last part of verse 2, that it says that the Christian is to “*prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.*”

The word “*prove*” in that phrase literally means *to demonstrate*. So the text is saying that the Christian's life and testimony should be a living demonstration of what the will of God is. How do we do that? How do we become a living demonstration of God's will? Here are some thoughts...

I. A Sacrifice Must Be Made

Look at verse one of our text. It says...

I ¶ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

In our culture we know very little about sacrifice. Did you know that there are three sacrifices the Lord expects from you?

For example Hebrews 13:15 instructs...

“...let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

So the first sacrifice the Lord expects is...

1. The Sacrifice of Your Praise

The writer of Hebrews says that the sacrifice of praise is an expression of our lips of giving thanks to His name. In other words this sacrifice is not silent. It is vocal. The Lord wants us to vocally express our thanks to Him. We can do that in our praying. We can do that in testimony. We can do that with our singing.

A second sacrifice the Lord desires is...

2. The Sacrifice of Your Possessions

The apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:15-19 about the giving of the church of Philippi.

“...when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Paul clearly identifies the giving of the Philippian church as a sacrifice that is well-pleasing to God.

It is sad but some Christians only give the Lord leftovers. They are unwilling to believe the promises of God's word. Paul told the Philippian Church that because of their sacrifice... God would *"supply all of their need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."*

Someone has said that: If you give what you don't need, it isn't giving.

There is a third sacrifice that the Lord wants. That is...

3. The Sacrifice of Your Person

That is exactly what our text is saying. Paul says that we are to *"present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service."*

I read a story that I believe explains Paul's words well.

A young boy came to church one cold winter day to get out of the blowing snow. He had been trying to sell newspapers but not a single customer had passed by because of the weather. He slipped into the back of the church, just hoping to get warm and catch up on his sleep. Though the Sunday crowd was slim, the boy really paid attention to the sermon and was greatly moved by it. When the pastor was done, he called for the offering. The ushers went from row to row, and when the offering plate came to the boy, he stared at it for a while and then put it on the floor.

He then did something very strange and very beautiful. He stood up and stepped right into the offering plate. By then,

all the people had turned around and were staring at the boy. When he looked up, he had big tears running down his face as he said, *“Pastor, I don’t have any money because I haven’t sold any newspapers today. But, if Jesus gave His life for me, then I will gladly give my life to Him.”*

The Lord wants us to offer all of our lives to Him. So if we are going to be demonstrations of the God’s will then there is A sacrifice that must be made.

But notice also that there is...

II. A Stand That Must Be Taken

In verse 2, God’s word says... *“And be not conformed to this world...”*

There is an old country song that says that the man who stands for nothing will fall for anything. That statement has a lot of truth. The Christian is called upon to draw a line in the sand and to take a stand. Paul is urging us to stop being pushed into being like the world.

Finally, notice also that there is...

III. A Strategy That Must Be Followed

Verse 2 - *“...but are ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...”*

The purpose of this strategy is our transformation. Instead of conforming to the world we need to be transformed by the power of Jesus Christ. Jesus is in the business of changing people’s lives.

He says that this transformation takes place by the renewing of our minds. How do we do that? We renew or reprogram our thinking by reading and studying the Word of God.

Conclusion: Why should we care about being demonstrations of God's will? God expresses his love to us through His grace and mercy. Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve. Because of grace God gives us the gift of salvation...the gift of eternal life.

Mercy is the other side of the love coin. Mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve. We deserve for every one of our sins... every lie, every swear word, every evil thought, every sinful deed to be punished. The Bible says that the wages of sin is death. That is what we deserve... eternal death... eternal separation from God in hell.

Because of mercy we can miss the punishment of our sin.

Paul is simply saying... God's mercy should motivate us to be demonstrations of God's will.

Someone once said...*We will never worship God with a sincere heart or serve God with unbridled zeal until we properly understand how much we are indebted to God's mercy!*

Jerusalem and the Will of God

Text - Matthew 23:1-39

Introduction: This is Jesus' last public message before He dies on the cross. It is dramatic...a cutting reproof of false religion and hypocrisy.

Let's set the scene: Jesus is speaking to 3 groups of people...

1. A multitude
2. The disciples
3. The scribes and Pharisees

Talk about calling names, Jesus holds nothing back! Bold and daring, He calls them *fools*, *snakes*, *vipers*, *blind guides*, and seven different times He calls them *hypocrites*.

They are wearing masks, and He pulls them off. The Greek word for *hypocrite* is a term from the world of Greek drama, meaning the mask wearer (actors-playing parts). These were religious play actors. Jesus demanded genuineness and authenticity. "*Get Real*" is how we would say it today. I see the following:

I. An Explanation - vs. 1-12

II. A Condemnation - vs. 13-36

III. A Lamentation - vs. 37-39

I. Explanation to the Crowd

This explanation is to the crowd, so they will understand the error in the teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Error #1: They had a false idea of authority.

v. 2-3 “*Moses’ seat*” = they had assumed authority that was not their own. They had their own list of rules not found in the Bible, which they called the Traditions. That’s wrong, but more wrong is that they didn’t follow their own rules, they were hypocrites!

Error #2: They had a false idea of ministry.

v. 4 Their idea of ministry was loading people down with rules and regulations, which made life a drudgery. They loved feeling superior and keeping their people beaten down. I’m pleased to report that Jesus wants Christianity to be a blessing, and not just a burden...a feast, not a funeral!

Error #3: They had a false idea of greatness.

v. 5-12

v. 5 *Phylactery* = a leather box they tied around their forehead or forearm, w/ scriptures written on parchment inside. They had taken literally the command of Deuteronomy 6:8. But to show off, they made their phylacteries bigger and bigger, like they were more spiritual!

v. 5 *borders* = this was a border of blue around the hem of their garments. Numbers 15:38

Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue:

This was a reminder that they could have a Heavenly walk while here on earth. It was a good idea, but they just had to make their blue ribbons bigger and bigger! But these guys were just religious show offs.

v. 6 They wanted to sit on the platform w/ the dignitaries.

v. 7 *Rabbi* = “*my great one*”. They wanted this honor. The Pharisees loved the title, but didn’t want to do the work to earn it. v. 8-10 Here we see Jesus condemning the use of three titles: *rabbi*, *father*, and *master*. Can you think of any who are in violation of this?

It’s easy to point our fingers at such religious hypocrites, but we would be the same if we didn’t engage in self examination now and consistently, daily!

II. Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees

v. 13-36 **8 woes are found here**, and they contrast to the beatitudes of Matthew 5.

- 1.Woe...v. 13...compare to Matthew 5:3
- 2.Woe...v. 14...compare to Matthew 5:4
- 3.Woe...v. 15...compare to Matthew 5:5
- 4.Woe...v. 16...compare to Matthew 5:6
- 5.Woe...v. 23...compare to Matthew 5:7

v. 24...compare to Matthew 5:8...They put gauze over their drinking cups to strain out something like a gnat, but didn’t

seem to notice the camel they swallowed. This reminds us of Jesus' teaching about the speck vs. the beam sticking out of their own eyes!

6.Woe...v. 25...compare to Matthew 5:8

7.Woe...v. 27...compare to Matthew 5:8

8.Woe...v. 29-31...compare to Matthew 5:9-10

Christians are to be peacemakers, even if persecuted, but these were the actual persecutors. They honored the prophets' tombs, but they're the ones who put them there!

III. A Lamentation Over Jerusalem

v. 37-39 - These are among the most moving and tender words ever uttered by Jesus. They reveal his deep affection and at the same time the total frustration with the stubborn self-will of the Jews. No city was more privileged and yet no city was more sinful. This city and her inhabitants wanted the praise of men, and they got it, but they missed the Saviour!

The reason why men are not saved is not that Christ is not able and willing to save them, nor that they are not under obligation to be saved, but that they will not come to him, or meet the needful terms of salvation. Of course, if they perish, they will be their own destroyers, and the fault will rest for ever on themselves.

Gethsemane and the Will of God

TEXT: Matthew 26: 36-46

Introduction: One of the most stirring experiences recorded concerning the life of Jesus took place in what we know as the garden of Gethsemane. It is here that we see the humanity of Jesus clearly expressed. It was in Gethsemane that Jesus began to be sorrowful (Matthew 26:37). It was in Gethsemane that Jesus was sorrowful unto death (Mark 15:34). It was in Gethsemane that Jesus was in agony (Luke 22:44). Now, notice first:

I. The Struggle of Jesus

We get some insight into His struggle when we remember the vicarious nature of His sufferings; that *"the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all."* His sufferings were not like those of Job, or Jeremiah, or Paul, or Stephen, but were unique in the world's history. He, the sinless One, was the Representative and Substitute of the whole sinful world.

So, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had this supreme struggle. This is no play acting. This was a struggle in which the outcome swayed in the balance. In the garden He wrestled with an unseen foe. You see, at the beginning of our Lord's ministry Satan came and tempted Him. Satan offered our Lord the kingdoms of this world if He would worship him, but He would have to miss the cross, of course.

Jesus is in a struggle. Our text tells us that this struggle was so intense that His sweat was *"as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."* This is a condition in which, under great emotional stress, tiny blood vessels rupture in the sweat glands and produce a mixture of blood

and sweat. So, in the garden of Gethsemane, we see the struggle of Jesus. But we also see:

II. The Surrender of Jesus

The entire life of Jesus was a life of surrender and submission to the will of His Father. But in this text His words, representing His yieldedness, are unsurpassed in their meaning, for He said, *“Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.”*

This struggle in Gethsemane was a contest which concluded in a surrender to the will of God. Alexander Maclaren wrote: *Jesus shrank from 'this cup,' in which so many bitter ingredients besides death were mingled, such as treachery, desertion, mocking, rejection, exposure to 'the contradiction of sinners.'* *There was no failure of purpose in that recoil, for the cry for exemption was immediately followed by complete submission to the Father's will. ...A prayer in which 'remove this from me' is followed by that yielding 'nevertheless' is always heard. Christ's was heard, for calmness came back, and His flesh was stilled and made ready for the sacrifice.*

Have you been able to say, *“Thy will be done,”* as Jesus said? Every man needs to have his own private Gethsemane experience so that he can learn to say, *“Not my will, but thine be done.”* How we need to subdue our stubborn wills and lose our wills in the will of our Heavenly Father.

Now let's consider:

III. The Strengthening Of Jesus

In Luke's Gospel the Bible tells us that after the Gethsemane experience *"there appeared an angel unto him from Heaven, strengthening him."* In the Bible you will read of several occasions where angels ministered to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says that angels are *"ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."* If you are a Christian, it is important for you to know that angels are one of the resources the Lord provides for you to encourage you and strengthen you in your daily walk.

Sometimes we just don't understand all the resources available to us in Christ. We have angels to help us through our Gethsemane experiences. In fact, Dr. George Morrison said, *"Every life has its Gethsemane, and every Gethsemane has its angel."*

But let us move on to consider:

IV. The Sadness of Jesus

The sadness of Jesus came about as a consequence of Him finding the disciples sleeping. There is a tone of sad disappointment at the discovery that they were asleep after the earnest plea that they keep awake. Quite often today the church is asleep when it should be awake and in prayer. If there is no Gethsemane, there is no awareness of the will of God; there is no going on in the will of God; there is no finding the will of God.

Take a moment and stand in the quiet of Gethsemane and listen. Do you hear the sob of the Savior? Do you hear the falling drops of blood. I trust that His surrender to the will of God in that garden will inspire our surrender to the will of God.

The Damascus Road and The Will of God

Text - Acts 9:1-6

Introduction: If you could ask Jesus any question you wanted, what would that question be? I suppose you would have to think long and hard about what you would ask Him, but I am guessing you might ask what Paul asked, “*Lord, what would you have me to do?*”

In these verses, Paul asked two very important questions. Questions to which we need sure answers. Those questions are:

1) *Who art thou Lord?* (v.7) This is the single most important question in all of life. Who is Jesus Christ to you? Your answer determines your eternity!

2) *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* This is the second most important question in life. God’s will and His will alone should be the heart’s desire for every child of God. God did not hide His will from Paul, and He will not hide it from you!

There are three ways we may recognize the will of God from the Damascus Road episode.

1. God’s Sovereign Will - This is a decision of God that is always carried out, nothing in the universe is ever able to stop it. God is God and He accomplishes what He wishes.

2. God’s Moral Will - This, too, is forever settled and is unchanging. Some things are right and some things are wrong, (It matters not what society says!) This Moral will is revealed in the Word of God and in the conscience of man.

3. God's Particular Will - He has a will that is particular and peculiar to your life. This particular will can vary from person to person. I can see all three aspects of the will of God at work in my own life. It was His Sovereign will that set His love upon me and saved me. It was His Moral will that I stop living a sinful life. It was and is His Particular will for my life that I become a preacher of the Gospel.

Even though you and I are such a little part of God's vast creation, and our lives seem very inconsequential, God knows you! He loves you! Even the very hairs of your head are numbered and known by Him. As a result, He has designed a particular plan for your life, and, He has promised to reveal it to you and to guide you into it.

I. God's Guidance Is Conditional

God expects certain things from us. Unless we are willing to deliver these things, we remain unaware of His will.

A. Be Willing To Obey Him - Paul wanted God's will. To truly do His will, we must put our will aside and be willing to do all that He asks us to do. Why should God reveal His will to us when He knows we aren't going to do it?

B. Display A Spirit of Meekness - That is, be teachable - Psa. 25:9. Paul displayed a teachable spirit. If you aren't teachable, and think you know it all, then you will probably miss His will.

C. Be Open and Yielded To God - Intently and sincerely pray for God's guidance. Acts 9:8-9, As soon as he had a word from God, he got busy doing it. If all areas of our life are open and yielded to Him, then we can expect that He will reveal Himself and His will.

II. God's Guidance Is Practical

God will reveal His will in ways that will be plain to see and understand. He used several ways in the Bible. These are still His ways.

A. Through His Miracles - Usually, God won't speak to a man like He did to Paul. This was a unique miracle! However, God will speak in this fashion occasionally, but don't wait on it before you start to serve Him!

B. Through His Word - vs.5. God's Word holds the answers to all of life's questions - Psa. 119:89. When you are in doubt concerning His will, go back to the Bible and read.

C. Through His People - Acts 9:8-20. God used Ananias to speak His will to Paul. Never underestimate the advice of godly people around you - Prov. 24:6.

D. Through His Spirit - Acts 9:17. The Holy Spirit is in us, John 14:16, and He will guide us unto all truth, John 16:13. God speaks to people through the Holy Ghost.

Conclusion: God has an awesome plan for your life! Do you know what it is? If not, be meek, teachable, open and yielded to God. Listen for His leading voice in His Word, His people and His Spirit and He will reveal His will unto you - John 14:21. He wants you to be in His will, and therefore, He will never leave you in the dark!

If you know His will, are you doing it? If not, there is no time like right now to surrender and yield to God's will.

Typical Myths About God's Will

1.) God Will Give You A Road Map - God does not give road maps, He gives relationships. As we follow Him, He will reveal His will to us. (Israel - Ex. 13:21 - The Pillar of Cloud and Fire)

2.) God Doesn't Want You To Have Any Fun - Some see God as a spoilsport. That is, if you surrender to do His will, you will have an unhappy life. Many are afraid to find His will because they are afraid of what they might be asked to do. (Ill. Put yourself in the place of God. How do you treat your children? Isn't He better than us? Luke 11:11-13)

3.) God Only Speaks To A Certain Holy People - God's will is not limited to those with distinction or position. He just doesn't speak to Paul, Abraham and Moses. He has a will for every saint at every possible level of commitment.

4.) You Have To Wait On A Damascus Road Experience - Paul's experience certainly was dramatic, but it wasn't normal. God spoke to him in unusual conditions, but more often, He speaks in a still, small voice - 1 Kings 19:11-12.

5.) God Only Reveals His Will To The Young - God calls people of all ages, He never stops using His saints. If He were finished with you, He would have called you home. If you are sitting on the sidelines, I can assure you that you need to seek His will! It is never too late to do the will of God if you want to.

6.) God's Will Is Hidden From Us And We Have To Find It - God never hides His will, He reveals it! He wants you to know His will so you can get about doing it.

God's Good, Acceptable & Perfect Will

Text: Romans 12:1-2

Introduction: Most Christians have looked at or heard a message from this passage sometime in their life. It reveals three great yet simple truths about God's will. His will is *good*. His will is *acceptable*. His will is *perfect*.

God desires that every believer follow His will. But our society places an incredible amount of pressure on Christians to "*fit in.*" Individual believers sometimes make spiritual or moral compromises in an attempt to "*fit in.*" How can we resist the worldly pressure of our day? We find God's *good*, *acceptable*, and *perfect* will and follow it!

In Romans 12:1-2, the Apostle Paul reveals these simple facts that open up God's will to us.

God's will is good! I take this to mean that His will is good for us. It is not a bad thing to run from. It is revealed only for our benefit.

God's will is acceptable! This characterizes His will in a different way. It carries the thought of being "*well-pleasing*" to God and to us. When you and I recognize God's will, the direction or path in which He wants for us, we will find it acceptable. You can swallow it, it will not be so tough that you can't take it. It may challenge your faith but you will know in your heart that it will please God and it will please you too.

God's will is perfect! This idea of "*perfect*" means a "*completeness*", a "*maturity*", a coming of age", i.e. growing up. Thus the "*perfect*" thing to help us mature as

believers, grow up as Christian, and be “*complete*” is the will of God.

God has certain things for you that may not seem *good* and *acceptable* and *perfect* in themselves, but they are there for you so you can do the *good* and *acceptable* and *perfect* will of God.

I. There Is A Church That Is Good and Acceptable and Perfect For You

There is no “*perfect*” church, but there is a church that is the *good* and *acceptable* and *perfect* one for you. There is no “*perfect*” pastor, but there is a pastor who is the *good* and *acceptable* and *perfect* one for you.

II. There Is A Companion Who Is Good And Acceptable And Perfect For You

If you're married, the one you have as a spouse is the one God has chosen. You are not to look elsewhere or complain and question if they are the right one. The one you are joined to is the companion that is *good* for you. The one you are joined to is the companion that is *acceptable* to you. Accept them, allow them, and make them acceptable to you. The one you are joined to is the companion that is *perfect* for you.

They are not perfect or complete in themselves no more than you are but they will be God's *completed*, *perfect* will for you. Don't look elsewhere.

III. There Is A Course That Is Good And Acceptable And Perfect For You

The Pulpit Commentary offers the following: “*The course, compare with Acts 13:25; 20:24. The runner in the race had a definite course to run, marked out for him. Paul's life was that course, and he knew that he had run it out. Stephen died an “untimely” death but he had finished God’s course for him. The apostle Paul died as an old man, but he finished God’s course for him.*”

This is a reference to the Greek games. *Where* you run makes a difference. Each must stay in their proper place, their “*lane*” on the track if you will. This is to be left to God's choosing not our own. He knows what is best for us all. It is better to be a nursery worker in a local church in the will of God, than it is to be the pastor of a local church outside of the will of God. Be what God wants you to be! Do what God wants you to do!

Matthew Henry said, “*That those are best able to prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, who are transformed by the renewing of their mind.*”

This is real victory—finding and doing “*the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*”

Tests To Discern God's Personal Will

Text – Ephesians 1:1-13

Introduction: I don't know about you but I believe one of the most important considerations in the Christian life is discerning (*figuring out*) God's will. As I have studied this topic, I have noticed that the phrase “*Will of God*” or “*God's Will*” usually in most concordances fall into two categories. One category is “*God's moral will.*” The other category is “*God's personal Will.*”

God's moral will is forever settled and fixed. Some things are right and some things are wrong, (It matters not what the world says!) This Moral will is revealed in the Word of God and in the sense of right and wrong in man.

There are more than a dozen references to “*God's moral will*” in the New Testament, but the area of God's will that most people are interested in, is God's personal will. How can we know what God's personal will for our life is? And that is exactly what it is, personal, very personal.

So how do we know what God's **personal** will for our life is, here are four guidelines to *test* the water so to speak:

Test # 1 The Scriptural Test

The Will Of God Will Never Contradict His Word

The will of God will always correspond with scripture, God will never lead you to do anything that is contradictory to His word. Do not act on impulse or feelings.

Test # 2 The Moral Test

God's Will Must Be Ethically And Morally Right

God will not sanction something that would bring confusion or harm to the others.

Test # 3 The Providential Test

Providential Circumstances - God opens and closes doors, watch for the footprints of God at these particular happenings. It may come through a sermon, a note from a friend, the Bible, your Sunday school class, or a hundred other ways, but careful direct prayer to God for the answer always precedes it.

Test # 4 The Reasonable Test

Romans 12:1: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* The word reasonable found here means that which is "logical," making sense to the mind. In connection with God's will, it carries the idea that the will of God will make sense to someone who is recognizing God's mercies, presenting their bodies, and seeking His will

Whatever you may be thinking is God's will, submit it to these tests and perhaps they may help as you seek to discern the **personal** will of God for your life.

I'm Out of God's Will...What Now?

Texts - Mark 3:31; John 4:34

Introduction: Sometimes Christians find themselves out of the will of God. It is a lot easier to get out of the will of God than we care to admit. When this happens it sure seems difficult to get back in it.

What are some things that get me out of God's will?

Stubbornness: If you have already made up your mind, it will be difficult to follow what the Lord wants you to do.

Other People's Influence: Someone may remark that God wouldn't expect you to do a certain thing—and in that way discourage you from obeying.

Ignorance of God's Word: This current generation is almost Biblically illiterate. They know nearly nothing about the Bible. Don't be guilty of "*not knowing*" and therefore missing His will as expressed in Scripture.

Being Double-Minded: Don't second-guess God's promises (James 1:6-8).

Feeling Unworthy: Don't believe the lie that you are undeserving of the Lord's guidance or grace. A pity party will not help you stay in God's will.

Being Too Busy: If you are too busy to pray, read your Bible, and serve the Lord, you need to re-evaluate your priorities.

Fear: God's will can seem impossible or scary. But remember, the Lord can bring good out of every situation (Rom. 8:28).

Known sin: If you are bound and determined to live rebelliously, God will not fully reveal His will to you.

The following are some of my ideas on what to do when we get out of God's will. My thoughts are motivated by a message I read many years ago from *Dr. Jack Hyles*, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church, Hammond, Indiana. I hope these ideas help you if you should ever get out of His will.

1. **Go back to where you got out.** If you made a mistake and now recognize it, see if you can go back and fix it. If it takes an apology, a swallowing of pride, or an admission of wrong-doing....do it if you can. Go back and repair the damage done. Go back and rectify the situation. Go back and do the right thing.

If you got out of God's will by leaving a good church, go back to it. If you got out of God's will by getting into financial trouble, go and do your best to settle up with the people you owe. If you got out of God's will by walking away from a great job, try your best to return to it. If you got out of God's will by hurting other people, go and make it right with them. Wherever you fumbled the ball, go back to that place or position and begin there to fix the situation.

2. **Don't do wrong in order to do right.** For example, if you got out of God's will by leaving a marriage and your former spouse has remarried....don't try to tear that apart so you can get back what you lost. It would be wrong to break up a home in order to get yours back. If you got out of

God's will by getting into debt, don't try to get out of debt by crooked business dealings. Bob Jones, Sr. said, "*It is never right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right.*"

Dr. Jack Hyles said, "*Suppose, for example, the pastor leaves a church that he should not have left. The church then calls a new pastor. In such a case, the former pastor has forfeited the will of God and should in no way attempt to regain the church. Never do wrong in getting back into the will of God. Two wrongs do not make a right!*"

3. Accept the change in God's will. God's will does change. It is not that He made some mistake and must change. It is that we have done things that have altered the perfect path He wanted us to follow. Now we can either live in total frustration and defeat, whining about our lot in life or we can go on with what we can salvage. For example, a missionary on the field has a marital breakup, his wife leaves him and marries another. There is no way to fix this situation so that it is back in a "*perfect*" state. However, the missionary can accept the loss, change, and go forward in a different direction. He can still serve God as a missionary but things have changed. He must accept this change or he may never make it.

4. Find a godly Christian and get close to them. Proverbs 13:20 - *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.* Proverbs 2:20 - *That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.* These verses remind us that godly companionship can help us be godly too. Perhaps someone has trouble finding, doing, or staying in God's will. It seems that they have the hardest time getting back in His will. Find someone walking with the Lord and get as close to

them as possible. Serve the Lord with them. Pray with them. Labor with them. Spend time with them. Help them in their work for the Lord. Learn from them how to better discern God's will.

5. Serve faithfully. What is meant by faithfulness? Well, integrity, honesty, trustfulness, loyalty. Can you be counted on? If someone were to ask the people in your church to write five letters to people they can depend on, people that they can really trust, would you receive a letter?

You see, faithfulness is a quality. It is one that all of us admire. And if we don't we ought to. I believe God admires it and He certainly requires it. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4:2, *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.* It doesn't matter how much ability you have, how much personality you have, how much intelligence you have, how hard you work, if you can't be depended on, you are useless.

If you find yourself unable to get back into the *perfect* will of God, be faithful where you are in doing what you can. Don't worry so much about what you've lost or how you can't get back to the "*perfect*" path, just be faithful where you are. Serve in your church, work on that bus route, pray diligently for your family, help your pastor, attend all church services, and be someone that others can depend on.

6. Let your experience help others. If you got out of God's will, chances are others know it. It is not wrong to admit your mistake to them. You should not glorify any wrong-doing nor should you brag about your sin. However, your experiences may help someone. Be transparent enough to let others know that they need to be careful lest they make the same mistake.

7. Don't play the blame game. Who is to blame for you getting out of God's will? No doubt, you, many other people, and many other things can be blamed. Don't waste what time you have left in life blaming others. Listen God knows where the blame lies. He is aware of who should carry the heaviest burden of blame. But that is His department not yours. Leave it in His hands, Romans 12:19-21 *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. ... Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

8. Don't be overcome with grief, move on. Don't allow grief to swallow you up. If you have been broken before God and others, that's a good thing. But do not make that your pattern of life. Make an apology, make restitution, patch up relationships if you can, *but move on*. Go forward with gratitude that at least something has been reclaimed and salvaged in your life.

So you got out of God's will. Nobody is happy about it, but God forgives us. He is the God of the *second* chance and the *third* chance and the *nth* chance. Remember Jonah 3:1 *And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time...*

You messed up. Who hasn't? We have all got out of God's will at one time or another. On the other hand if we repent and ask forgiveness, He will forgive. 1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* You may have made so much of a mess only God knows what is possible from here. Get right with Him the best you can, allow Him to reclaim you for His service, and do His will that sets in front of you now. God can and will still use you.

Some Simple Steps To God's Will

Text - Psalm 25:12

Introduction: The Lord wants you to know and do His will. He wants you to make the right decision in every situation. He's not trying to keep His will a secret or hide it from you. However, your attitude concerning His guidance makes a big difference. His directions are kept for those who fear Him (Ps. 25:12). So once you acknowledge that He alone has the right to direct every choice you make, He'll give you the answers you seek. Try these simple steps:

Step 1: Consider All Scriptures Relating To The Thing You're Praying About

Step 2: Focus On The Holy Spirit's Leading And Impressions On Your Heart

Step 3: Carefully Consider The Circumstances Affecting Your Area Of Interest

Step 4: Seek And Accept GODLY Counsel

Step 5: If The Four Things ALL Line Up – Go Ahead In The Direction God Has Shown You

This is not some magic formula but it is a way to get started on the right path to the will of God.

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

The Most-Often-Asked Question

Introduction Do you know the question that pastors get asked most often? No, it's not "*Where did Cain get his wife*"! The question we hear most often is: "*How can I know God's will for my life?*" Personally, of all the things people ask me, questions around knowing God's will, doing God's will or being in God's will top the list. This question relates all kinds of things: choosing a college, selecting a job, marrying a spouse, pursuing a career, moving to a new place. The list goes on and on.

We really want to know the answer to this one, don't we? None of us wants to waste our time and effort going down the wrong path to a dead end. We want to be in the will of God because we know that's where we'll be not only happiest and most fulfilled, but above all, most pleasing to God. So how do I determine the will of God for my life?

First of all, it may help you to know that God isn't playing hide-and-seek with His will. On the contrary, He wants you find it and know it. Look at this passage.

James 1:5

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Notice what this verse reveals about God and godly wisdom: Does God give or withhold this wisdom? Is this wisdom for all or for a special few? Does God think less of us for asking? Will God grant us this wisdom or not? God is on our side in wanting us to know his will.

God Has A Wonderful Plan For Your Life.

This expression has become a cliché, but it is the truth. The tragic thing is that few people know, much less do, the will of God for their lives. God has programmed you for success, not made you for failure! The Bible admits the possibility of defeat in the life of a Christian, but never the necessity of it! We are to be living in victory. Victory is God's gift to every child. Many people don't really believe that. But if you're not living in victory, you're living beneath your privileges.

2 Corinthians 2:14 *Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.*

How often does God want us to triumph? Always!

3 John 1:2 *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. We flourish most when we are in His will.*

Along The Way Notice Guideposts Guiding To His Will

One of the best passages in the Bible about finding God's will for your life is Proverbs 3:5-8. In fact, you might call it "*the formula*" for finding His will.

Proverbs 3:5-8 *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.*

This is a promise that is often repeated in the Bible. For example:

Isaiah 58:11 *And the Lord shall guide thee continually.*

Psalm 32:8 *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: and will guide thee with Mine eye.*

We have the **Father above us**, watching over us and controlling all things.

We have the **Savior beside us**, guiding our footsteps.

We have the **Spirit inside us**, controlling our thoughts and inner life.

God has an individual plan for you. God doesn't deal with people in mass. He deals with them as individuals. The very hairs of your head are numbered. And it's just as true for the plumber as the preacher. It's as true for the secretary as the missionary. God has a plan for every life.

But What If God's Will Is Something I Don't Want?

You may be thinking, *"If I were to acknowledge God in all my ways, there's no telling what He might make me do. Why, Lord, you might send me as a missionary to Africa if I were to do that. You might make me marry some ugly person! No telling what You'd do if I were to say, Lord, I want your will!"*

Don't be afraid of the will of God. The Bible says, *"Perfect love casteth out fear."* (1 John 4:18)

Have you thought this verse is saying, “*If you can just love God perfectly, you’ll be able to stop fearing*”? That’s NOT what 1 John 4:18 means. We can’t do anything perfectly but sin. If we had to strive for loving God perfectly, we’d never get there! It’s not my perfect love for Him that casts out fear. The thought here is: “*We have no need to fear someone who loves us perfectly.*” It’s coming to understand His perfect love for us that casts out our fear. You see, God’s will is best; God’s will is what you would choose if you had all of the facts. That’s the reason the Bible logically asks in Romans 8, “*He that spared not His own Son, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?*” If God gave His priceless Son for you, won’t He give you what will turn out to be the very best for you?

If God gave you His Son, Jesus, you don’t have to worry about Him hiding His will from you or leading you into some dreadful future.

Psalms 37:4 *Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

When you’re praying,

When you’re walking in the Spirit,

When you’re trusting in the Lord with all of your heart

When you’re not leaning on your own understanding

When you’re acknowledging Him in all your ways

He Will Direct Your Paths.

He'll do it through His Word. He'll do it when you pray and the Spirit of God speaks to your heart. He'll do it thru sanctified wisdom. God will renew your mind, give you wisdom, then God will open doors and shut doors. God doesn't leave you wandering around like a ship without a rudder or a compass on a dark and stormy night.

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

Psalms 48:14 *For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.*

In *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* by Dr. John Gill (1690-1771) we read: *...the Lord orders the steps of the righteous, holds them by the right hand, and guides them with his counsel ...: Christ, the great Shepherd of the flock, feeds them... according to the integrity of his heart, and guides them by the skillfulness of his hands; he guides their feet in the ways of peace, life, and salvation, by himself; he leads them into green pastures, beside the still waters, and unto fountains of living waters: the Spirit of the Lord leads them to the fullness of Christ; guides them into all truth, as it is in him; directs them into his and his Father's love, and leads them on to the land of uprightness. And this guide is an everlasting one; "even unto death."*

God Will Always Guide His People.