

Knowing God's Will Series

Knowing God's Will

*It's God's Will For You To Go To Heaven
2 Peter 3:9*

Some people have some odd ideas about discovering 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.

Today we are going to begin a new study that I am calling very simply, "Knowing God's Will." As we study this topic I we are going to do so from two perspectives.

First we are going to focus on...

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 going to devote some time studying...

2. The Importance of God's Will

So, as you have heard me say before, where do we begin? We need to begin at the beginning.

We need to learn first and foremost that it is God's Will that each of us go to heaven.

Look with me at **2 Peter 3:9**.

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.

It is God's will that you go to heaven. How do I know that? Look at our text. 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 reference to 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..."**

God makes several promises concerning salvation. We don't have the time to consider each one today, but I would like to call your attention to a few of them.

For example, let me show you ...

1. The Promise of Calling

Romans 10:9,10, and 13

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Let me show you a second promise about salvation. 1 John 1:9, this is...

2. The Promise of Cleansing

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.

John 5:24 provides us with ...

3. The Promise of Commitment

John 5:24 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

Let me show you one more.

4. The Promise of Certainty

1 John 5:11-13

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

How do we know it is God's will for you and me to go to heaven? We know because of what the promises of God say.

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.

Phillips Translation says: **It is not that he is dilatory about keeping his own promise as some men seem to think; the fact is that he is very patient towards you. He has no wish that any man should be destroyed. He wishes that all men should come to repent.**

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

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."

God's patience reveals two very important things.

1. The Great Longing of God's Heart.

2. The Great Love of God's Heart.

Numbers 14:18 "The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy..."

Then finally let me say that it is God's will for you to be saved because...

III. GOD'S PLAN SAYS SO

Our text helps us understand God's plan of salvation. Notice two things here...

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:

"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 are going!

Knowing God's Will

It is God's Will For You To Be Spirit Filled

(Note this is just an outline)

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

Knowing God's Will... is that possible? Absolutely!

As a matter of fact, as we study this topic, we are considering it from two perspectives.

The Importance of God's Will

The Ingredients of God's Will

Last week we learned of two of the ingredients of God's will.

1. It is God's Will for you to go to heaven.
2. It is God's Will for you to live a holy life.

This morning let's learn of a third 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**

Knowing God's Will
The Importance of God's Will for Eternity
Matthew 7:21-23

- 21 ¶ Not every one 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.
- 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?
- 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

The Words of Jesus tell us of three sobering things.

I. THE DECLARATION THAT SHOULD RESULT IN OUR EXAMINATION

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 Phillipian 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 non stop 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** THAT SHOULD RESULT IN OUR PREPARATION

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 **DISMISAL** THAT SHOULD RESULT IN OUR TREPIDATION

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....

Knowing God's Will

The Importance of God's Will for Prayer

1 John 5:14-15

Let's notice some introductory observations...First...

1. A Great Promise

Notice that the Christian is promised that God will hear and respond to our praying.

Then secondly, notice that...

2. The Promise has 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 notice in verse 15 "**the petitions that we have desired of Him.**"

What we desire is foundational to effective praying.

Why do I say that? I say that because our desires express 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 primary desire should be to see God's Will accomplished.

For many Christians that idea goes against the grain of what they believe prayer to be. Prayer is not an exercise in which we attempt to talk God into doing something He would not want to do.

Prayer is the thrilling experience of finding God's will and then asking Him for it. We need to understand that only prayer that is in accordance to God's Will is going to be answered.

Someone may ask, does that mean that in my praying I am restricted to the will of God? The answer is yes, but don't be concerned about that. 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 Atlantic Ocean.

Praying in God's will doesn't mean fewer 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 God's will is.

Having said that let me quickly deal with a common misconception about the will of God.

God NEVER intended for His will to be a mystery to us. That is simply not the case.

Listen to 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 believer 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?

Discerning God's will involves first of all...

1. RESEARCH THE WORD OF GOD

All of the commands, warnings, promises, and principles of the Word of God express to us how God wants us to live. That is His 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) Believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:17,18)
- 3) Believers to live sanctified lives free of sexual immorality (I Thess. 4:3)
- 4) Believers to be submissive to governmental and spiritual authority (I Pt. 2:13-15)
- 5) Believers to be thankful (I Thess. 5:18)
- 6) Believers to suffer for well doing (I Pt. 3:17)

In John 15:7 Jesus links 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 discover 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?

We need to learn that discerning God's will requires that we...

2. REQUEST THE WISDOM OF GOD

James 1:5 teaches us that if we lack wisdom all we need to do to receive it is ask the Lord for it.

Listen also to **Proverbs 3:5-7**.

5: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

7: Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

The point is we need God's wisdom when it comes to making decisions about things that God's word does not specifically address.

Do you know what God's wisdom is? It is God's special understanding or divine perspective of something.

Friend our decisions can turn into disasters if we fail to seek the Lord's wisdom. For example, God gave a great victory to Joshua and Israel over Jericho (Joshua 6). In Joshua 7 we learn that Joshua sent men to spy out Ai. They came back with a report that there was no need in all the soldiers going to battle because in their opinion a couple of thousand or so could handle the task. Joshua sent them out and the army of Israel was defeated. Joshua rent his clothes and fell on his face before God and began to pray, or should I say he began to complain and blame God. "O God why did you bring us here to Canaan, to destroy us?" Joshua then received some jolting news. God told him to get up and then He told Joshua about there being sin in the camp.

Joshua should have consulted with God before he made the decision to send anyone to battle. If he had God no doubt would have spoken to him about sin in the camp at that time.

Let me also say that discerning God's will requires that we...

3. RELY ON THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 8:14 teaches us that the children of God are "led by the Spirit of God."

Romans 8:26-27 teaches us that one of the ways that the Spirit of God leads us is by helping us with our praying... "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 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."

Notice that those verses addresses two things:

1. The Imperfection of our Praying

Paul indicates that there are times or circumstances when we don't know what to pray.

We need the Holy Spirit to help our "infirmities." The Greek word for "infirmities" means to be without strength indicating an inability to produce results. No work could describe us any better when we don't know what to pray.

But notice that Paul not only addresses the imperfection of our praying but also...

2. The Intercession of the Spirit

Paul said that the Holy Spirit "helpeth." "Helpeth" is a term that means to help someone carry a load that they cannot carry by themselves.

What a blessing to know that the Holy Spirit will improve our praying.

Finally if we are going to be sure that we are praying according to the will of God then...

III. WE MUST DO GOD'S WILL

Honestly there is not much sense in praying if we really don't intend to do God's will.

Can you imagine Jonah after he had blatantly disobeyed God calling a prayer meeting and saying fellows let's call on God and ask Him to calm the storm and I want to ask Him to bless me as I go to Tarshish. I want to just ask Him to open doors of ministry...blah, blah, blah...

That prayer wouldn't have accomplished anything. Jonah had no intention of doing what God had instructed.

Remember God knows our hearts. He knows if we truly want His will to be done.

May I give you a little test? Here's the question. 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 unwelcomed by the believer?

When we come to prayer we need to surrender to God's Will. God will respond.

Conclusion:

On the eve of our Lord's crucifixion Jesus 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.

Knowing God's Will

The Importance of God's Will In Making Decisions
James 4:13-17

13 Go to now, ye that 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:

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.

15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

It seems to be human nature to buck against limits. You see a sign that says, "Keep Off The Grass" and what do you want to do? You want to put your toe over there on the grass.

We really dislike being told... Don't! Sounds negative doesn't it. I try to avoid being overly negative in my preaching, but this morning it is going to be impossible if I am true to our text.

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 text is not condemning the making of plans. Our text is saying that we should not make plans or decisions without considering what God's will is.

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.

Their pride-filled behavior reminds me of the familiar words from Henley's classic poem: "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

Notice in **verses 15 and 16** that James tells us what their attitude should have been:

15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

We often get into trouble when we make decisions unilaterally 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.

14 But the men of Israel sampled their provisions, but did not inquire of the Lord. 15 Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them.... (NIV)

Joshua's failure to pray before making the decision led to Israel's being caught in an unhealthy and unholy alliance 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 secondly OUR TEXT TELLS US THAT...

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 it says:

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: “Redeem the time...” (Eph. 5:16). We must not delay in doing what we know to be the will of God!

Is there some sin you have not forsaken? You had better deal with that today.

Is there a relational fence that needs mending? You had better do it today.

Maybe you know God has been dealing with you about joining this church and you have put it off, don’t delay...make that commitment today.

Perhaps there is some ministry that the Lord has been dealing with you about but you haven’t stepped forward. You have made yourself available... do it today!

Young person, have you been telling yourself that you are going to get serious about living for the Lord some day, but not right now? Listen don’t fall for that trick of Satan. Give Jesus your all today. Give Jesus your best today!

Is there a friend or family member that needs Christ as their Savior and you have been intending to talk to them but you have delayed...you had better not assume that there will be more opportunities.

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 learned that we should not dismiss God’s Will and that we should not delay God’s Will. There is one final lesson here for us. Look at verse 17. The Bible says:

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

That verse is teaching us that...

III. WE MUST NOT DEFY GOD’S WILL

Notice that verse 17 makes it 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.

Listen to **Jonah 1:1-3:**

1 ¶ Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

3 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 know 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 that story Nineveh, the place God wanted Jonah to go to represents God’s Will. Tarshish, the place Jonah headed toward represents DEFIANCE.

May I ask you, where are you headed? Nineveh or Tarshish?

Knowing God's Will

God's Will and Your Testimony

Romans 12:1-2

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.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

When I was in high school I took a speech class. My teacher was the assistant principle, Mr. Smith. I remember one particular assignment that he gave me. I was supposed to give a demonstration speech.

I decided to demonstrate how to make a chocolate milkshake. I set up a blender, took the ingredients vanilla ice cream, chocolate Hershey's syrup, and then my secret ingredient Pepsi, and place them in the blender, mixed it thoroughly and created a delicious cold and tasty treat. Everyone who got a taste thought it was great. Mr. Smith who got the largest cup of course gave me an A.

We have been studying the past few weeks about Knowing God's Will and in particular we have been learning about why knowing God's will is important.

We are going to see today that God's will important because it is essential to us having an effective testimony.

Our testimony is our spiritual reputation. We leave a testimony behind everywhere we go.

Notice in our text, 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 illustration and demonstration of what the will of God is.

How do we do that? How do we become a demonstration of God's will? Our text tells us how. It tells us first that...

I. A SACRIFICE MUST BE MADE

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

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.

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.

We have gathered today I hope that we might offer the Lord the sacrifice of praise. But frankly, I cannot offer it for you and you cannot offer it for me.

You need to open your mouth and express your praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.

We are not here to put on a performance. We don't sing because we enjoy singing... we sing as an offering to the Lord.

Why is giving praise vocally a sacrifice? It is a sacrifice of our pride. It is an admission of our dependence upon the Lord.

A second sacrifice the Lord desires is...

2. The Sacrifice of Your Possessions

One winter a storm fell especially hard on the Appalachian Mountains. The snow stacked deep and it became impossible for residents to leave their homes. The Red Cross mobilized helicopters to fly in supplies to remote mountain homes. One crew had worked hard all day delivering much needed relief to snow-bound families. On their way back to their base, they saw a small cabin almost hidden beneath the snow. Because of the steep mountain, they had to land far below the cabin and carry the supplies uphill through waist-deep snow. It was almost dark when they knocked on the front door. A wrinkled old mountain woman opened the door. "Ma'am, were from the Red Cross," said a crew member." The old lady said, "It's been a hard winter, son. I just don't think we can give anything this year."

Like the Lady in that story, some feel like the church always has it's hand out. But let me straighten you out about something. God doesn't have His hand out. God asks us to give not to meet any need that He has, but that our needs will be met.

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.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17 (Paul says I am mentioning this) Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18 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.

19 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 wellpleasing to God.

May I ask you a serious question? Is your giving to the Lord's work sacrificial?

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 Phillipian 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 expects. 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 found 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.

Notice in verse 2 that 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. There should be a noticeable difference between Christians and non-Christians. A conformist is afraid to be different and feels a need to be like everyone else. A Christian is not supposed to be a chameleon!

We must stand so we will not conform to...

1. The World's Philosophies

The world has its wisdom and its ways.

The world thinks it is wise to deny the existence of God, to believe that we have no creator and that life really has no ultimate purpose. The world's wisdom says there are no absolutes, except that there are no absolutes. The world's philosophy is that we can and should live independently of God.

David was right in **Psalm 1:1** when he said that the Christian should avoid...

“ walkingin the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, nor sitting in the seat of the scornful.”

We must also stand so we will not conform to...

2. The World's Priorities

What does the world value? What is important to the world? The world says live for money. Live for position. Live for things. Live for pleasure. Live to satisfy yourself. Take care of number one!

Friend, we must stand so we will not conform to...

3. The World's Practices

The world is steeped in sin.

John says in 1 John 2

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

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

*If we are going to be a demonstration of God's will **there** is a Sacrifice that must be made, A Stand that must be taken, and then there is...*

III. A STRATEGY THAT MUST BE FOLLOWED

Verse 2...

“...but are ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

Paul explains two things here. First he explains...

1. The Purpose of this Strategy

The purpose 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.

2 Cor. 5:17... If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

Paul also explains...

2. The Process of this Strategy

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? Paul tells us by sharing...

1. The Glorious Results.... We prove that God's will is good, acceptable and perfect.

And then he shares...

2. The Great Reason... by the mercies of God.

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.

John Calvin said this...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!