

ASCERTAINING THE WILL OF GOD

God's will shall be done! He sovereignly declares, "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psalm 115:3). In Isaiah 46:9, 10 God says, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." God is in control. Man is not going to thwart or disrupt God's ultimate plans for the universe. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand" (Prov. 19:21). Under inspiration Solomon declares, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). God works with, through and sometimes in spite of man's blunders and disruptions.

God's will shall be done. What is our part in this grand scheme of things?" Bible verses that would be advantageous to meditate on for today's message are Ephesians 5:17, I Peter 4:2, and I John 2:17. By means of introduction allow me to lay down three principles: (1) We must give ourselves to God. Paul said these kind words about the membership of the surrendered Christians in the churches of Macedonia: "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" (II Corinthians 8:5). (2) We must be committed with our hearts. Paul was addressing people, who were not living under the best circumstances, how to serve the Lord: "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6). (3) We should consider the will of God a lifelong pursuit. Paul discloses this principle in the prayer of his friend: "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" (Colossians 4:12). My prayer also is that everyone whose eyes fall upon these words stands complete in all, not some, of the will of God. We should not be so consumed with the will of God after graduation from high school or college or marriage that we decide, "Okay, I found the will of God; now I'm on my own." Oh no, this is to be a lifetime pursuit, for every avenue and adventure of your life. Every decision no matter how large or small should be made with the will of God in mind. I commend to one and all the will of God for your life.

I. The will of God will bring intimacy with Christ.

"For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (Mark 3:35). These are the very words of Jesus when his mother Mary and his half-brothers came looking for Him. He was saying that any of us can be as close to God as we want to be. Compare Luke 11:27, 28. I don't want God in the peripheral of my life. Colossians 1:18 tells us, "...that in all things he might have the preeminence." The will of God is so much more than rules; it is relationship with our Lord. I say with Peter, "...to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

II. The will of God is revealed to us when we deal thoroughly with our sin.

This is the potentially the most uncomfortable point of this message, but it is vital. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (I Thessalonians 4:3, 7). We cannot know the will of God apart from a transformation from conformity to this world to Christlikeness as expressed in Romans 12:1, 2. Furthermore God reveals, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). Isaiah informs us, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). The Bible says, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits. Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established (Proverbs 16:2, 3). What an insight! When we depart from sin and do right, God will remove the confusion from our minds. Read all the books on the will of God. Talk to all the counselors we can find about the will of God. If, however, we are not willing to confess our sins and forsake them, the will of God will not be discovered and enjoyed.

III. The will of God can be found and done by every earnest seeker.

God says, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). Here are three green lights I look for in finding the will of God:

1. Pray. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3).
2. Search the Scriptures. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130).
3. Observe circumstances. Jesus said, "...Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it..." (Revelation 3:8).

My father placed "How to Ascertain the Will of God" by the 19th century man of God, George Müller in my hands while in my youth. It was a plan that he used in his life and I, in turn, have done the same throughout my life. It is a formula that the great man of prayer incorporated in his life. I challenge you to hang on to this, as I have done, for the rest of your life.

How to Ascertain the Will of God

1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's Will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.
2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If so, I make myself liable to great delusions.
3. I seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the

Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's Will in connection with His Word and Spirit.

5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.

6. Thus, through prayer to God, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. In trivial matters, and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective.

George Truett said, "Success, what is success? Success is finding and doing the will of God in your life." I love you and I am praying for all of you to know, as Paul did, the joy that comes with knowing and doing the will of God for your lives. "That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed" (Romans 15:32).

-Pastor Pope-