



Sermon

What Is God's Will for Me?

What Is Being Taught

Text: Ephesians 1:15-23

- I. How do you know what God wants you to do?
 - A. Not in regards to moral decisions, but in regards to choices we often face in which neither choice is actually wrong.
 1. "Which college should I attend?"
 2. "Should I ask her to marry me?"
 3. "Should I try for another job or keep the one I have?"
 4. Or how about the more mundane, "What should I have for dinner?"
 - B. Life is full of choices and many of our choices are made without much thought.
 1. Which shoe we put on first
 2. Whether we lock the house on the way out
 - C. Choices actually cause more people than you might realize a lot of grief.
 1. Religions influenced by John Calvin's teaching state that God is completely sovereign over this world. God has determined everything before the world began.
 2. They divide God's will up into three areas:
 - a. God's sovereign will. That is His plan for the universe and the direction He wants it to go, such as the plan for Jesus' sacrifice and our salvation - Ephesians 1:3-5

- b. God's moral will. That is God's laws regarding what is right and wrong
 - c. God's individual will. The argument is that God has each life mapped out.
 - (1) If we conform ourselves to God's will for our life, then things will go well.
 - (2) If we try to go against God's will for our life then things will go bad.
 - (3) Some will go so far as to say we will be sinning.
- D. What one man wrote: "The Bible is remarkably clear that God has an intricate plan for our life, which includes specifics such as which college to attend, whom to marry, where to live, which car to buy, and when (and if) to retire. Only those who find and obey God's specific will for their lives will enter the reward he has planned for his followers. This will is found by meditating in prayer and listening for the whispers of the Holy Spirit, who lays impressions upon our hearts. We confirm these impressions by continued prayer, consulting goodly friends, and observing opportunities we have in our life. Because Jesus is our LORD as well as Savior, we do not have the freedom to choose our own ways. Our every decision must be conformed to the "will of God" (Romans 12:2 et al.) We are to "trust in the LORD with all our heart" (Proverbs 3:1) and let Him, not ourselves, "direct our paths" (Proverbs 16:9). This was the fault of the traders in James 4:13-17, they did not ask the Lord for His approval of their plans. "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me" (Isaiah 30:1). I do hope that you do not take this note as offensive, but I simply cannot allow you to deceive young Christians into thinking that they have the freedom to control who they marry. To marry someone whom the Lord has not approved is just as heinous a sin as murder, and will be punished with eternal torment. Anyone who has married without consulting the Lord first should immediately divorce their spouse, regardless of even the most dire of circumstances. This applies also to careers; I beg you in the name of all that is holy, if you have entered a field without the Lord's permission, you may be in dire jeopardy! To those whom Satan has bound in worldliness, conforming to the divine Will may be burdensome, but it is truly better to enter heaven a divorcee, or unemployed, than to enter H*** with your "true love" or your "dream job."
- E. There is a wide spread teaching in denominations regarding decision making. The following was in an article "Seven Ways to Know God's Will" by David Jay Jordan. He isn't the originator of it. You can find the same list in numerous places.
1. God's Word. The first place we look to find the will of God is in His Words recorded in the Bible. He has put the basic answers to nearly every question or problem we will face in life right there. When God speaks to us out of His Word, we know it's right!
 2. The Voice of God's Word. Have you ever been reading the Bible when all of a sudden a verse or passage spoke directly to you, as though it had been written just for you in regard to some situation you face? That is the voice of the Word. The Lord applies His Word to you personally, and you get the answer you were seeking.
 3. Direct Revelation. God also speaks to us through messages received by the gift of prophecy, or through dreams or visions. If such revelations are truly from God, they won't contradict His written Word. It's wonderful to be able to get our answers straight from the Lord, and then confirm those answers with His Word, because then we know we're on the right track and can proceed in full faith. That settles it! We've heard from Heaven!
 4. Godly Counselors. The Bible tells us that "in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14; 24:6). When you're trying to find God's will in a given situation, it is often wise to ask for the counsel and opinions of others who are strong in the Lord, wise in His ways, and whose lives show the good fruit of following Him closely (Matthew 7:15-20).

5. Circumstances and Conditions (also known as "open and closed doors"). If something is God's will, He will usually open a door of opportunity that makes it possible. Or if something is not His will, He will often show us that by creating or allowing circumstances and conditions that stop us from doing it. Circumstances and conditions, when relied on solely, are generally a poor means of finding the will of God. They can, however, provide a confirmation of what the Lord has indicated through the other more reliable means.
6. Strong Impressions or Feelings (also known as "the witness of the Spirit" or "burdens"). Feelings can be deceiving, but if God wants you to take a certain course of action, He will often give you an inner conviction that this is the right thing to do. Or if He doesn't want you to do something, His Spirit will give you a warning not to. Either way, He gives you a certain faith and peace that you're doing what He knows is best. It's best to then confirm this with one or more of the other ways of finding God's will.
7. Specific, Predetermined Signs in Answer to Your Requests (also known as "fleeces"). You can sometimes check or double-check your decision by asking God to give you a specific sign, like Gideon did with his fleece, when he wanted a confirmation that he'd gotten God's instructions straight (Judges 6:36-40).

F. Generally these claims are justified by citing examples in the Bible.

1. But what is overlooked is that the examples cited are in regards to unusual events, not every day decisions. They are recorded for us because they are unusual.
2. Often the examples are misapplied, such as Gideon asking for *confirmation* of God's order to him with an individual asking God make a decision for him.

II. Common passages to support the claim of an individual will for each person

A. Proverbs 3:5-6

1. What does "your paths" mean? Is it referring to every decision you ever make or the general course of your life?
 - a. Proverbs 4:18-19 - a path of the just versus the way of the wicked
 - b. Proverbs 5:19 - the way of the lazy versus the way of the upright
2. Going back in context, we see that Solomon is talking about God's laws - Proverbs 3:1-2
3. If we trust God and follow His teachings, they will shape our choices to bring us success.

B. Psalm 32:8

1. Once again, there is an *assumption* being made that God is talking about an individual's every decisions.
2. How does God teach and instruct us? By His Word! - I Corinthians 1:21
3. God teaches us how to make good decisions from His perspective.

C. Isaiah 30:20-21

1. Let's look at the context - Israel wasn't following God's teaching - Isaiah 30:1
2. There weren't listening to God's law and thus straying off of the path of righteousness - Isaiah 30:8-11

3. But when they repent - Isaiah 30:19
 4. Then God will bring his prophets back to guide His people - Isaiah 30:20-21
 5. Use of the term “the way” and the phrase “turn to the right or the left”
 - a. Deuteronomy 5:31-33 - refers God’s commandments
 - b. Deuteronomy 17:18-20 - God’s laws
 - c. Deuteronomy 28:13-14 - God’s commandments
 6. But what about the voice?
 - a. Is it the voice of the teachers and prophets who came before?
 - b. Or, the voice of God from within as claimed?
 - c. Notice that the voice comes from behind, not from within
- D. Colossians 1:9
1. Why did Paul want Christians to know God’s will?
 2. Verse 10-11 tells us it was so they could walk in a worthy manner
 3. So again it is learning God’s laws so that we might make knowledgeable choices according to His will. Paul wasn’t talking about a separate will for each individual - I Thessalonians 4:1-3
- E. Romans 12:1-2
1. Are we proving a will specific to us? Or, are we proving God’s will for humanity?
 2. What example follows in verse 3? An example of God’s commands for all men.
 3. “What is good and acceptable and perfect” is very similar to Romans 7:12
 4. What transforms a Christian? God’s word - James 1:25; II Corinthians 3:18
- F. Ephesians 2:10
1. What works are being discussed? Individual duties, unique to that person? Or words of God which are commanded of all Christians?
 2. The context is of all, not something different for each person
 3. God wants us to do deeds of righteousness - Titus 2:14; Hebrews 10:24
 4. Notice that the works of God are contrasted with works of sin - Ephesians 2:1-3
- G. Ephesians 5:15-17
1. What will are we to understand? A unique will for each one of us or God’s will for all mankind?
 2. Verse 8 - Walk as children of light - that is for all Christians
 3. Verses 9-10 - Examples of what is acceptable to the Lord: goodness, righteousness, truth - these are things for all Christians, not whether I should go shopping tonight or wait until the morning.
 4. Contrasted again with works of the world - Verse 11

- III. What has happened is that an idea is claimed, not derived from the Scriptures – one of multiple wills of God
- A. Then passages are used to support the idea, but slight of hand is used. Any reference to “will” is applied as the person wants instead of letting God define it.
 - B. God does have a will for you and I - II Peter 3:9
 - C. It is His will that you live free of sin - I Thessalonians 4:3; I Peter 4:1-2
 - D. So that by obeying God’s will you will have salvation - Hebrews 10:36

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