

Lesson 28

Knowing God's Will

In lesson 27 we learned that God is now forming the church, the Body of Christ. What is God's will for the church? What is God's will for my life? These questions will be the focus of this lesson.

God's Will Revealed

Believers often wonder what God wants them to do concerning their occupation, marriage, and many other areas. However, listening to the way many of them pray and talk, you would think that God had hidden His will and left only scattered hints or clues. Is this true? In Ephesians 1:8 we read: "Wherein he hath *abounded* toward us in all wisdom and prudence." God is *not* hiding His will. He has not merely left scattered clues for us. He has given us an abundance of wisdom.

We read further in Ephesians 1:9: "*Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.*" God has already made known unto us "the mystery of his will." We do not have to look in many places searching for His will. The will of God has already been revealed and it is found in the Bible.

Many believers continually beg God to reveal His will about a particular matter. They will sometimes even fast and pray for hours trying to get God to make His will clear to them. It would seem that God doesn't *want* the saints to know His will. We must not think in this way! Ephesians 1:9 says that it was God's "good pleasure" to reveal His will. It is not necessary to beg God to try to convince Him to tell us His will. He *wants* us to know His will. This is why He has given us the Bible. In the Bible we have all the guidance we need to live according to God's will. He has revealed "the mystery of His will." "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17).

What is God doing?

Too many believers are preoccupied with themselves instead of having their minds focused on God. If we know what God is doing in this dispensation of grace and adjust our lives to what He is doing, we will be living according to His will. God had a plan before the world began to form the church, the Body of Christ. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). However, God kept this plan a mystery (or secret) until it was revealed to Paul, the apostle (Romans 16:25--"the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began"). We can never live according to God's will unless we understand what God has revealed in "the mystery."

God's will is not as complicated or difficult to know as many believers seem to think. For example, "For *this is the will of God*, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (I Thessalonians 4:3). It is very simple to see that God's will is that we refrain from sexual immorality. "In every thing give thanks: for *this is the will of God* in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18). This verse states very clearly that God's will is that we

give thanks in every circumstance. If we will but take time to study Paul's epistles, we will know what God is doing in this dispensation. When we bring our lives into line with what He is doing, we can be assured that we are living according to God's will.

Making Decisions

How should a believer go about making a decision, e.g., which job to take, who to marry, where to live, etc.? Following are some guidelines that will be of help:

1) Have a consistent and systematic plan to study the Scriptures If you are consistently reading and studying God's Word, your knowledge will be constantly increasing. You will find yourself with an ever growing reservoir of wisdom to draw upon in making decisions. The Bible may not tell you what color of shirt to wear today or what to eat for breakfast.¹ However, due to neglecting Bible study, most believers do not realize how much specific guidance is found in the Bible. The whole Bible should be studied, but priority should be given to Paul's epistles (Romans through Philemon) since they contain God's will concerning this dispensation of grace. This is the most important thing that you can do if you want to know God's will.

2) Ask counsel from other believers who are well-instructed in God's Word We must not take any man's word as the voice of God. However, counsel from discerning, mature saints can be very helpful as we seek to make wise decisions. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Proverbs 13:20). "Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established" (Proverbs 15:22).

3) Ask yourself the following questions about the choice you are considering.

- a) What verses in the Bible relate to this decision?
- b) Is this expedient (proper, helpful)? See I Corinthians 6:12.
- c) Will this glorify God? See I Corinthians 6:19-20; 10:31.
- d) Will this be a good example to others? See I Corinthians 8:9.

Misleading teachings

Some teachers say that we can know God's will by whether or not we *feel* an inner peace about a certain decision. However, these inner feelings are simply our emotions and must not be confused with the voice of God. Colossians 3:15 is sometimes used to support this "inner peace" idea. If you read Colossians 3:12-15 you can see that the context is one of peace in our

¹ It should be noted however that even in matters of what shirt (or dress) to wear or what to eat for breakfast, the Bible does give some guidance. With these questions in mind, read the following verses: I Corinthians 10:31-32; I Timothy 2:9; 4:1-5; etc.

relationships with other members of the Body of Christ. It is not proper to use Colossians 3:15 to refer to our inner feelings as a way of finding God's will. Such teaching can easily lead to living by emotions instead of living according to God's revealed will. This leads to confusion, instability, and selfishness.

Others teach that we must look at our circumstances to find God's will. If something good, or bad, or unusual happens, many believers think that God has caused this event to tell them something about His will. [E.g., "If the cute girl in my school sits by me at lunch time, God is telling me to marry her." "If my car breaks down while I am driving to a job interview, God is telling me not to work for that company." Etc.] Of course, I ought to consider my circumstances when making decisions. [E.g., "Do I have enough money to do this?" "How much time will this take?" "How will this affect my family and my health?" etc.] However, I should not assume that *God* caused my car to break down or the girl in school to sit next to me. The Bible does not tell me that *God* caused these things. I am only using my imagination when I say that God did something (e.g., causing my car to break down) because He wanted to tell me something (e.g., "Don't work for that company"). This is *not* the way to know God's will for my life.

God wants you to know His will. This is why it pleased Him to reveal His will in the Bible. Consistent and systematic Bible study will give you the wisdom needed to make wise, spiritual decisions that honor the Lord.

Review Questions

True or False

1. God's will is hidden, but He has left some clues for us.
2. God wants us to beg Him to reveal His will.
3. Coming to know God's will is a very complicated process.
4. When making a decision, it is wise to ask counsel from other believers who have a good knowledge of the Word of God.

Multiple Choice

5. When making a decision we should:
 - a) Assume that the Bible will not give any practical help.
 - b) Open the Bible at random and believe that God will show you a verse on that page to give you guidance.
 - c) Always do what our pastor or priest tells us to do.
 - d) Read the Bible and take note of any verses that relate to our decision.
6. God reveals His will to us:
 - a) by giving us signs through the circumstances in our lives.

- b) through the Bible.
- c) by giving us a feeling of inner peace.
- d) through astrological charts, palm readers, tarot cards, etc.

7. According to Ephesians 1:9, God:

- a) has made known the mystery of His will.
- b) has kept His will hidden.
- c) will reveal His will when we get to heaven.
- d) is revealing His will in many ways today.

Fill in the Blanks

- 8. God had a plan _____ began to form the church, the Body of Christ.
- 9. It is important to have a _____ and _____ plan to study the Scriptures.
- 10. Inner feelings are simply our _____ and must not be confused with the voice of God.

For Further Study

- 1. What is God's will in this dispensation concerning the Law? See Romans 6:14; Galatians 5:18.
- 2. Should we look for God to reveal His will in visible ways? See II Corinthians 5:7.
- 3. Read Romans 12:9-21 and list at least five examples of how this passage could help you to live according to God's will.
- 4. Read Ephesians 4:25-32 and list at least four examples of how this passage could help you to live according to God's will.
- 5. Read Colossians 3:12-25 and list at least four examples of how this passage could help you to live according to God's will.
- 6. What is God's will according to I Timothy 2:3-4?
- 7. How do II Timothy 2:15 and II Timothy 3:16 relate to knowing God's will?
- 8. How do your personal desires and common sense fit into knowing God's will?
- 9. What does Romans 12:1-2 tell us about the will of God?
- 10. Read Judges 6:36-40. Some believers say that we must "put out the fleece" to know God's will. Should we follow Gideon's example to know God's will in this dispensation?

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