

Lesson # 6 -- The Will of God and the Believer's Choices

Introduction

- A. In this series of lessons we have found that the preceptive will of God, to speak generally, is that which directs us to live according to the promises, commands, invitations, and exhortations of holy Scripture.
- B. It is amazing how often this subject is mentioned in the Bible. We have seen how God has made every type of provision for us so we can know and do his will.
- C. In this lesson I wish to take up another important passage on the will of God and approach it from the viewpoint of the decisions we should be making -- if we are to live successfully.

I. The Priority of the Will of God.

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father . . . Col. 1:9-12

A. The explanation.

1. The motivation behind Paul's prayer: "For this cause."

Paul had heard from Epaphras of the saints at Colosse and their faith, love, and hope (1:3-8), as well as how they were in danger due to false teachers (2:9,16-23). He begins to pray for them so they would know and do the will of God. From his response we see how important this subject was to the Apostle and the priority it should have in our life today. In the Bible the will of God is not one option among many. It is the only way we are to live.

2. The characteristics of Paul's prayer: "Do not cease ...desire."

These words indicate the urgency the Apostle felt about the need at Colosse. They undoubtedly were young believers. Paul knew they would be a good testimony, have a strong church, know the joy of the Lord, and be able to resist the false teaching, only if they learned to live according to the pattern of the will of God. It is the same today.

3. The content of his prayer: "Filled with knowledge of His Will."

- a. Paul's use of the word "filled" is unusual. He could of said "know" or "practice" but his choice of "filled" indicates a reference to the work of the Holy Spirit.

When the Lord Jesus went back to Heaven He sent the Holy Spirit of Truth to teach us the will of God and how to put it into practice (John 16:13-15). Paul's prayer is that the saints in Colosse would gain the "knowledge" of the will of God and choose live in harmony with His will through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The word also indicates an acceptance and practice of the will of God in every area of life. Paul's wanted them to be a group of believers without the blemish of error and the sins to which error inevitably leads.

- b. The words "knowledge of His will" could be translated "the truth regarding His will." Paul prayed they would learn the truth of how to live for God. This reminds us of the importance of truth as well as its power. We cannot live in freedom, joy, and fruitfulness -- unless we learn the truths of redemption.

When we know the truth, and put the truth into practice by faith -- then we become the recipients of the power of God. Only then can we be called a growing and spiritual believer.

- c. In his reference to knowing the will of God "in all wi and spiritual understanding," the Apostle taught a great truth. He identified the will of God with what the Bible meant by "wisdom" and "understanding." Therefore, to be wise and to have understanding is to know and do the will of God.

These two words "wisdom - understanding" are often used together in the Bible, particularly in the Proverbs (1:7; 2:2, 3,6,10-12, 3:13,19; 4:5,7; 5:1; 9:10; 10:23; 16:16). Wisdom is usually stated to refer to a grasp on the meaning of truth, and understanding indicates how to implement that meaning in one's life.

When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee, to deliver thee from the way of the evil men . . . That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.

Prov. 2:10-20

B. The instruction.

1. The words "knowledge - wisdom - understanding" cover the range of what it means to be informed, enlightened, sensible, intelligent, and smart. The opposite is to be ignorant, foolish, and stupid. It is frightening on one hand, and yet wonderful that the believer has a choice. We do not have to live in ignorance as a foolish and stupid person.
2. The issue here, however, is more than simply gaining information. The problem is not so much in the area of the mental as the moral. Sin has not only caused us to be ignorant, but has deceived us into thinking that we are an expert -- at least in the area of the spiritual. Even as believers there are three problems we must face and overcome.
  - a. We are largely ignorant of the will of God.
  - b. We are lazy in regard to correcting our ignorance.
  - c. We are arrogant in that we rarely believe we need help and information to correct our ignorance.
3. The person who will acknowledge his need and seek help from God and others -- will become characterized by wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of God and His will. There is nothing, literally nothing -- more important.

C. The application.

1. As we consider this prayer of the Apostle Paul we are confronted with the overwhelming importance of the will of God. It is associated with wisdom and understanding.
2. This brings up the question of our choice. Do we want the will of God? Do we want the will of God enough to get involved in learning what it is and how to live that way? Do we want the will of God enough to make a decision to start now?
3. From our study of these lessons we must conclude that the only thing that stands between the will of God and ourselves is simply our lethargy.

## II. The Benefits of the Will of God.

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father. . . Col. 1:10,11

### A. The explanation.

#### 1. The manifestation of the will of God: "Walk worthy."

From this passage we recognize again that the will of God is simply living the Christian life as defined in the Bible. It is not something hidden and known by only a few.

The manifestation of the will of God is that we would "Walk (live) worthy of the Lord." The word "worthy" means of like value and indicates we are to live so our life "matches" God's character. The reference is to His attributes of Truth, Love, and Holiness. When we know and do the will of God we will be living in "harmony" with truth, love, and holiness.

#### 2. The goal of the will of God: "Pleasing God in everything."

Such a life will enable us both intellectually and morally to "please God." In the new birth we were given the ability to honor God but only through the will of God are we led into such a life. The issue again is our choice. When we surrender to God and His will -- and give up our self-centered way of living -- then the Holy Spirit can teach us how to live this way.

#### 3. The characteristics of walking in the will of God:

##### a. "Being fruitful in every good work."

It is helpful to see the progress of Paul's thought. He stated that knowing and doing the will of God will enable us to walk worthy of God which will cause us to please God in everything. And, what it means to please God is to be fruitful in every good work, increasing - strengthened - and giving thanks.

To be "fruitful in every good work" is simply to be able to accomplish the will of God in our life and service. It is a promise and pledge of success. Many believers are very hesitant to try to say a word for the Lord or engage in some work in the church. These words have been designed to encourage and motivate us. We must choose to respond to God by faith and courage and become more involved in doing His will.

b. "Increasing in the knowledge of God."

The second characteristic of walking with God is a steady growth in our knowledge of God. The word "knowledge" as used in the Bible is never simply "head knowledge" but includes practice as well. To know God, as thus defined, is the highest act we can perform -- and the most important. The only reason we do not make this the first priority in life is our ignorance, laziness, and arrogance.

It is almost beyond our intellectual grasp -- that God, when we have sinned against Him, would not only redeem us but make it possible through the Bible, the church, and the Holy Spirit to grow in a practical, joyful, and fruitful understanding of Himself. And, as we grow to engage in a deepening walk of fellowship with Himself through which He would pour out of His benefits into our life.

c. "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

When we are concerned about the will of God and give up our self-centered way of living -- then we become the recipients of a constant enablement. This is the truth that Paul had in mind when he said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

The words "strengthened" and "might" come from the same root (dunamis). Our English word is dynamite. The word "power" refers to God's infinite ability. This is an unusual promise. Every believer can be assured that God will give the enablement that is needed as we attempt to do His will.

The promise is made even more definite by reference to the words "patience," "longsuffering," and "joyfulness." These areas are specifically mentioned because they are so hard to develop and are needed in almost every facet of our daily walk. Patience means to be steadfast; longsuffering simply means to suffer-long with that which is trying; and joyfulness indicates the comfort and happiness that is ours as we experience God's power and live in fellowship with Him.

d. "Giving thanks unto the Father . . . "

It is appropriate that the fourth characteristic of doing the will of God would be thanksgiving. As we have briefly considered the privilege of knowing the will of God and the benefits which follow -- the only spiritual response would be that of thanksgiving. In this unusual passage we have the True and Living God -- giving us an invitation to come to Him, to learn of Him, to fellowship with Him, and to receive every good from His hand. To read these verses, and then not to be thankful, would indicate a spiritual condition very far removed from the will of God.

B. The instruction.

Our brief survey of this passage leads us to only one conclusion -- we are missing everything spiritual -- and what life is all about -- if we are not living in the will of God.

C. The application.

1. Do you see the kind of a person you can become by choosing to live in the will of God? We are here promised every ability and support that we would ever need -- if we are only willing.
2. The issue rests with us. Nothing more needs to be done. Every provision has been made for us and is promised on the basis of the love and grace of God. The only condition is that we be willing to surrender ourselves to God and then in honesty practice what we know of the will of God and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as He teaches us the Bible.
3. Where do we start? With our complete surrender to Him and then the daily steadfast practice of what we now know to be the will of God.