

## Lesson # 8 -- The Will of God and the Believer's Attitude

### Introduction

- A. We have all witnessed the power of a correct as well as an incorrect attitude. The power is awesome and mysterious.
- B. The influence of one's attitude is also reflected in the old saying, "What can you do with a person who has the wrong attitude?"
- C. The Bible has a good deal to say about our attitude. In this lesson I wish to point out four areas where we can bring our attitude into harmony with the will of God.

### I. The Will of God and the Believer's Attitude toward Fulfillment.

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes, fear the LORD, and depart from evil, it shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Prov. 3:5-8

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. John 4:34

#### A. The explanation.

- 1. These passages remind us of the close connection between the will of God and personal fulfillment. While we do His will for His glory and not our own success -- our fulfillment is a characteristic and promise of such a life.
- 2. God created us to find our deepest meaning and enjoyment in our relationship with Him. In the Fall all of that was turned into the opposite as we witness about us today. In the new birth we have been brought back into a relationship with God whereby we can live for His glory and find true fulfillment.
- 3. Solomon spoke of the will of God in such terms as "Trust," "Lean not unto thine own understanding," "In all thy ways acknowledge Him," "Be not wise in thine own eyes," "Fear the LORD," and "Depart from evil." The result was the promise of guidance, protection, health, and prosperity. While this was stated in a theocratic setting -- the principle holds true for us today -- in a spiritual manner.

4. The reference of the Lord Jesus to the will of God as being His food -- is an expression of His fulfillment. He meant by that statement that His deepest need was met -- by doing the will of God.

B. The instruction.

1. Each of us need a great deal of help in this area of personal fulfillment. For too many Christians life has little meaning and even less of spiritual happiness. When we go through a crises -- that truth often becomes evident.
2. It is important to understand that our fulfillment, our spiritual happiness, is a by-product of doing the will of God.
3. Our attitude must be one of commitment to do the will of God that He might be honored. When this is a genuine expression of our faith and love then life will take on new meaning. It is our attitude that makes the difference.

C. The application.

1. Too often our attitude reveals our self-centeredness. We want to be successful, happy, and fulfilled -- no matter how much it costs other people -- and without changing our sinful way of life.
2. Fulfillment cannot be earned. We must, however, learn to live in the will of God because true happiness is always of a spiritual nature. We were not created to find ultimate fulfillment anywhere else. The history of the human race, as well as your life and mine, is a clear testimony of that truth. We cannot have spiritual fulfillment while living an unspiritual life.

II. The Will of God and the Believer's Attitude toward Daily Life.

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. I Thess. 5:16-18

A. The explanation.

1. This threefold admonition which is found among the concluding remarks of the epistle -- is built upon the truths already presented. Those truths, the gospel, explains their rational as well as their meaning.

2. Paul plainly states that the believer is to be characterized by these three virtues -- because of what it means to be a Christian. His emphasis in this epistle could be summarized into three areas. They were to rejoice, pray, and be thankful for the following reasons --
  - a. They had received the gospel and salvation, Chps. 1,2.
  - b. They had learned to live the Christian life, Chps 3,4.
  - c. They were expecting the return of Jesus Christ, Chps.4,5.
3. When we consider the significance of these truths we can understand why the Apostle gave the three exhortations in our text. The Christian has every reason to rejoice, to pray, and to be thankful.

B. The instruction.

1. The believer's attitude, reflected in rejoicing, praying, and giving of thanks, indicates that who he is (a Christian),, what has happened to him (salvation), what is happening to him (the Christian life), and what will happen to him (the return of Christ and heaven), causes him to transcend the problems of daily life.
2. These exhortations do not mean that the Christian is to be an impractical, non-caring type of individual, whose only interest is in religion and heaven. They do indicate however the correct attitude -- that of responding to all of life on the basis of divine revelation and salvation.

C. The application.

1. We can use this threefold exhortation as a measurement of how well we understand and practice the gospel. A great deal of failure surely indicates our lack of spiritual growth.
2. The believer can learn to obey the will of God and develop these admonitions in his Christian life. We can choose to rejoice, pray, and give thanks because of the relationship God has established with us and the truths related to that relationship.
3. Our attitude is an indication of that which we have allowed to govern us. If the source is found only in the daily life then we are naturally "down" when things go poorly and "up" when things go well. When we understand the unchanging character of God, our relationship with Him, and the truths He has given us -- then we will not be so vulnerable to the prosperity and tragedy of our day-by-day life.

### III. The Will of God and the Believer's Attitude toward Trials.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. I Peter 4:1,2 (NIV)

#### A. The explanation.

1. In this passage we are told that our attitude toward the testings and temptations of life should grow out of the work of the Lord Jesus. Through His suffering for us we can have the ability to live in freedom from sin.
2. The thought here is similar to Paul's teaching in Romans 6-8. We know we died in the Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, we were raised in His Resurrection, ascended in His Ascension, and received the benefit of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The understanding of this and the desire for its freedom and power in our life is the foundation of a correct attitude.
3. The gaining of this attitude in the practice of daily life, with the freedom and fruitfulness that accompanies it, is not an easy step. Peter describes it by the statement, "He who has suffered in his body is done with sin." The suffering he is referring to has to do with repentance, surrendering to God, discipline, and learning how to express faith and love so we can be free from sin and live as we should.
4. The benefit of this Biblical attitude is found in the words "Live ... for the will of God." When we choose to respond to Jesus Christ, and live in harmony with His work, then the will of God becomes an actuality in our life.

#### B. The instruction.

1. Peter was writing to people who were undergoing persecution. His letters are filled with instructions related to such trials and suffering. It is encouraging to see how he will continually relate the will of God, and how we are to live, to the work of the Savior. This truth reminds us of the abundance of the provision that has been made for us.
2. The basic message of the Crucifixion and Resurrection is that the believer does not have to live in bondage to sin and spiritual weakness. We can learn to have the right attitude. What Peter is speaking of is the attitude that says, by faith and love, "No" to sin and temptation, and "Yes" to the will of God.

C. The application.

1. Through this passage we are again reminded that the will of God has been designed to lead us into freedom from the bondage of sin and the freedom to honor God.
2. We also see how the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, which includes the ministry of the Holy Spirit, is the foundation of the will of God. It is God's grace that makes the will of God work in your life and mine.
3. Again we are brought to the realization that the issue rests with us -- and our choice. Do we want the will of God? Do we want to be free from sin? Do we want to be a fruitful person? Do we want to live for God's glory and honor?

IV. The Will of God and the Believer's Attitude toward the Future.

Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain. 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. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.  
James 4:13-15

A. The explanation.

1. James clearly speaks out against the non-Biblical view that holds our life is our own and we are in control of it. He reminds us that only God knows the future and we must learn to recognize Him and live in the will of God.
2. From this passage we understand how the will of God applies to every area of our life -- and not simply to salvation. It was Solomon who said under inspiration, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him -- and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6).
3. It is a great comfort to the believer, who wants to do the will of God, to realize that God is in control, and that He knows the future. When we pattern our life according to the wisdom of the Bible then we can be assured we are in God's will.

B. The instruction.

1. The way God will lead us concerning the future is through a practice of what the Bible calls "wisdom." A simply formula that can be used concerning the future could be as follows.

- a. Will it violate the known will of God?
  - b. Can I claim the promises of God regarding it?
  - c. Does it fit the pattern of my life and ability?
  - d. Will I be able to glorify God through it?
  - e. Will it cause me to neglect my present responsibility?
2. James also draws our attention to the importance of the will of God. He reminds us that our life is like a cloud that has only a brief existence.
  3. As we contemplate the will of God, from the various lessons in this series, we realize how necessary it is to make sure that we are not wasting our time and life. It is so easy to be taken up with that which does not contribute to our spiritual benefit nor the glory of God.

C. The application.

1. The passage before us, when related to the other verses we have considered, presents us with the responsibility of making a decision regarding our daily life.
2. God has promised to lead us -- and He does so -- not by some emotion or thought, but by His will as made known in the Bible. Many have made terrible mistakes in life, all because they thought they were following God's leading, only to end in some tragic situation.
3. God will never make the decision that we have the ability to make. When the will of God is our highest priority -- and we use such a checklist as given above -- then we can be assured we are pleasing Him.
4. The basic question is: Do I want the will of God?