

GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6

God has a will. God's will determines His actions. God has a plan for every life. When that plan is discovered and followed, it brings greater happiness, usefulness and success than could be achieved in any other conceivable set of circumstances.

When we reflect on the fact that we are the highest of God's earthly creatures, destined for a place in the future even above that of the angels, we are forced to conclude that God must have a special work for us to do while on earth. He has made us; every talent we possess has come from Him; He has purchased us at the tremendous cost of the blood of His Son. It is unthinkable that He should intend us to live in uncertainty and confusion with no worthwhile goal to achieve.

Multitudes of God's children have found His plan for their lives and followed it. For Abraham it meant leaving Ur of the Chaldees and spending the remainder of his years in tents (Hebrews 11:8-10). For Moses it meant giving up the wealth and honor he had enjoyed in Egypt to begin a life of wandering in the wilderness (Hebrews 11:24-27). For David it meant leaving the sheepfold where he had spent his boyhood and sitting on the throne of Israel (I Chronicles 17:7).

God also has a plan for each of us. Earthly parents may direct the education of their children into paths leading to a lifework which seems desirable, but only God has the infinite wisdom to guide an individual into the work for which he was endowed at birth. All our thoughts, ways and words are known to Him. God does not always reveal the distant future to us, but He does lead each step of the way.

What is included in God's will for your life?

I. Your Salvation.

It is not His will that you should perish. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). It is the will of God that believing sinners shall be saved.

II. Your Sanctification.

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (I Thessalonians 4:3). Separation from known sin is God's will for your life. The Psalmist said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear Me" (Psalm 66:18). To cherish some favorite sin, refusing to give it up for Christ's sake, is to erect a barrier between you and the blessings which come from communion with God. God wants you to take your stand against sin and to maintain it consistently. It is His will that those who are the children of God shall be set apart for Him.

III. Your Service.

"For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (I Peter 2:15). The world is full of ignorant and foolish people who are quick to make the most of the faults of Christians. We are being watched constantly; therefore, we must be on our guard, quieting the tongues of the enemies of Christianity by deeds of kindness and love. We have no right to give unbelievers ammunition to use against the cause of Christ.

Perhaps no scriptural statement about the way in which God leads His people is more arresting than Psalm 37:23: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way." This speaks of a believer who is surrendered to the Lord. When someone tries to do good for the sake of Christ, this act becomes an evidence that his faith is genuine. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).

"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4). All Christians have trusted in the Lord, but some of them have not delighted in the One whom they have trusted; and the fact that they do not have the desires of their hearts is proof of this. Some delight in pleasure. Others find their chief delight in business, or a career, or music, or sports, or any of a thousand other things. Obviously, many of these are good and profitable, each in its proper place. It is only when something usurps the place rightfully belonging to the Lord that it becomes sin. If you want to enjoy heaven's greatest blessings, you must respect the Word of God enough to make it the rule of your life.

It is not always easy to discover what God's plan is. Having told Him by words and actions that we mean business with Him, we are to rest quietly in the full confidence that He will make the way plain.

Service can never take the place of salvation or of sanctification, but both salvation and sanctification ought to produce the best possible service---divinely-directed and scripturally-stated service according to the will of God. Service out of salvation and sanctification is glorious to God and blessed to us. But service without salvation and sanctification is empty and impotent.

There are some scriptural and practical rules by which you, as a sincere Christian, can discover for yourself God's plan for your life. Romans 12:1-2 summarizes what the Lord expects of us: "I Beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." This is an earnest entreaty, and not a command. You can resist God's pleadings if you choose, but you shall suffer loss now and forever if you do. He yearns for your willing and cheerful service.

Three distinct elements appear in these verses. The first and the third are positive, but the second is negative. You are to present your body to God, to refrain from world conformity and to be transformed. Trust in God is to be entire, exclusive and transfiguring. It yields definite results. God will direct your path, and you shall prove how good, acceptable and perfect is His will for you.

At the threshold of this passage stands an act of dedication by which you turn your body over to God once for all, to be His for whatever purpose He may have for you. As a living sacrifice, you must of necessity have renounced self-interest and self-will. As holy, you must confess your sin and be forgiven of it. As acceptable to God, you must be of use to Him, submitting to what His Word teaches about your life and work. Instead of shrinking from His will as something to be feared, you come to recognize joyfully that everything He plans for you is born of His love and His desire for your greatest good.

Let us consider a few brief rules which bring together the few leading principles by which you are to determine the will of God for your life.

1. You must be willing to do God's will.

The human wills of the Jews thwarted God's purpose to bless them. As we are constituted by nature, we prefer our own way. This is the very essence of sin. Self-will keeps more people from enjoying the blessings of the God-planned life than any other factor. Many reserve the right to refuse to do what God indicates as His will for them. They plead with God to be allowed to have what they want, instead of resting in His wisdom and love.

2. You must understand that God's will is always in harmony with His Word.

If you have a desire to do something that conflicts with the plain teaching of the Bible, you may be sure that your promptings come from the world, the flesh or the devil. It cannot be the will of God because His word and His will are never in conflict.

3. You should know that providential circumstances may indicate God's will. Be careful lest you insist on your own way instead of God's way for you. He is the God of circumstances. He can and will change every factor in a given situation if He wants you somewhere.

Sometimes the romance of the mission field has made young people feel a call to go to a far country, but they were never able to go, try as they might. Since it is impossible for God to call someone to do a work for Him without providing for every need and removing every obstacle, the young people simply misunderstood the will of God. When the providence of God led Joseph into Egypt as a slave, he made the best of the situation by faithfully serving God in the work at hand. Moses may have longed to be with his people during the years he was a shepherd in the desert, but he waited until God intervened to bring about a change in his circumstances. Your present position is the place where you must begin to fulfill God's plan. A new environment will not change you into a faithful servant of the Lord if you are not faithful where you are.

4. You can learn God's will through prayer.

When Paul was converted on the Damascus road, "he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:6). Those who are most often in communion with the Lord are the least troubled about His will.

5. You will have peace of mind when you do God's will.

When you have the assurance that you are doing God's will nothing can disturb your peace of mind. If "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" is absent, there is something wrong, and you had better turn to the word of God and to prayer.

The life of Christ presents us a perfect illustration of absolute conformity to the will of God. Christ was entirely subject to God's will in His life

purpose. He said, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent" (John 6:38). Even as a boy He did the Father's will. When He was twelve years old, Joseph and Mary found Him in the temple at Jerusalem among the doctors of the law. When they questioned Him about what He had been doing, He replied, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). He sets before you the fact that you can live according to the will of God even during your school days, if you really want to do so.

You are not qualified to select your own path or to choose what is best. No counselor has either the wisdom or the right to advise a believer in specific terms as to the work which God has called him to do. Only the Lord is able perfectly to fit a personality and a lifework together. The counsel of godly Christians is of value, but the question of what you are to do as a lifework must be settled between you and God. Willingness to do what God wants you to do is a basic secret of knowing His will and receiving His blessing.

Probably no one has ever made the most of his possibilities. This is true in school, in daily work and in Christian experience. It is not too late to enter into the fulness of His blessing by beginning to do what He wants you to do. God is able to make a world-wide blessing of anyone who is wholly subject to Him. When you allow His power to work in you, there is absolutely no limit to what He may do through you. Do not allow present circumstances to discourage you. Others may have a better education, a more attractive personality, a more handsome face or figure, a stronger voice, a better memory, a keener intellect, more money, better clothes, influential friends, or larger opportunities to advance in their chosen vocation. Not one of these things is of first importance, but these encouraging words of Paul are indispensable: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Not often, if ever, will you be given a great work to do until you have proved yourself in a small work. When you fill well the place in which you find yourself now, you thereby prove that you are qualified to be trusted with greater responsibilities. By the faithful use of whatever gift you now possess you may expect greater gifts. The most unpromising people have achieved notable success because they proved themselves faithful. After all, no Christian service is a little value in the sight of God.

God's will is the biggest and best thing for your life. To conform to His will is the greatest achievement you will ever make. It is the will of Him Who loves with an infinite love and Who always seeks your highest welfare. God's will for your life is right. It is best. He wills your present and eternal welfare. There is safety, satisfaction and joy in doing His blessed will. Above everything else in your Christian life, discover and do the will of God.