

"THE WILL OF GOD"

"For this is the will of God." I Thessalonians 4:3

God has a will. The scriptures ascribe this attribute to Him. "Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13. "That good and acceptable and perfect will of God." I Corinthians 1:1. His will determines His actions. His will was clearly revealed in His outward activities in creation. He willed and it was done. But for that will, creation would not have taken place. The universe everywhere presents the impress of His will. The will of God is also manifested in His providential government of the universe. But it is most distinctively exhibited in the work of redemptions.

God has will concerning man. What a glorious truth that insignificant man engages the mind and heart of God. God has a plan for every life. He has a pattern for every character. He has an ideal for every soul. To make His will known and get it accomplished has always been the biggest undertaking of God. About this He has taken no chances. He has magnified His Word above His Name. His Name tells what He is and His Word tells what He says and He makes the doing of His Word greater than the praising of His Name.

To do the will of God was the biggest business of Christ when he was on earth. Satan wanted Him to do something else. He offered Him pay and power to substitute something else -- sense, sentiment, sensation, something. God's will came first in His life. He made His life conform to God's plan for it. He wanted God's will to be done regardless of what that will might be. He prayed, "Not My will, but Thine be done." He was obedient to God's will in everything. In the accomplishment of the will of God, Christ brought people to Him, caused them to know Him and made them happy in Him.

There are two important things in connection with the will of God for our lives:--

I. Discovering the Will of God.

Satan tries to deceive us about the will of God and when he can not succeed at that, he tries to keep us from doing the will of God. There are various phases of His will:--

1. The secret will of God.
2. The determining will of God.

By this He purposes and decrees what shall come to pass.

3. The prescribing will of God.

By this he tells us what we should do. He sets forth the rule of duty. His determining will must always be accomplished; His prescribing will may be disobeyed. His will of purpose always comes to pass. His will of desire does not always come to pass. His will of command is often disobeyed.

4. The revealed will of God.

What is the revealed will of God for us?

(1) The salvation of sinners.

"And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:39-40. It is not His will that any should perish. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." II Peter 3:9. He wants all men to have everlasting life. What does that mean? Everlasting life means an endless existence in the absence of all evil and in the possession of all good -- physical, intellectual, moral, social, and religious.

No one would ever be saved if God had not willed salvation. He willed salvation both from His side -- the side of electing grace -- and from our side -- the side of believing faith. God willed the grace and He moves the faith. He willed to save everyone who would believe on Christ. It is the will of God that believing sinners shall be saved.

(2) The sanctification of saints.

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." I Thessalonians 4:3. Sanctification is salvation plus. Salvation is for sinners. Sanctification is for saints. The Bible has a message for sinners. It has a message also for saints. It is "able to make thee wise unto salvation." It is profitable too, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." II Timothy 3:15-16. The will of God works unto salvation of sinners and unto sanctification of saints. It is the will of God that saints shall be sanctified, that is, "set apart" for Him. Sanctification is a supernatural thing because it is divinely infused. It is intrinsic because it lies chiefly in the heart. It is extensive because it spreads into the whole person. It is beautiful, abiding, and progressive.

(3) The service of believers.

"The work whereunto I have called them." Acts 13:2. 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. Such service may be humanly effective and highly ecstatic and much praised, but it cheapens Christ and cheats and deceives Christians.

The will of God works from salvation through sanctification to service. Believers ought to live as saints and serve as saints, according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit spoke to the church at Antioch about the will of God for the service of believers. What was this work? It was the divine task of world-wide witnessing. The church was but cooperating with God in the work of His will. He is always behind His work. He does not want us to be behind in in His work. A non-missionary church is doomed to narrowness and failure. The members of a non-missionary church -- saved though they be -- good in their living though they be -- scriptural in their giving though they be -- will soon be more concerned about local conditions than about world-wide witnessing.

(4) The satisfaction of servants.

The church at Antioch and its missionaries enjoyed this satisfaction. "And when they had come and gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." Acts 14:27. What a reward for service! What a glorious church Antioch became! What a world-wide work it did! From their world-wide witnessing the gospel blessing went over into Europe and thence on to America and to us.

There is no substitute for the will of God, whether in its content or its order. Its content is for salvation and sanctification and service and satisfaction. This, too, is its order. To try to change this order is to court disappointment and damage. To hope to reach either salvation or sanctification through service is a false hope. To try to substitute service for either salvation or sanctification is to try a false plan. According to the will of God is the secret of individual Christian living and the promise of satisfactory church service.

II. Doing the Will of God.

God's will is the biggest and best thing for any life. To ascertain His will for our lives is the greatest discovery we shall ever make. To know His will for our lives is the greatest privilege we shall have in this life. To follow His plan with unwavering fidelity and to achieve His will for our lives is the greatest achievement we shall ever attain. In the model prayer, He taught us to pray, "Thy will be done." We should pray this prayer:---

1. With the conviction that we have not fully done His will.

This is true of each individual as well as the human race.

2. With a sincere desire to know fully what His will is for us.
3. With an earnest longing to do His will.

To know God's will is not sufficient. We should yearn above all else that His will may be done. Really to desire His will is not always easy. Jesus did not find it so, but still He prayed, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine, be done." The will of God is the will of Him Who loves with an infinite love and Who always seeks our highest possible good.

4. With a spirit of self-dedication.

One should mean that here and now I give myself into His control.

Why should God's will be done?

1. It is right.
2. It is perfect.
3. It is best.

He knows better than we what is for our real good. He wills our present and eternal welfare. Failure to do His will always means self-injury.

4. It is beneficial.

There is joy in the very act of performing His will. Happiness, safety and satisfaction always result from doing it. We should deem it a great privilege to be allowed to do His will.

How should God's will be done by us?

1. Unhesitatingly.
2. Promptly.
3. Cheerfully.
4. Intelligently.
5. Lovingly.
6. Thoroughly.
7. Prayerfully.
8. Continuously.
9. Universally.
10. Perfectly.

Life is not a question of being or having this or that; it is simply a question of the will of God -- knowing it, living it, and doing it.

OBEDIENCE

I said: "Let me walk in the fields."
He said: "No, walk in the town."
I said: "There are no flowers there."
He said: "No, flowers, but a crown."

I said: "But the skies are black;
There is nothing but noise and din."
And He wept as He sent me back--
"There is more," He said, "There is sin."

I said: "But the air is thick,
And fogs are veiling the sun."
He answered: "Yet souls are sick,
And souls in the dark undone!"

I said: "I shall miss the light
And friends will miss me they say."
He answered: "Choose tonight
If I am to miss you or they."

I pleaded for time to be given.
He said: "Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem so hard in heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide."

I cast one look at the fields,
Then set my face to the town;
He said, "My child, do you yield?
Will you leave the flowers for the crown?"

Then into His hand went mine;
And into my heart came He;
And I walked in a light divine,
The path I had feared to see.

----- George McDonald