

30. God's will for your life

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God is more concerned about including us in His perfect will than we ever would be. But somehow people make knowing the will of God for our lives into some mystical approach to our future.

We have a tendency to think that God is supposed to reveal His will for us in such dramatic ways – like with a booming thunderous voice from heaven, or a quiet celestial music from heaven in the background and a soft fragrant breeze comes your way and a scroll comes down from heaven to give you what is going to happen.

The majority of born-again Christians, if not everyone, want to know God's will for their lives. But more than not, many of them want to know the will of God with a wrong motive. Knowing God's will is not knowing about our future itinerary, rather following Him with a right attitude.

Many times we feel like God is leading us as if we are blind. However, if the truth be known God doesn't play a hide and seek game with us. He wants us to know His will for us.

A. THE GENERAL WILL OF GOD

Most often we don't realize that the answers to our questions for God's will for our lives is written black and white in the Bible. They are general will of God for us.

1) It is a will of God for us to be believers of Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

2) It is a will of God for us to be filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:15-19 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord

The Greek tense of the word 'filled' is present. It means that we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit constantly. "What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?" some of you might wonder. It means that you are relying on the Spirit of God and directed and empowered by Him all the time rather than you running your own life.

3) It is a will of God for us to live a pure life.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality

4) It is a will of God for us to have an attitude of gratitude.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

It is OK to ask the Lord for His will. An old Jewish proverb says, "It is better to ask for a direction ten times than taking one wrong turn." I don't know about you, I am a directional challenged person. I am so bad that I even get lost with a GPS. So I don't mind asking for a direction.

B. BEING A LIVING SACRIFICE

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

This is such a typical writing style of apostle Paul. After he teaches us with the doctrines in the beginning of his letters, then he provides us with a list of practical approaches to our life situations and problems. It is not enough for us to understand Paul's doctrinal explanation, but we must do what we learn.

James 1:25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

V1-2 of chapter 12 is a conditional promise from the Lord. If we do this, we are in the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. God is calling us to make a choice about the way we live for Him.

Before we became born-again Christians, we did whatever our bodies and carnal desires wanted. But now since we are His followers, we want to use our bodies for His glory. Because Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and we should not defile it with carnal things. It is our privilege to glorify and magnify Christ in our bodies.

There are two other "living sacrifices" mentioned in the Bible and they help us understand what this really means. The first is Isaac, Abraham's son, from Genesis 22 and the second is, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ. Isaac willingly put himself on the altar and would have died in obedience to God's will, but the Lord sent a ram to take his place. Isaac "died" just the same – he died to self and willingly yielded himself to the will of God. When he got off that altar, Isaac was a "living sacrifice" to the glory of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect illustration of a "living sacrifice," because He actually died as a sacrifice, in obedience to His Father's will. But He arose again.

In the OT, the priests had never presented a living animal on the altar. They were all killed before they came near the altar. But in our case, the Lord wants us to come to Him as a living being with our own willingness. We're dead in the sense that we no longer live for ourselves, but we're alive in that we now live for God. We daily lay aside our own desires to follow Him.

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

So far we heard words – 'living sacrifice', 'dying to self' and 'denying oneself'. What do they mean? It is about not following our own carnal desires every time it demands our attention. To some of you, it can be doing drugs, or drinking alcohol or looking at pornography magazines or visiting porno web sites. Or it could be flirting with someone who is not your spouse or having sex with someone when you are not married to them.

Some people compartmentalize their lives. They have Sunday morning life – looking godly, smelling godly and talking godly. Once they go home and they have a different life – cussing, allowing their carnal desires to rule over them until next Sunday.

When these people come to the church and they hear convicting Word of God, then they decide that they would not go back to church or go to a different church where they don't hear the Word of God. Somehow they think that they escaped from the eyes of God. Fat chance! Whether we are sitting in church pews or far away from church, God sees everything in our hearts and everything we do. There is nothing hidden from His all seeing eyes.

Psalm 139:7-12 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; 12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.

How can we possibly become living sacrifice which goes against our sinful nature? It sounds like something we cannot do. Besides, the problem with living sacrifice, though, is that they often crawl off the altar.

But it can be accomplished. The Bible tells us that it is reasonable service. It is the right response to all that God has done for us. He is not asking for something we cannot do.

The ancient Greek word for 'reasonable' is 'logikos' where we get the English word 'logical'. Reasonable service is a life of worship of our God according to His Word.

C. NOT BEING CONFORMED, BUT TRANSFORMED

Romans 12:2a And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

Here is a chunk of Play-Doh. You all have played with this before. You can shape, mold and cut out shapes from this however you want.

That is what the devil wants us to do. Many of us struggle to become transformed for God because we're being conformed so much to the world. The world and its god satan are doing everything they can to conform us into their mold.

The word 'conform' means an outward expression of something that doesn't come from within. When we wrap ourselves around the things that characterize the world system – its goals of fortune, fame, power, and pleasure.

The battle ground between conforming to the world and being transformed is within the mind of the believer. Christians must think and act differently.

To be transformed, however, means "to assume an outward expression of an inner reality." We take on a new shape because of a force from within. Pressed Play-Doh is made by being conformed, but butterflies are made by being transformed.

The Greek verb 'transformed' is 'metamorphousthe' is seen in the English word 'Metamorphosis,' a total change from the inside out.

How can we be different than the world? God transforms our minds and makes us spiritually minded by using His Word. As we spend time meditating on God's Word, memorizing it, and making it a part of our inner men, God will gradually make our minds more spiritual.

D. OUR WILL TO HIM

Romans 12:2b that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Many people think they can control their will by "willpower," but usually they fail. This was Paul's experience as recorded in Romans 7:15-21. It is only when we yield our will to God that His power can take over and give us the willpower that we need to be victorious Christians.

As we spend time in prayer, we surrender our will to God and pray, with the Lord, "Not my will, but Your will be done." We must pray about everything, and let God have His way in everything.

E. GOD'S WILL FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL

Some still wonder, "OK, all these are fine. But what about God's will for my situation?" We say, "Lord, what is your will? Before I am going to surrender to it, I would like to know what I am getting myself into." But God may tell you something that you don't want to hear. The question is, are you going to do what He says?

It has been said that the condition of an enlightened mind is a surrendered heart. If you want to know the will of God, then you must have a heart that is surrendered. Present yourself to Him. Then accept His will, no matter what.

The more we get to know the will of God, the more we will like it, because the will of God for us is perfect. So we shouldn't be afraid of His will.

How do we know what we are about to do is the will of God? Here are the requirements to meet:

1) God speaks to us through His Word, the Bible.

He will never contradict His own Word. If we feel that what we think or what we are about to do is contradicting the Word, then we should ignore it. Because it is not His will.

2) God will speak to us through circumstances.

This can be tricky. We have to be careful here. Just because something happens to us, that doesn't mean it is the will of God for us.

Here is my advice for you: When you are facing a decision making moment and you say, "I want to pray about this." But the person on the other side insists that you must decide right then, not later, I suggest you pass it. Because if it is God's will for you to have it, He will make another way to give it to you. God is not like a silly used car sales person who put a lot of pressure on us to take His will. He never does it that way.

3) God will give us peace and confirmation to His will for us.

If something in our hearts says, "This doesn't seem right" or you can't have a confirmation from the Lord, learn to listen to that small voice.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Following the will of God is not burdensome to any of us, because He has a perfect will for us.
- 2) While the world and satan try to conform us to the mold of destruction, our Lord offers a transformation into the image of His Son Jesus.
- 3) Please remember this: When we want to know God's will, three things must be aligned:
 - The Holy Spirit gives you peace.
 - It does not go against the Word of God.
 - God provides His permission through the particular circumstances.