God’s Will: What Is It?

August 21, 2016

I John 1:1-10

Have you noticed that many people are very concerned about the future? Please open your Bible with me to the 4th chapter of the Book of I Thessalonians.

Here’s what people are really concerned about today?

1. 1970 – world population: 3.7 billion

2016 – world population: 7.4 billion

(India’s 2016 population: 1.27 billion;

adding 235,511/day)

1. Economic collapse: US debt: $19.3 trillion
2. Spread of I.S.I.S. (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria);

17 countries have been attacked since Sept. 2014;

There is a five-year plan to conquer the entire world.

1. Global water crisis
2. Climate change
3. National security (28 terror attacks on US soil since 9/11)
4. The next US president

Christians today are asking, “Is This God’s Will?”

Like the middle-aged farmer, who always wondered in the back of his mind whether God really wanted him to be a great evangelist. One day working in the fields, he took a break and laid down under a tree. Looking up in the sky he saw the clouds form what seemed to be the letters P and C.

So, he hopped up, sold his farm, and went out to P-reach C-hrist; knowing now that this was God's will for his life. The only trouble was, this guy was a terrible preacher. One night at one of his crusades after a horrible, horrible sermon, a compassionate friend of his who knew the story of how the farmer got his “calling” went forward and whispered in his ear, “Could it be that God was just asking you to P-lant C-orn?” [Found on [www.centralpc.org](http://www.centralpc.org) “Seeking God’s Will” by Dr. Ronald W. Scates].

I've titled today's sermon “God’ Will: What Is It?” The Scripture, has the only correct view of the world, of life, or right and wrong, etc. So, what is God’s will? As you are about to see, His will is the only thing that will enable you to hold on to a right view of the things you face.

And why? Why consider God’s will? Here's why. When you know the LORD’s will, one thing is expected of you; that you do it. Let's pray and I'll show you just what I mean. Shall we pray?

Please open your Bible with me to the 4th chapter of the Book of I Thessalonians and I'll begin reading at the first verse.

I Thessalonians 4:1 *“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. (2) For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. (3) For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:*

*(4) That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; (5) Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: 6) That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.*

*(7) For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. (8) He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.”*

Would you notice with me the line in verse three that says “for this is the will of God...”? I Thessalonians 4:2 *“For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. (3) For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: …”*

In order to be simple and practical, let me say this. The will of God does not need to be confusing or hard to discover or even mysterious. And it shouldn’t be complicated.

But let me make a point of clarification as we begin to look at these verses today. There are, as you’ve often heard me say, two aspects to the will of God; two important distinctions to be aware of when considering God’s will.

First, there’s His Sovereign Will. God, as we discover Him in the Bible, is Sovereign. He reigns over everyone and everything. His decree is this. It’s “His eternal, unchangeable, holy, good, wise, and sovereign purpose, containing at once all things that ever were or ever will be.” His decree is absolute. You can’t change what God has decreed.

And here’s what we find in the Bible about God’s decrees.

Here are a couple of passages of Scripture that demonstrate this.

The first is Acts 2:23 *“Him [Jesus], being delivered by* ***the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,*** *ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:…”*

This line “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” is His decree. If you have any trouble with this concept, just ask yourself this question. Did God determine the place and purpose for the sun and moon? That’s His determinate counsel and foreknowledge.

The second is Ephesians 1:11. Ephesians 1:11 *“In whom (in Christ) also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of* ***him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will****:...”*

God only does what is good and right. He only works all things in the universe after the counsel of His own will. His sovereign will cannot depend upon anything we as human beings can or cannot do.

Here’s a Bible illustration. It’s from the OT Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. Here’s what we read from Daniel 4.

Daniel 4:34 *“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine under-standing returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:*

*(35) And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and* ***he doeth according to his will*** *in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”*

There is an aspect of the will of God that is only in His mind and heart. It is this aspect that only God knows. Only God understands His own plan which is usually mysterious to the human heart. In this sense, it’s not for us to know His sovereign will; that is, until it comes to pass. Your place is to humbly accept it. And your place is to glorify Him with everything He does and allows.

But there’s a second aspect of God’s will. This we can and *do* know. And that is what you’ve heard we call “His revealed will.”

God reveals His will for your benefit. And all that He has commanded is there for you to obey and to abide in. His revealed will includes all of His commands and principles.

Do you remember Adam and Eve hearing and knowing the will of God in the Garden? God said “Do this” and “do that.” And what were Adam and Eve being called to? To obey His will.

So, whatever He has spoken is His will. Whatever He shows us in Scripture is the revealed will of God.

Think about it in a very practical sense. It’s simply impossible for you to have a knowledge of God’s Sovereign will. Folks, that’s *God’s* realm. That’s *His* department, so-to-speak.

So, first, there’s the sovereign will of God. Then, there’s the revealed will of God. And this is enough. One we know. One we don’t know. Therefore, your life is to be rooted in a growing knowledge of what He has revealed in His word.

Now, let me show you a very plain indication of God's revealed will. It's right here in I Thessalonians chapter four.

I Thessalonians 4:3 *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:...”*

And here's another example from this same book. (5:18) *“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”*

There’s something quite simple here regarding the LORD’s will. Can you see it? Now, can you know the LORD’s will? Folks, you can only know the future insofar as God has revealed it in Scripture. But, practically speaking, we can’t change that. The future is entirely God's mind. It’s His heart. It’s His department. It’s part of His divine decree.

But, what God *does* hold you accountable for is His *revealed* will. And that aspect of His will is what we find in the Bible.

How many times will you be exhorted to learn the Bible? How important is it that you read and study the Scripture?

For example, when it comes to knowing God’s will, you could ask “What does God say about anger?” or “What does He say about lying?” or “What does the Bible say about morality and immorality?” or “What does He say about work; or pleasure; or time; or forgiveness.”

You name the subject. If the LORD speaks about it, can’t you discern His will on it?

Folks, when the Bible speaks on a subject, that’s His will. He’s spoken. That’s His revealed will. And this is your main concern in your daily life.

Seriously, how would knowing the end of ISIS affect your daily walk with the LORD? How would knowing who’ll be our next president affect your personal walk? Those things are simply unknowable; until they come to pass.

Let me give you another practical example. One day a group of Jews were in a public debate with Jesus. Just twenty-four hours earlier, He had miraculously fed some fifteen thousand people by multiplying five small barley cakes and two small fish.

Here’s part of that debate. John 6:27 *“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.*

*(28) Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? (29) Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”*

What’s God will? What’s His will for the Jews *then* and for you and me *now*? Here it is: that we *“believe on the One the Father sent into the world.”*

These Jews had asked Jesus the question “Just what is the work of God? What does God want us to do?” And Jesus answered very simply *“that you might believe on Him Whom He has sent.”*

That’s it! That’s the will of God! That’s the work of God! That’s the responsibility of man towards his God. In essence, God’s will for Jews, Gentiles, for all mankind is that we **believe on Jesus**, the One the Father sent into the world. Folks, that’s what we call “the Revealed Will of God.”

Now, go back with me to I Thessalonians chapter four, where you’ll see this very clear word as to what God’s will is. We find it in I Thessalonians the third verse of this fourth chapter.

I Thessalonians 4:3 *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: (4) That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel [body] in sanctification and honour; (5) Not in the lust of concupiscence [immorality], even as the Gentiles which know not God:...”*

You see, the will of God, the revealed will of God is what He holds you responsible for. Each one here today is accountable for one thing; doing God’s will. It’s not confus-ing. It’s not mysterious. It’s not hard to know. And it’s not complicated. If anything, it’s simple. His will is whatever He commands.

Now, isn’t it true that you live the largest part of your life according to the will of God? Most of your life you live by just carrying out your daily responsibilities.

Let me show you what I mean. Let’s say you are in business. As, as a Christian who is in business, you live your life and you operate your business according to good Biblical standards. You uncover for yourself God’s will. What is that? You don’t lie. You don’t cheat. You don’t steal. You don’t retaliate. Instead, as a Believer, you commit your life and your works to the LORD. You respond to the people and problems in your life in a Christ-honoring manner. And such things as these are the will of God. So you see, God’s will is being done by you every day; as you go about your day applying Biblical principles.

And yet, sometimes; oftentimes, God directs you to some specific aspects of His will in the Bible. This passage here in I Thessalonians four is one of those specific aspects of His will.

So, I, as your Pastor, want to simply exhort and encourage you to pay close attention to each of the words the Holy Spirit used when He wrote on the subject of God's Will. I'd like you to see He says and to see just what He means. Then, when you see what the LORD is saying, you say “LORD, you *are* speaking to my heart.” Now, *I know your will.* Now I am finding the joy and the privilege of doing it with Your enablement.”

And so, what is His Will according to the Apostle Paul here in I Thessalonians chapter four and verse three?

I Thessalonians 4:3 *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: (4) That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; (5) Not in the lust of concupiscence [immorality], even as the Gentiles which know not God:...”*

His will is your sanctification. And how much more specific does Paul need to be? God’s will, he says, is that you “abstain from fornication” and that you possess your vessel in holiness and honor.

God, as you know, is the One Who has the Right; the Absolute Right, to tell you how to use your body. So, if it's your desire to do His will; just ask “What does my Heavenly Father say to do?” Here's what He says.

I Thessalonians 4:3 *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:…”*

This term “fornication” is the exact same term as our modern one; being involved with someone sexually outside of marriage. It refers to any type of sexual immorality, whether it's physical or emotional or porno-graphic or, any way in which you use your life for an immoral purpose.

The term “vessel” here, as you know, in verse four is a word that is used to describe your physical body and in particular what you quote “fill” your vessel with.”

And, for all intents and purposes, your “vessel” is an earthly vessel. You are made out of dirt. Your body contains the very same elements that are found in the ground under-neath you.

Here's what Paul says to the Corinthian Christians. II Corinthians 4:7 *“But we have this treasure [The Good News of Jesus Christ] in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”*

Peter also uses it when he refers to a wife. In I Peter 3:7 he says *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”*

So, the term “vessel” is an Old English term meaning “your physical body.”

But the key term Paul uses here is the term “possess.”

Here’s the will of God for you; that you possess your vessel in sanctification (holiness) and honor.

“Possess” means “to exert control over.” You are the only one who has full control over your body.

And folks, this is a word both to men and to women; to you who are married and to you who are single. Each one of us has been given a body with normal appetites. And that same body, because of the sin that indwells you, is prone to sin; not because it’s God’s design, but because sin lives in you.

And so, God gives to you a specific statement in His Word regarding His Will and the use of your body.

And then there's this wonderful word “sanctification.” It means “holiness” or “consecration.”

Each of you is, according to the will of God, to use your body in sanctification (holiness) and honor. Simply put, there is a right use of the body when it comes to morality and a wrong use. There is a godly use. And you are called by the will of God to exert control over your body in holiness and honor.

Now, a question. Is there anyone here that cannot see the will of God in this matter? Is it plain? Is it understandable? Is it complicated? And it's simply a matter of your responding to God.

Now, notice then how Paul elucidates this in verse five; “not in the lust of concupiscence” like the Gentiles around you. “Concupiscence” is a reference to one thing “uncontrolled sexual desire.”

Look at the society around you. Is it filled with “uncontrolled sexual desire” or not? Look at the television programs, the situation comedies, the movies, the advertise-ments, Hollywood. Are they or are they not all examples of “concupiscence”?

Folks, isn’t the will of God simple? God says this. “Use your body for holy things and for honorable things.” And then Paul adds a stern warning with this reminder. God will avenge all those who use their bodies in immorality. Look at verse six.

I Thessalonians 4:*6 “That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.”*

Look with me at the word “defraud” in verse six. It’s the exact same word as our modern word “take advantage of.” It refers to “cheating." The world around you may laugh as it enjoys both cheating and cheaters when it comes to relation-ships and marriage.

But laughing at sin is still no laughing matter. Please don’t think God isn’t observing each person’s lifestyle when it comes to the matter of sex. He is.

Folks, all the immorality that is done behind closed doors is not hid from the eyes of a pure, good, holy God, Who must judge our sins.

Here’s a man who knew this well. Proverbs 5:21 *“The ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD.”* None of us are exempt from His eyes. Does it matter where we are at any time? He, the God Who has no eyes; the invisible God, sees *you* every moment of the day.

And Paul’s last word here is this. What has God called you, Christian, to? Verse seven. I Thessalonians 4:7 *“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness [complete consecration to Him]. (8) He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.”*

To “despise” means “to reject.” And when you reject the plain sense of the Words of the Bible, you are rejecting the plain, clear revelation of His will. Please remember, you are rejecting the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. In essence, to reject the Words of Scripture is to reject God Himself.

So, folks, what about the Will of God?

There are two aspects to it. Both are shown in God’s Word. And the one you must be most concerned with is the one that has been revealed. He makes plain what He wants you to do.

So, today, you are being called to holiness (consecration). Today, what is God’s will for you and me? Is it complicated or is it simple? Folks, it’s powerful and it’s practical and it’s plain.

And that leaves you with a responsibility. Will you do God’s will? It will be a choice every single day of your life.

And if you choose to do His will, remember this. You cannot rely upon your own power to do it. Here's how Paul puts it in II Corinthians 8:9. *“For He is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye having all sufficiency in all things may be able to do every good work.”* It’s the LORD’s grace working in you that makes you sufficient to be able to do every single good work.

So, today determine to join in with the Saints of all the ages and do His will. The LORD’s objective is that you be holy [consecrated to Him].

Lastly, folks, it’s God’s love that leads you into true holiness. And that love was perfectly demonstrated at the Cross. It's His plan for you to advance in living a consecrated life. A holy life is one that is “set apart for God’s use.” And yes, there are many things that enable us to live a holy life. But can you see where love ends up? Whenever you submit your heart to God and let Him produce the fruit of true love in you, then God’s love working in you towards others leads you into holy living.

This is God’s goal for you as His child. His desire is that you be established in holiness. And the process towards holiness is walking in love. When you walk in love, you walk in holiness. That’s how God works.

So, what will you do today? Will you take God at His Word and trust Him to accomplish His will upon you? Today, each of you has a choice.

Folks, I know that God’s will is a very large matter. But we’ve only got today to live. We can only respond to the LORD today. No one has a promise of tomorrow. So, today is the day to believe His Word and respond to Him.

Will you submit your heart to the LORD and let Him have His way? Here, Christian, is the Prayer of Surrender. It’s a wonderful prayer and I’m sure it honors the LORD when you pray it and truly mean it. “LORD, I submit all that I am to you; my spirit, my soul, and my body. Do with me what is most pleasing to you. Work out Your will upon me today.”

And when you don’t do it, do back to Him for His cleansing. I John 1:8 *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Why? Because He’s the Forgiver. The blood of Christ is enough. Christ’s crucifixion and His shed blood are for you.

Now you can see why I often ask this question. “If you died today, are you certain that you would enter the Gates of Heaven? Either you are relying on the work of Jesus on the Cross of your eternal security or you are relying on your good efforts to get in? Which is it?

Now, it may be that you are not a Believer in Jesus Christ thus far in your life. And the question, of course, is, “Why not?” What are you allowing to hinder you from turning to Jesus Christ and receiving His free gift of eternal security?

The Bible is just as plain about this. Today is the day of Salvation. What will you do about the condition of your heart for eternity

The one eternal matter that stands between you and God is the matter of sin. And Jesus has already gone to the cross to take care of that for you.

So, here's what you need to do.

REPENT

BELIEVE

Here’s a simple salvation prayer for you to pray if you’ve never trusted the LORD for His free gift of eternal life.

The moment you repent and believe on Jesus Christ, you are declared righteous in God’s sight and you truly enter into a love relationship with God for eternity. And you are saved by that love for eternity. Have you prayed the sinner’s prayer? Have you come into a personal relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ? If not, why not?

Shall we pray?

Would you take your hymnal and turn with me to Hymn # \_\_\_\_\_ “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”