

DISCOVERING GOD'S WILL (2)
THE EXPLICIT WILL OF GOD-Part One
“DESIRE AND BELIEF”
Sermon 5/06/18

PSALM 40:1-10

“I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many will see and fear and will trust in the Lord.”

“I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation; behold, I will not restrain my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation.”

David speaks of the great things God has done for him and then states he has not kept the wonders of God to himself. He has proclaimed them to others so they too might know the joy that comes from God's forgiveness and grace. David did this as a natural outpouring of his gratitude to God and his desire to have others know the same. Like David, we too have been given the privilege of sharing the gospel with others as well. Unfortunately the sharing of the gospel is not as well received today as it once was.

Growing up in the 50's America was a different place. Religion was acceptable and going to church was common among many. You could speak of the things of the Lord and not be ridiculed. Today, if you have convictions that are based on the Bible and speak of them in public it can be labeled hate speech, and you could be labeled homophobic, intolerant, as well as many other derogatory terms. In middle-America many still have the shared values of their faith in common but on the coasts Christianity in particular is mocked and people who live out their faith are challenged. In California you can't even speak to someone about their desire to be free from what the Bible calls sin without risking going to jail for sharing that belief.

Yet the Bible tells us to share our faith freely and to not only be convinced of its truth but convicted by them as well. We are not to keep our beliefs to ourselves but we are to share them with others. But words alone will not convince anyone. Many claim to be believers but do not live like one. Throughout Scripture God says that to establish the truth of something there must be two or three witnesses. One is never acceptable. So when we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord we must also live our lives like He is Lord of our speech as well as our behavior.

We cannot witness to the truth of the gospel unless our lives prove the validity of what we preach. That is why we must know what the will of God is. We cannot live out what we do not know. We cannot witness to the truth of God's word if we do not know what His Word says. And if we cannot produce the fruit of righteousness in our lives then others have a right to question the genuineness of our faith.

That is why last week we began our study of “Discovering God's Will”. We need to know what the will of God is so that we can live that will out in our speech and our actions. We started by

determining the sources God has provided for determining His will. Here is what we discovered.

GOD REVEALS HIS WILL

Through the words & works of Jesus
Through a revelation from the Father
Through a prophet
Through inspiration of the Holy Spirit
Through the Scriptures

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus only did and said what He saw the Father do and say; so we can be assured that whenever we do the works of Jesus or say the things Jesus said, we are doing the Father's will. And just as Jesus received His insight into God's will directly from the Father, so can we. We may even have a prophet of God come to us and tell us things which the Father wants us to know - just as Elijah and Isaiah revealed God's will to the kings of Israel and Ananias and Agabus did with Paul. Of course we know that the Holy Spirit also gives us insight into the mind of God, for He is the Counselor which Jesus said would be our Helper in determining what God's will is; And the Scriptures reveal God's will from Genesis to Revelation so that we are without excuse. When we look to these five sources we can be assured that we will find what the will of God is.

But why is it important to know what the will of God is? Besides the obvious benefit of remaining in God's favor, what impact does knowing and doing the will of God have on the lives of believers? In his letter to the Colossians Paul answers that question. He tells us why knowing the will of God is important and what the benefits are to those who follow it.

COLOSSIANS 1:9-11

"For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects..

"bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light."

According to Paul when we are filled with the knowledge of God's will we will:

Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord
Please Him in all respects
Bear fruit in every good work
Increase in the knowledge of God
Be strengthened with all power
Attain all steadfastness and patience
Joyously give thanks to the Father

With all these benefits it's no wonder that Paul tells us in Ephesians (5:17) not to be foolish, but *"understand what the will of the Lord is"*. When we understand God's will and put it into practice we will not only please the Lord but our knowledge of Him will increase, our patience will be strengthened, and our joy in pleasing Him will result in giving thanks to the Father. So then what is God's specific will?

To answer that question we will look to Scripture. One would think since God breathed His words into the men who wrote the Bible that it would be very easy to determine the will of God through the reading of His word; but you would only be half right. There are places where God's word is very direct in proclaiming the will of God. But there are many other places where it is not so direct. God's will, as revealed in Scripture actually has two components to it. There is both the EXPLICIT and the IMPLICIT will of God. Let me define what I mean when I say that God's will as revealed in Scripture is both Explicit and Implicit.

THE EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT WILL OF GOD

The Explicit Will of God is unambiguous and clearly stated in Scripture. It provides overarching principles and instructions that deal with God's creation. It also provides a general overview of who God is and what He desires for all of mankind. The Implicit will of God is that which applies to every situation. It reveals more of the requirements of God and His expectations for His children. The Implicit Will of God is stated in general rather than specific terms.

Today we will begin by looking at the Explicit Will of God. Once we have laid out the Explicit Will of God we will then look at the general or Implicit Will of God. This should take place over the next several weeks.

There are a total of 13 verses that state the Explicit Will of God. The first six (6) have to do with the salvation of all mankind; the remaining seven (7) deal with us on a more personal level. I will deal with the first six (6) today and take up the remaining seven (7) next week.

#1

GOD'S EXPLICIT WILL - SALVATION

That None Should Perish

You may think it is hard to find the Explicit Will of God in Scripture but it truly isn't because all of these verses contain the words "will of God" in them in either a negative or a positive manner. For instance, in Matthew 18:12-14 Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep where the shepherd goes looking for the one sheep out of the ninety-nine who has wandered away. At the end of this parable Jesus says the following, *"It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish."*

When Jesus gave this parable he was talking about those who stray from His will as revealed in His commandments. Though this Scripture is stated in the negative it can be stated in the positive. If we know what the will of God is NOT then we can determine what he will of God IS. Since this Scripture says it is NOT God's will that anyone who strays from His commands would perish then we can conversely conclude that it WOULD be God's will that all who stray from His commands be saved. In other words God wants all of mankind to be saved and none to perish.

This is in line with 2 Peter 3:9 where it says, *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."* So it is God's explicit will that no one should perish but that all would come to repentance and be saved. John 3:16 confirms this by saying, *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

#2

GOD'S EXPLICIT WILL - SALVATION

That We Become His Children

Another Scripture that reflects the truth that God desires all who believe in His name to be saved is from John 1:12-13 which says, "*But as many as received Him to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*" This Scripture tells us that those who believe in His name and have been given the right to become children of God have done so by the will of God. In other words this Scripture confirms that it is the will of God that people become His children through belief in His name.

#3 & 4

GOD'S EXPLICIT WILL - SALVATION

That Believer's Bodies Be Raised
That Believers Receive Eternal Life

Because Jesus said that He came to do the Father's will we know that everything He did was in line with the Father required of Him. However, there is something specific that God asked Jesus to do that is revealed in the gospel of John (6:37-40). Speaking to those who had seen Him and the miraculous things he had done but still refused to believe He said, "*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.*"

From these verses we can conclude that the explicit will of God, and in turn for all who believe in His name, is that Jesus does not lose anyone whom the Father has given to Him and that He should raise them up on the last day. God's will, then, is that all who come to Jesus and believe in His name would be raised from the dead and have eternal life. Paul confirms this by saying, "*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord*" (14 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

#5

GOD'S EXPLICIT WILL - SALVATION

That Jesus Rescue Us From sin

In Galatians 1:3-4 Paul says, "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*"

It was God's will that Jesus be the instrument of our salvation. Throughout history mankind has sought many ways to be free from the effects of evil in this world through self-reliance, self-help techniques, and strength of character; through worshipping idols, worshipping self, and worshipping men who make their own truth; by seeking out false religions and false prophets to sooth our

conscience and by attempting to balance the scale of justice through good deeds.

But these all fail to take into account the only method that God Himself said would take away our sin. In Hebrews 9:22 it says, *“Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.”* A sacrifice of blood is required by God in order for sin to be erased. But not just any blood. Only the blood of something perfect would be acceptable in the sight of God. And nothing in this sin stained world was ever perfect except Jesus. God considers the blood of Jesus to be an acceptable sacrifice for sin. As the old hymn says, *“What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”*

The will of God was that Jesus become the acceptable and perfect sacrifice for sin. The things that we have mentioned that are the known will of God - that not one of His creation should perish, that all become His children, be raised from the dead and receive eternal life – these are not sufficient in themselves to accomplish His will. Man had sinned and was in need of cleansing and forgiveness. If mankind were to fulfill the will of God for salvation then God had to provide the way for that to occur. God’s will for all men to be saved could not be accomplished or fulfilled unless and until God made a way for sin-stained humanity to be cleansed. God needed a perfect sacrifice for sin and Jesus volunteered for the job. 1 John 1:7 tells us that it is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all sin. No other sacrificial blood would do. Therefore it was the will of God that Jesus come and shed His blood for our sin in order to rescue us from this present evil age. For it is through the blood of Jesus that all have the opportunity to become a child of God, to be raised from the dead, and to receive eternal life.

#6

GOD’S EXPLICIT WILL - SALVATION

That Our Sorrow Leads To Repentance

In his letter to the Corinthian church Paul admonishes the believers not to tolerate the sin which is in their midst. Since the sin was committed by someone within the church it was with great sorrow that they removed the person from their fellowship until such time as he would repent. Fortunately repentance did occur and the person was restored to fellowship.

Upon hearing the news of restoration Paul explained to the Corinthians the purpose of sorrow. Here is what he said: *“I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us...For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.”*

Based on these verses we can conclude that the Explicit Will of God is that whenever we become sorrowful over our sin, or our lack of confronting it within the church, this sorrow would be a godly sorrow that leads us to repentance. There is a sorrow of the world but that is heavy with regret and sees no hope. This type of sorrow leads to death. But the sorrow of God leads to a repentance without regret because the weight of guilt is removed and the sin which accompanied it is forgiven.

I want to pause a moment here to think about this, for all of us have experienced sorrow over sin. Paul is telling us that there are two types of sorrow – the one leads us to repent and the other keeps us from repenting. The sorrow that is according to the will of God is the one that leads us to repent and ask forgiveness for our sin. The sorrow of the world does not lead to repentance but rather results in death.

The death about which Paul is speaking certainly includes the death that comes about as a result of not inheriting eternal life. But a sorrow that is carried in this life because there is no hope of forgiveness can also lead to death; certainly an emotional death which cases people to pull away; but sometimes it can result in physical death as well. Many people commit suicide because they see no hope of forgiveness for what they have done. For this reason it is important to pay attention to what Paul is saying to the Corinthian church and to recognize whether or not the sorrow you or others are experiencing is godly or worldly sorrow.

There are two examples in Scripture of the results of both godly and worldly sorrow. Judas betrayed Jesus into the hands of his accusers which ultimately led to His being crucified. Judas was very sorrowful for having done such an evil deed and made an attempt to make it right by giving back the coins which he had earned for his betrayal. But that was not enough to ease his conscious. The sorrow that Judas felt was filled with regret for having done such a thing. The priests would not absolve him of his crime and so he felt he had no place to go to find forgiveness. The sorrow which filled his soul became too much for him to bear and eventually led him to commit suicide. The sorrow which consumed Judas was worldly sorrow and it did indeed lead to death.

Peter on the other hand also betrayed Jesus but with a different result. Peter had said he would never betray Jesus or deny that he knew Him but just several short hours after making this declaration Peter denied three times that he knew Christ. To make matters worse Jesus told Peter in advance that he would thrice deny him before the rooster ever crowed the next morning. So when the rooster did indeed crow after he denied three times that he knew Jesus, the conviction of his deed immediately filled Peter with sorrow and remorse. And what did Peter do with his sorrow? The Scriptures say that he went out and wept bitterly. Peter's bitter tears tell us that he was truly sorrowful over what he had just done.

Unlike Judas, Peter did not separate himself from others. He returned to his fellow disciples and grieved together with them over the death of Jesus. This implies that Peter repented of his denial and received forgiveness; for only a person cleansed from his sin would return and face the other disciples after what he had publicly done. Because peter's humiliation was forgiven he was able to be one of the first to rush to the tomb when the women notified the disciples that the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty.

It would also have been significant to Peter and the others that when the angel in the empty tomb instructed the women to go and tell the others of the resurrection of Jesus he specifically said, *"Go and tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He old you.'"* Peter was specifically singled out as someone Jesus wanted to see. If what Peter had done did not exclude Him from seeing Jesus then we can know for certain that Peter received forgiveness. The sorrow which Peter felt was godly sorrow and it led him to repent. Therefore it was important for Peter to know that he was included in the group of those whom Jesus wished to see.

We all struggle with regret and remorse for things we have done. Although this particular verse deals with salvation it is also important to note that we all have to deal with the sorrow that comes upon us as a result of our misdeeds. Even this sorrow can be used by the enemy to separate us from God. Even believers need to be aware that our sorrow can be used by the enemy of our souls for evil and not for good. Peter explains it this way - our Adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But we must resist him by remaining firm in our faith, not

wavering from the truth of God's word.

Satan loves to whisper lies and half-truths into our ears telling us things which would keep us from repentance. Things like, "You are such a bad person. You keep doing the things you say you will not do but then go right ahead and do them over and over again. God is so tired of hearing your feigned repentance that He has closed His ears to your prayers. There is no hope for you, you are a helpless sinner who will never have victory over it and you deserve to wallow in your grief. There is no forgiveness available to you anymore." These words are probably very similar to those Satan whispered into the heart of Judas. These are condemning words holding no hope for forgiveness.

The good news is that you will never hear these words spoken by the Father. The Holy Spirit does not speak condemning words into the minds and hearts of His people. In John 16:8-13 Jesus speaks of the role of the Holy Spirit. He says that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment...and that He will guide us into all the truth. There is a big difference between condemnation and conviction. Romans 8:1 tells us that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. As believers in Christ we have already passed from judgement into life. We have been convicted of our sin but because of our belief in Christ we have not been condemned.

It is important to remember that even when we were in the midst of our sin Jesus died for us. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but rather to save it. God offers hope, even in the midst of sin, never condemnation. If anyone rejects the hope that God offers they will receive condemnation, but it comes about because of their own choice, not because it was the will of God to condemn them.

The devil speaks words of condemnation because he does not want any to repent. But the Holy Spirit speaks words of conviction because He truly desires all to repent and to come to the knowledge of the truth – the whole truth, not partial or distorted truth. For instance, John reminds us that when we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). And Psalm 86:5 reminds us of God's kindness when it says, "*O Lord, You are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help*" (NLT). Godly sorrow leads to life because it brings us to the place of repentance without regret; and this type of repentance leads us to forgiveness and ultimately to the salvation of our souls. Worldly sorrow leads to death because it seeks to keep us from knowing the truth that will set us on the path of repentance.

Even after we have been saved Satan seeks to accuse us night and day before the throne of God. He uses the sorrow we experience as a result of our sin to whisper words of condemnation to us. But don't listen to Him. He is a liar and the father of lies. When we sin the Spirit will convict us of our sin but not condemn us for it. We should pay attention to that conviction for it is meant to cause us to repent and be forgiven. And when we are forgiven we are also cleansed from all the unrighteousness which filled our hearts. So pay attention to the type of sorrow you are experiencing. It may keep you from struggling with the lies of the enemy when you could instead be enjoying the forgiveness of God.

These first six items that I have presented as the will of God all deal with salvation; there are seven more verses that reveal the Explicit Will of God. These deal with mankind on a personal rather than a corporate level. They deal with God's will for our earthly lives rather than for our eternal

destiny. We will look at these next week and the following week we will look at the Implicit Will of God – those verses that reveal what God requires of us but do not have the words “the will of God” included in them.

In the meantime let’s ask ourselves how we can apply what we have learned today. What can we learn for this aspect of God’s will regarding salvation? If we are convinced that it is God’s will for men to be saved then we know that when we tell others about the love of Christ we are doing what God desires us to do – we are doing His will. When we share what Christ has done for us we are testifying to the truth of the gospel and the power of God to change a life which is God’s desire for us all as we prepare for an eternal existence. And when we lead others to make a commitment to Christ we are partnering with God to fulfill His will. Sharing the gospel and leading people to the path of salvation is doing God’s will.

Paul reminds us that people cannot call upon someone in whom they have not believed. They must have someone tell them about the salvation that is available through Jesus. That someone is us. We have the words of eternal life to share with those in desperate need of it. Whenever the gospel is introduced into the world we can expect conflict because we are constantly being opposed by the enemy of our souls and the souls of those with whom we are trying to share the gospel. Some people are very receptive to the gospel. You may even be the answer to their prayers or their cries for help. Others may be reluctant at first but warm up to it as your life continues to shine the truth from within. But there will also be those who will oppose the gospel no matter how much love or patience is shown to them.

For this reason it is good to remember what Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 6. It is here where he lists several sins of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. But then he goes on to say that “*such were some of you*”. We have all sinned in various ways. Some sins seem more evil or worse than others but one sin - even if it’s insignificant in light of what others have done - is enough to keep us out of heaven. We are all equally sinful but we are also equally forgivable. It is grace, not the works we do, that saves us. Let me close with these words from 1 Peter 3:15-16.

“Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the things in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.”

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