

DISCOVERING GOD’S WILL (5)
THE IMPLICIT WILL OF GOD-Part One
“THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS”
Sermon 6/03/18

THE EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT WILL OF GOD

For the past several weeks we have been discovering what the will of God is for our lives. We started by looking at the Explicit Will of God – those verses that directly say, “this is the will of God”. Here are some examples of Scripture revealing the Explicit Will of God

1 PETER 2:13-15

“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution....for such is the will of God...”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

JOHN 6:40

“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.”

These verses clearly reveal what the will of God is. There is no ambiguity or confusion because it is clearly identified (defined). From these examples we know that it is God’s will that we rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in everything, and submit ourselves to every human institution. It is also God’s will that everyone who believes in Jesus will have eternal life and be raised from the dead on the last day. These, as well as others we have already looked at, are stated explicitly in Scripture as the Will of God. However, the Will of God is also implicitly stated in Scripture. These verses reveal God’s will as well even though they do not have the words “the will of God” attached to them. Though these verses imply, rather than state directly what the will of God is, they are no less binding on our behavior.

One could argue, however, that there is really no difference between the Explicit and the Implicit will of God. In reality, everything written in Scripture reveals the will of God, whether it explicitly says ‘This is the will of God’ or whether it simply implies it. All that God reveals about Himself and what He expects of His creation provide insight into what the will of God is.

Romans 15:4 says, “*Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope.*” And 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us, “*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*” These verses tell us that all of Scripture is useful in understanding who God is and what He requires of us. The stories of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Joseph and his brothers, as well as Samson and Delilah, David and Bathsheba, Ruth and Naomi, Esther and Mordecai all reveal the faithfulness of God while in the midst of hardship and sin. Even the stories of the faithless like Absalom, Jeroboam, Manasseh, Ahab and Jezebel, Eli and his sons, tell us how God interacts with evil and holds them accountable while attempting to woo them away from their

sin. All Scripture is inspired and therefore has something to teach us, providing an insight into what the will of God is.

God revealed to many different people in many different centuries what He wanted communicated about His will using various methods. Sometimes Scripture tells a story, sometimes it provides instruction, and sometimes it records historical events or speaks prophetically of future events. Other times God reveals His will through the use of the negative, by stating what He does not want us to do. For instance, “Thou shalt not kill” reveals that God does not want us to commit murder.

And though there are some very specific things which God reveals about His will, such as “Thou shalt not kill”, it does not state “Thou shalt not kill with a knife or a sword or a gun, etc.” The principle of not committing murder remains constant no matter what instrument is used to commit the crime. By not stating a specific murder weapon the principle of not committing murder remains applicable to everyone, everywhere at all times.

That is the goal of Scripture – to be relevant to all peoples in all nations at all times throughout the history of the world. So as we look at Scripture we may see some specific things which God requires of His people but how we apply God’s will to our specific lives may vary from century to century and culture to culture. This cross-cultural instruction spanning centuries of history does not detract from the inspiration of Scripture but rather enhances its credibility. All Scripture is inspired and applicable to all generations and cultures. That is the beauty of Scripture.

But let me get back to our topic today and give you an example of what I mean by some Scripture providing explicit instruction and some providing implicit instruction. If I said to my son, “I want you to go to the Safeway store on Bayley Road and get me a 12 ounce jar of Skippy Chunky peanut butter and a 12 ounce jar of blackberry seedless jam” I have stated explicitly what I want my son to do and buy. These are very specific directions with no generalities in play. If my son either never goes to the store, goes to a different store or store location, or comes back from the store with something different that I have explicitly said, then he would have disobeyed my direct order, He would not have done what I wanted him to do. My will would have been violated and ignored.

However, if I said to him, “Son, would you please go to a store and buy me some ingredients to make a sandwich? I am not particular, so you can choose what those ingredients will be. All I ask is that you go to the store and return with something with which I can make a sandwich.” These instructions are more general. They involve something specific – going to the store – but does not state explicitly what store or what location or what products to buy. It is a general directive. It implies what I want done but does not restrict the outcome of what I want done. There are limitations but they are very general and not very specific. These are the types of instructions which God gives that apply to all cultures at all times.

Having set the stage let me now provide you with the first example of what I call the implicit will of God – verses that state what God requires of us but do not contain the words, “this is God’s will”. I start with one which gives a specific instruction but leaves the means of fulfilling its directive up to the one who believes and practices it.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-3

“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

This seems like a pretty clear instruction of what God requires of us and a clear directive of what we are to do. We are to set our minds on the things which are above where Christ is seated and not on the things which easily consume our time and energy on earth. God even provides the reason why He asks this of us: We have died and our life is hidden with Christ in God. This instruction - what God requires of us - flows from the principle of death and resurrection. That we have died with Christ, been buried with Him and have been raised to new life with Him as well. Therefore it is possible (and God requires it of us) to not dwell on earthly things but rather to set our mind on heavenly things. Though these verses do not state explicitly that this is the will of God for us, it is an implicit directive of what God wants us to do. It clearly implies what God's will is for us. How we apply this directive to our own life may vary from person to person and culture to culture but the directive remains the same.

#1

GOD'S IMPLICIT WILL IS:

We Set Our Mind On The Things Above, Not On The Things Of This Earth

To set your mind on something is to adopt a certain view, to be concerned about something, to perceive or judge what is happening - in this case from a heavenly perspective rather than from an earthly one. The things we dwell on, the things which consume our thoughts, are to be the things of heaven, not the things of earth.

This is not easily done for we have a propensity to worry and stress over the things of earth. There is much to distract us from heavenly things. We deal with health issues, financial issues, aging issues, family issues; we deal with relationship issues, possession issues, inheritance issues, even betrayal issues. I could go on and on but you get my drift. There is much to distract us and draw us away from thinking about the things of heaven, keeping us focused on the things of earth.

But I don't believe God wants us to withdraw from the world, to forget our bills, our families, our friends, our health, and other issues we encounter and just simply pretend they don't exist. He does not want us to withdraw from life on earth; He simply wants us to make heaven a priority and the things of earth secondary. He wants us to have a heavenly perspective, to see the bigger picture - all that lies before us in the heavenly realm - rather than the issues which lie directly in front of us. He has stated that He will never leave or forsake us, and that He has sent the Holy Spirit as our Helper. He asks us to place our trust and hope in Him, rather than worry about tomorrow and what it will bring. This is the heavenly perspective that He requires of us.

Proverbs 23:7 says. *“As a man thinks in his heart, so he is.”* Whatever perception of ourselves we hold in our heart will determine who we will become. Whatever we spend time dwelling on will eventually be manifested in the things we do and how we react to the world around us. If we dwell on worry we will be consumed with worry. If we dwell on finances we will

be consumed with finances. When we constantly dwell on the troubles we are having in this world, the troubles of this world consume all our time and energy. When we dwell on earthly things we become a by-product of this world and not a by-product of the next. We become what we allow our minds to dwell on. That is why God says to set our minds on things above and not on things upon the earth.

Since we have a natural propensity to dwell on the things of earth rather than the things of heaven our minds need to be redirected to dwell on heavenly things rather than being consumed with earthly cares. Romans 12:2 says, *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”* Our mind needs to be re-programmed so that we stop dwelling on the things of earth and start dwelling on the things of heaven. Again, this is not to say that we ignore what is happening around us. Life on earth is reality for us now and we must deal with each issue as it comes. But God says that the things of earth must not override or overshadow the things of heaven. But how do we do this?

Thankfully we are not left in the dark to wonder how we can accomplish this new perspective on life. God does not require something of us which He has not already equipped us to do. God provides, through the Holy Spirit and through the Scriptures, the remedy and the means by which we can accomplish what He requires of us. In Colossians God tells us to set our minds on the things above and not on the things of the earth. This is God’s will for us. But He does not tell us here how to accomplish this change of priorities. For that we need to look elsewhere in Scripture.

In Philippians chapter 4 Paul tells us how to set our minds on heavenly and not earthly things. It is a two-step process beginning with what not to do and ending with what to do. And in the middle the benefit of following his instructions is revealed. We are going to look at the beginning and the middle of these verses today.

PHILLIPIANS 4:6

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

In order to set our mind on things above and not on things of the earth we need to stop being anxious for anything. It is natural for us mortals to worry. There is much in this life to be worried about. When Wendy and I were first married I drove a school bus for Walnut Creek Christian Academy. I remember one time, after delivering a bus full of kids back to their homes that I began to think about this verse. And I said out loud to the Lord while driving that empty bus back to the school, “Lord, how can you expect me not to worry? I have so much to be worried about!”

You see, we did not make much money in those days. We could hardly pay the rent and food was scarce. Popcorn and apples were our two main food groups. I was constantly concerned about where the next meal was coming from and if we could even pay next month’s rent. There were plenty of things in my life that caused me to worry and it took a great deal of my mental energies just to remain calm in the midst of these uncertain days and nights.

I was a baby Christian and did not yet know how to fully trust. I knew that God said not to worry, but as much as I tried not to I just did not know how to keep from worrying. In my mind if I was ever going to resolve my situation I had to worry. Letting go of worry was like letting go of my concern for my family. By holding on to worry I assured myself that I was in charge of the situation and through the worry I could eventually figure out how to resolve it.

But I was deceived. All my worry did nothing to resolve my issues. I was still short on money and still concerned every month whether or not we would have a roof over our heads. Holding on to worry did nothing to resolve my issues. In fact, it was making them worse. And as time went by the Lord revealed the root of my problem and it was not a shortage of funds. It was that I held on to an earthly perspective that constantly overwhelmed my ability to see my situation from a heavenly perspective.

In Mathew chapter 6 Jesus speaks about the futility of worry and of maintaining an earthly rather than a heavenly perspective.

MATTHEW 6:24-33

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on.

“Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, hat they do not sow, not reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father sees them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?

“And why are you worried about clothing. Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown in to the furnace, will He not much more clothe you?

“You of little faith! So not worry then, saying, ‘What shall we wear?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Notice that Jesus acknowledges that we have legitimate material needs in this life. He does not deny that we need food, drink and clothing. But He tells us that our perspective on how we will attain food, drink and clothing should differ from those in the world. Our mind should be set on the things above and not on things upon the earth. Our mind should be set on the Provider and not the provision. We should stop looking at the world and worrying about what we lack and instead focus on God’s awareness of our situation and His ability to provide everything we need. We should contemplate our life from a heavenly perspective and not from the perspective of earth. This brings me to the second thing that is God’s implicit will.

#2

GOD'S IMPLICIT WILL IS THAT:
We Are To Be Anxious For Nothing By
Letting Our Requests Be Made Known To God
Through Prayer and Supplication

If we set our minds on things above, we will not be anxious for anything. We will pray with thanksgiving because we know and expect God to provide for our needs. We will not hesitate to bring a list of needs to our heavenly Father and lay them at His feet because we are assured that He hears and responds to the prayers of those who are His. We cease to worry because we have placed the responsibility for provision on God and not on ourselves or our circumstances. And what is the outcome of these prayers, of setting our minds on heavenly rather than earthly things?

PHILLIPIANS 4:7

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.”

When we set our minds on things above rather than things of the earth, instead of experiencing worry and frustration we find ourselves filled with the peace of God. Our trust in God's provision overrides our concerns; our prayers allow us to release our worries; and laying our needs before the throne of a loving Father overcomes our anxiety over tomorrow. The peace of God which comes from releasing our worries is something which is not easily understood; in fact it surpasses our ability to comprehend it. But that does not make it any less real. The peace that God gives is held in place by a guard who stands in front of the gate and does not allow anyone or anything to enter or leave. The peace of God will stand guard over our hearts and minds so that worry cannot enter and God's peace cannot leave. It is the peace that comes from lack of worry. It is the peace that comes from trust. It is the peace that comes from setting our minds on the things above and not on the things upon the earth.

A believer's life is hidden with Christ in God. And where is Christ? Christ is seated at the right hand of God. And where are we? The Scriptures tell us that we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Though our lives are currently lived on the earth our lives are actually hidden with Christ in God. So my challenge for you this week is to do just what Scripture says— to set your mind on the things above and not on the things upon this earth. It may be difficult at first, you make take one step at a time, but it should get easier as you continue to make a habit of obeying what God has asked you to do.

Having talked this week about how the mind plays a role in our obedience we will move next week to matters of the heart. We shall see why obedience to God's will is not only a matter of intellectual belief but heart belief as well. For if what we believe to be true in our heart is not in line with what we believe to be true in our mind then we can find ourselves holding two opposing beliefs regarding the will of God. If that occurs the one we feel to be true will always override what we intellectually know to be true. So as important as the mind is for obedience, if our heart is not engaged obedience is not possible. It's a life changing concept and one you won't want to miss.

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