

DISCOVERING GOD’S WILL (6)
THE IMPLICIT WILL OF GOD-Part Two
“THE HEART OF THE MATTER”
Sermon 6/10/18

Last week we looked at God’s Implicit Will, that which Scripture reveals as the will of God without explicitly stating it. We saw that:

God’s Implicit Will is That:

- #1-We Set Our Mind On The Things Above, Not On The Things Of This Earth
- #2-We Are To Be Anxious For Nothing by Letting Our Requests Be Made Known To God Through Prayer and Supplication

It is one thing to intellectually agree that we should do this – to set our minds on the things above and to be anxious for nothing; but it is quite another to actually do it. I have been a Christian nearly 50 years and there are times when I am overcome with anxiety and when my mind is stuck in earthly gear. Over the years there has been a constant battle between what fills my mind and what fills my heart. Through the years I have concluded that what I allow to rule my emotions and my thoughts will determine what course of action I will take. Belief and unbelief both reside within the heart and mind of man. Let me illustrate what I mean by using a modern-day parable.

Parable Of The Tightrope Walker

There once was a man who walked across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. With the misty spray surrounding them and the sound of the roaring falls echoing in their ears, the people watched him go across the tightrope time and time again with perfect precision. They were amazed at his skill and ability. After several times across the man asked the onlookers if they thought he could push a wheelbarrow across on the tightrope. The people unanimously said they believed he could do it. So he took a wheelbarrow and pushed it successfully across the falls on the tightrope.

The man then asked if anyone was willing to get into the wheelbarrow while he pushed it across the falls. No one volunteered. No one raised their hand. They all remained silent, trying to blend into the crowd innocuously; terrified he might choose one of them to go unto the wheelbarrow. The people believed the man could push the wheelbarrow across until it came time for them to put their trust in his ability to do so. They were not willing to place themselves in the wheelbarrow, to place their lives into his care. They had the knowledge that the man could push the wheelbarrow across the falls, had even seen it with their own eyes, but they did not have the belief that the man could carry them safely across in the wheelbarrow. They had knowledge without belief. They had knowledge without trust.

What about us? We say we know the Lord but do we really know Him? We say we believe what He says, but do we really believe it? We say we trust the Lord but do we really trust Him? Do we base our beliefs on our own experience, our own understanding, on our limited resources? Or do we base it on a Person, on His unchanging nature, and on His unerring Word? Like the people observing the man walking across Niagara Falls, some of us have given

intellectual assent to the truth of Scripture but have not placed out trust in God's ability to carry us safely across the falls. I know this has been true of me from time to time. It's one thing to say we believe, it's another thing entirely to put that belief into practice.

God is calling us to trust Him. He's calling us to step out in faith, to put into practice what we know. He's shown us how. Now He's asking us to walk by faith. He's asking us to get in the wheelbarrow. Will we trust Him with our life? Or will we continue to sit on the sidelines, content to watch? Will our actions match our words? Will our belief match our knowledge?

The people watching the man at the falls were of two different minds. On the one hand they believed the man could successfully do anything while walking on that tightrope across the dangerous falls. But when asked to place their life in his hands their intellectual belief was insufficient. Their fear of death and danger was greater than their trust in their intellectual knowledge. Their belief allowed them to watch from the sidelines but did not allow them to participate in the journey.

INTELLECTUAL BELIEF vs. HEART BELIEF

This parable shows us that it is possible to intellectually acknowledge that something is possible while at the same time not be willing to place our trust in what we have intellectually believed as possible – to know intellectually that something is true while at the same time to be emotionally unable to trust.

This holds true for us in this life as we seek to walk by faith. For instance, it is possible to believe with our intellect that Jesus is the Son of God. We can intellectually assent that Jesus existed and was who He said he was. But Scripture does not say we are to believe with our intellect. It says we are to believe with our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. There is a vast difference between an intellectual belief and a belief that comes from the heart.

You see, it is possible to believe one thing with the mind but believe an entirely different thing with your heart. It is possible, as James says, to be of two-minds, what he calls double-minded; to hold two opposing beliefs, one in your mind and one in your heart. Let me explain what I mean.

We cannot hold two opposing truths with our intellect alone. We cannot believe that 2 plus 2 equals 4 and also believe that 2 plus two also equals 6. We can only hold one of these to be true. Likewise we cannot hold two opposing truths in our hearts. We cannot believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and also believe that Jesus was never raised from the dead. Only one of these truths can be held as truth in our hearts. But we can and often do believe two opposing things. One is believed with our mind and the other is believed with our heart.

Here's an example. I can intellectually assent to the truth that God is able to provide for all my needs. I have read that truth in the Scripture and believe it with my mind. However, when I am in need of food or money and I experience anxiety and fear and worry, and an absence of calm or peace because of it, then my heart overrides my intellect and revealing what I truly believe. I have two opposing beliefs residing within me. The one that feels the most true to me

will be the one that dictates my actions. I will follow through on what my heart dictates to me as truth even though I intellectually I hold something different to be true.

The heart is a key player in our journey of faith. In Luke 6:45 Jesus said, *“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”* Proverbs 4:23 says, *“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”* Proverbs 21:2 says, *“Every man’s way is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.”* Matthew 6:21 says, *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* Proverbs 4:23 says, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart (not your intellect), and lean not on your own understanding.”* Proverbs 4:23 says, *“Above all else, guard your heart for everything you do flows from it.”* God looks at the heart to determine whether or not a man has faith and to determine the genuineness of that faith.

In Genesis 15:6 we read, *“Abraham believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”* And what did Abraham believe? He believed that even as he was about to sacrifice his son Isaac on the altar, in obedience to God’s command, that God’s promise would remain true. Even if he sacrificed the one through whom God had promised many descendants, God was able to raise him from the dead. His faith did not waiver in God’s promise because He believed in his heart that God was able to accomplish what He had already promised.

The importance of heart belief is revealed in Romans where Paul says,

ROMANS 10:9

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

Belief in Jesus must come from the heart and not simply from the lips. It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. So whatever fills our heart will be reflected or revealed through our actions and our words. We can say the words, “Jesus is Lord” but if we do not believe Jesus is Lord in our heart then they are empty words, devoid of salvation.

In Matthew chapter 7 Jesus says that many will say to Him, *“Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles? And then He will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”* They understood something intellectually about Jesus and attempted to do things in His name, but they had no heart knowledge. They did not believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead. They were merely attempting to do good works in order to enter heaven. They did not have faith in Christ, so they were denied entrance. God did not know them because when He looked at their heart there was not faith in His shed blood to save them.

Last week I spoke of being worried and fearful in the early years of our marriage over. I fretted over where our next meal was coming from and whether or not we would be able to pay the rent. In those days I intellectually believed the verse that said, *“Be anxious for nothing”* but the fear in my heart overrode my intellect. The true source of my belief was not in my mind but rather in my heart. The abundance of worry and anxiety in my heart revealed the true nature of my belief – that I did not trust God to provide for me even though I intellectually professed to.

When the rubber meets the road, as they say, is when the true nature of what we believe is revealed. My intellectual belief crumbled as I placed the weight of the worry I had upon it. My intellectual belief could not hold up under scrutiny. When it was tested it proved to be false. What I believed in my heart overrode what I believed in my intellect. It did not matter that God's word said it was true. It did not feel true to me so I did not believe it. When we have two opposing beliefs one will always win out. What we feel is true will trump what we know to be true.

A story of Jesus and His disciples will help to illustrate this. In Mathew Chapter 6 we read of Jesus taking five loaves and two fishes then multiplying it enough to feed five thousand men. Immediately after this

“Jesus made His disciples get into a boat and go ahead of Him to the other side of Bethsaida. Then, after bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray. When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. Seeing them strain at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night (which is between 3 and 6 in the morning) Jesus came to them walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them.

“But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, ‘Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.’ Then He got into the boat with them, and the winds stopped; and they were utterly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves. But their heart was hardened.”

The key part of this passage is that the disciples were astonished when the winds stopped because they had not gained any insight after seeing Jesus miraculously feed the five thousand. Their intellectual belief obtained by sight had not penetrated their heart. Their hearts remained hardened to God's power and ability even though they had witnessed it first-hand.

Here is another Scripture. In Matthew we read of the angel at the empty tomb of Jesus saying to the women to tell His disciples to go to Galilee where they will see Jesus. Mathew then says, *“The eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee and when they saw Him, they worshipped Him, but some were doubtful”* (Matthew 28:17).

When Jesus stood before them in His resurrected body they all had the intellectual ability to acknowledge that Jesus had been raised from the dead. There was no doubt in their minds, yet come still doubted. And where was their doubt coming from? It was coming from their hearts. They could hold a belief in their mind but it was much more difficult to hold it in their hearts.

These stories show us that it is possible to see with our own eyes something miraculous yet not learn the lesson of belief. We can intellectually assent to something but that does not mean it will have an impact on our heart. Our heart remains hardened to spiritual truth. If we saw Jesus standing directly in front of us most of us would fall down and worship as the disciples did. But we might also doubt as did some of the disciples.

How can you doubt who Jesus is and what He can do when He walks on the water and gets into the boat after feeding five thousand men from five loaves and two fishes? How can you doubt when a resurrected Jesus is standing directly in front of you? And yet they did. You see, it is possible to intellectually see and understand something but still have doubt in our hearts over the reality of the truth of what we acknowledge with our minds. If faith is to be genuine it is in the heart where faith and trust must reside and not simply in the mind.

Jesus tells us in Matthew chapter 6 not to worry about what we shall eat or drink or what we shall wear. We spoke of this last week in the context of God's implicit will. And why should we not worry? Because our heavenly Father knows we need all these things. God does not command us to worry but rather to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. When we do, all these things – food, clothing, and other provisions - will be added to the spiritual things which God is granting us because we believe in the name of His Son. We are not to worry or be anxious over earthly things. Paul reiterates this concept in Philippians 4:6-7 when he says, *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.”* This is the implicit will of God for us.

What we truly believe in our heart will be revealed by our actions. We can intellectually assent to the truth of God's word and even confess with our mouth that God will take care of us, but if we are anxious over what we shall eat or wear and whether or not we will have a place to live, or a job, or someone to take care of us in our old age, or any other number of things over which we worry, then the true nature of our belief is revealed to be not trust but doubt. We may hold one truth in our minds but the reality of our faith and trust resides in our hearts. Becoming anxious exposes the doubt that resides deep within us and brings into the light of day the weakness of our intellectual faith.

Jesus spoke of the Jewish leaders calling them “whitewashed tombs, full of dead men's bones”. They taught and understood the Scripture but missed or misinterpreted what they read. They honored the Lord with their intellect, speaking of God's ways with their mouths, but their hearts were far from Him (Matthew 15:8). These leaders believed that the Lord their God was one, just as Moses had proclaimed in Deuteronomy 6:4. But James tells us that the demons believe this also and tremble.

The Jewish leaders gave intellectual assent to the Scriptures. But even though they intellectually believed what Moses proclaimed - that another prophet like him would come to them whom they should place their trust in - they did not believe in their heart that Jesus was that prophet. The abundance of what was in their heart revealed the true nature of their belief. Jesus said of them, *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; It is these that testify about Me; (yet) you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life”* (John 5:39). We too are sometimes unwilling to come to Jesus with complete trust so that we might experience the abundant life He has promised. We cling to the fear in our hearts rather than taking the hand of the Lord to journey with Him as we walk together through the valley of trust.

GOD PROVIDES EVEN IN THE MIDST OF WORRY

I spoke last week about my worry for what Wendy and I would eat during the early years of our marriage and whether or not we would continue to have a roof over our head each month. What I did not tell you is how God provided for our needs. There were several times us during those lean years when my wife and I would go for a drive just to get out of the house and have a few moments away from the worry of the house and the lack of food. We did these infrequently and never at the same time or day. Yet I remember three distinct times when we returned from our drive that there was sitting on our doorstep an envelope containing a hundred dollars in cash. Thanks to that money we were able to pay the rent those months. To this day I have no idea who placed those envelopes on our doorstep. But I can give God the credit for it being there.

There was another time when food was very low and friend of ours came to the door bearing a bag full of apples. I felt embarrassed to receive them but we were so poor and so hungry that I took them and thanked him for his gift. We ate those apples over several days as they were our main staple of food then. Another time someone from our church asked if I wanted to have a few days' work by sorting pears in a factory. Manual labor was not my favorite then and still isn't but I was grateful for any work I could get. So I drove to Emeryville and worked in a factory for a man who had invented a new type of sorting machine for Del Monte. I worked for two days only, while the powers that be inspected the new machinery, then I was done. Not a lot of money made but enough to get us through another month of paying rent.

I could go on and tell you about the many cars that were given to us after several of ours broke down and we did not have the money to fix them. God was always providing for us in small but meaningful ways. I admit that I wavered between trust and doubt many times, but the lesson I came out of that time with was this: God is faithful. He may not provide what I expect, He may not even provide as much as I think I need, but He will provide. And not a single ounce of my worry did anything to make it happen. All worry did was distract me from what God was doing. It kept me from experiencing the peace which God so freely gives to those who trust Him.

Those days of learning to trust God for food, shelter and clothing helped me to understand the difference between what I believed in my head and what I believed in my heart. I could no longer simply confess with my mouth that Jesus was able to take care of me. I had to believe in my heart that He was able to do it. I had to stop looking at what was intellectually possible and start getting in the wheelbarrow and trust in my heart that He would get me safely across the abyss. I may have feared what tomorrow held for me but I learned that trust overrode my fear. God is faithful. What He has promised is able to do.

2 Timothy 1:7 says, "*God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control*" (ESV). This means that when we are full of fear or feel powerless, and when we lack love or self-control, that it is not coming from God's Spirit. It is coming from the enemy of our souls and it is coming from our unbelief. When we trust God with our whole heart we produce the fruit of God's Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And, as Paul says in Philippians, when we give our anxiety to the Lord the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6).

Each of us has a choice to make – to believe the fear that rules our hearts and overwhelms our emotions, or believe the God who dwells within our heart. Both options are available to us.

But know this, whichever one we choose will cause us to act out what we believe. What we choose to believe will determine what we will experience. We will either be frustrated and overwhelmed by the cares of this world or we will experience God's peace.

As for me, I chose to believe in my heart that God is faithful to His word and is able and willing to provide for my every need, regardless of the circumstances I find myself in. Our life on earth is a journey which takes us through difficult time. We will have tribulation in this world. We will experience things which overwhelm us. But with trust in Jesus we can overcome the world. With a belief that stems from the heart and not just from the intellect we can find the peace of God in the midst of whatever trial we face. God is faithful. The only question remaining is will we be faithful to? Will we believe with our heart that God is able to provide for us? Will we cast all our cares at His feet and leave them there? Will we get in God's wheelbarrow and let Him lead us across the rapids safely? If we do we will find ourselves empowered to obey God's implicit will which says, *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God, And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Amen.

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