

What Is The Will of God for My Life? Part 2

We're looking at the will of God in this series. So many people ask the question – what is God's will for my life? Some ask it, sincerely desiring to please God, others ask simply out of curiosity. Some ask because we fear, and are too lazy to make our own decisions, and would like someone else to make them for us. But we saw in past 1 of this series that the will of God is not what some people make it out to be.

The will of God should not be discerned through our emotions, through a supposed new revelation for a human, or purely from circumstances. We saw, and are seeing from Scripture – that the will of God has two aspects – a revealed will and a secret will. To be in God's will is to obey His revealed will, not ask Him for His secret will, and to apply wisdom to our decision-making.

Now, we've been searching Scripture to find the revealed will of God. Firstly, we saw in **1 Timothy 2:3-4** that it's God's will for you to be saved. Once you are saved, **Ephesians 5:17-18** tells us that it's God's will that you be Spirit-filled. This means being Word-filled, desiring to obey the Word, and relying on the Spirit to empower your obedience. It is a moment-to-moment leaning on Him for the grace to imitate Christ.

Thirdly, we saw that it's God's will that a believer be sanctified. Sanctification is becoming more like Christ – it is living a holy life. We saw how this is done – by putting off the old, being renewed in His image, and putting on the new.

We still have three more to look at. At this point, you may be saying – but how does this help me choose a wife? How does this help me know if my job is where I'm supposed to be? Well, if you think it through, you'll begin to see that these rather general principles – be Spirit-filled, be sanctified, will be the exact things that provide us with the wisdom for good decision-making. We'll see that more clearly a bit later.

So let's continue with our study of God's will in the Word. In **1 Thessalonians 5:18**, we read: *"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."* This is God's revealed will is that we be thankful – which means content or satisfied. Now, we say want to be in God's will. Well, here it is in black and white – be satisfied. If we are a grumbling, moaning people – we are out of the will of God.

Now, how can I give thanks about everything? I mean, that really sounds pie in the sky. Well, the key is to understand that being grateful for something does not mean you have to be delighted with that thing. You do not have to be pleased about it to be grateful for it. What do I mean?

Think of it this way: what you think you deserve, you are not grateful for. Spoilt brats do not appreciate huge benefits in their lives, because they regard them as 'normal' or 'necessities.' Millions of others would regard running water as a luxury, or a blanket and a few changes of clothes as a wonder.

See, the less you have, the more you appreciate what you get. You do not regard everything as a 'right', but as a privilege – you value it more. If we start from the point of view of asking, "What do I really deserve?" we'll get the answer. The answer is – hell. That's what we truly have earned (**Romans 6:23**).

Now, if you deserve hell, but instead get eternal life, doesn't everything else become icing on the cake? This attitude of submission to God is what truly empowers gratitude. Not delighting in everything, but seeing ourselves as deserving of nothing, but instead being recipients of much.

From the place of deserving nothing – everything becomes a blessing! And you can count them! This is gratitude. So I can be thankful for hard times, for lean times, for difficulties, because they are better than an eternity in hell (which is what I deserve) and they are part of my Master's plan for me.

See, gratitude is an attitude. Gratitude is an attitude of submission to God. It is a place of humility – where we are grateful for our Master's unfairly good treatment of us. So God's will is that we be satisfied. Contentment has nothing to do with your circumstances and everything to do with submission to the God of the circumstances.

Paul knew how to abound, and how to be abased. He knew he could be thankful in all kinds of circumstances because he believed, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (**Philippians 4:13**). He was in submission to Him and so could be satisfied with what God gave Him. That brings us to our fifth stop in Scripture on the will of God, which we can find in 1 Peter:

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

1 Peter 2:13-15

God's will is that we put foolish men to silence with our well-doing. What is our well-doing in this portion of Scripture? Submission. Submission. It is worth examining the topic of responding to ungodly authority. Believe it or not, it's God's will that Christians be submissive and law-abiding. And submitting to authority is a supernatural thing.

Unsaved people only submit when it suits their purpose – if they are threatened with harm or if they are enticed with reward. The unsaved man is his own king and despises the idea of submission – in marriage, in parent-child relationships, in the workplace, in the church, and in the civil society.

But the saved man is not to be that way. When he submits to the Holy Spirit's control, he will be submissive to authority in his life. Sometimes, he will be shrewd in the case of abusive and

ungodly authority, and always he will seek to please God first, but ultimately, there is a pattern of peaceable, submissive Christians that is painted in the Scriptures.

I sometimes see a car with the fish on the back signifying someone professes to be saved, but they are whipping past at a speed that is a violation of the laws of the country. Please, take your fish off, if you're going to do that. You may say, "God is not so petty." No, God's will is that you as a Christian submit to the laws of the land.

On the other end of the spectrum, I understand that Christians must not be passive in society, nor must we be silent observers, but there is nothing God-honouring about Christians being belligerent, rebellious-spirited people, supposedly possessed of the idea of 'taking over the world for Jesus. Let's do it's God's way. He says, submit to the powers I have ordained, and preach the Gospel to every creature.

Our final mention of the revealed will of God in Scripture is also found in 1 Peter: *"For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing"* (**1 Peter 3:17**). God's will, believe it or not, is that we as Christians suffer for our Christianity.

Suffering for our own foolishness is not God's will. Suffering for our own sin is not God's will. But God has included suffering in His plan for the life of a believer. How some overlook this vital aspect, I don't know. Scripture is very plain that God wants us to suffer as Christians:

- **Philippians 1:29** – *"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."*
- **Philippians 3:10** – *"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death..."*
- **1 Peter 2:21** – *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps."*

Scripture clearly wants us to know that we will suffer, and *should* suffer. Why is suffering so crucial to our lives that God wills it for us?

Firstly, remember that it was the God-ordained path of Christ, and the servant is not greater than his Master. Secondly, suffering is like the intense heat needed to purge the dross from the gold. Within our hearts, selfishness sits like a deeply-embedded impurity, so ingrained that we consider it natural and normal. Suffering is what God uses to show us our selfishness and grow our love for Him.

Think about it – when you suffer for God, you are truly brought to a crisis point – am I going to choose God in this situation, or self? I mean, the suffering is obviously antagonistic to you – to yourself, so to choose the suffering, to choose to be thankful for it, is to say you are choosing God over self. You are by God's grace loving Him more than yourself. And those are probably the most spiritually maturing events in our lives. And so it is God's will that we suffer.

So there we have God's revealed will in scripture:

1. We must be saved.
2. We must be Spirit-filled.
3. We must be sanctified.
4. We must be satisfied.
5. We must be submissive.
6. We must be suffering for Christ.

Now, how do I know if I'm in God's will? Simple – if you are doing these things consistently – you are in God's will. There is no mystery behind it. But you say, "No, I need details! I want to know who I must marry, what career path to take, where to live, if I must stay or go and so on" Well, remember we said that there is a revealed will of God, and a secret will of God:

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy 29:29

We've been seeing the things that belong to us and our children – the revealed will of God – being saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, satisfied and suffering. So when you are asking, "Lord, please tell me the name of the one I'm supposed to marry" – you are asking for secret knowledge. You say, "No I just want to be in God's will." Well, God has told you His will. What He hasn't told you is secret. To ask for this knowledge sounds like prying to me.

Now, I know we may not feel that way, but it is true. Like we said, we often want God to give us the details to relieve us of the responsibility of making wise, intelligent decisions, and to give us a smooth life without us having to be responsible and diligent. So what do I do with regard making the decisions in my life? Well, there is a lot of counsel in the Bible.

1. Obey the revealed will of God.

See, consider how the things we have said will affect even a decision such as who to marry. By being saved, you take yourself out of the whole world's mentality of marriage and sexuality. By being sanctified, you abstain from sexual impurity which complicates the matter of finding the right person. By being submissive, you will honour godly counsel from parents, church leaders and so on.

Then, by being satisfied, you are not filled with doubt, worry and discontent that you will never be married – but are getting on with your life as a useful servant of Christ – which makes you more attractive to others anyway. By embracing suffering, you are learning that relationships are sacrifice, not just sugar, so you are looking for deeper qualities in others than surface attractions.

And by being Spirit-filled, you are filled with the Bible's instructions on marriage, character, and relationships, and so are not looking among the unsaved, not looking at uncommitted Christians, but are looking for a partner who will complete you in your usefulness to Christ. So, be just obeying the revealed will of God, I would say we have solved about 90% of the problem.

By dating the unsaved, you're violating **1 Corinthians 7:39**, so you're out of the will of God. By ignoring godly counsel, you are being unsubmitive, so you're out of the will of God. By being involved in sexual activity before marriage, you are not being sanctified, so you're out of the will of God. By being filled with misery at being single, you are not satisfied, and out of the will of God. So this is where we start to solve most of our problems.

2. Ask for wisdom

However, if you are consistently seeking to obey these things, then the next thing is to ask for wisdom from God. **James 1:5-6** says, *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."* God will give us wisdom if we ask for it. **Proverbs 2:6-8** tells us that it is God who gives wisdom.

3. Gather wisdom, information and Bible-based counsel

Third, we must gather as much wisdom and information as possible. Your first stop is the Word. May I recommend the book of Proverbs as an inexhaustible source of principles and precepts for every area of life. Proverbs will tell you not only to avoid sexual immorality, it will tell you to avoid the contentious woman, the angry, violent-tempered man, the one with no respect for their parents, the one greedy for gain, the lazy person.

It will advise you what to look for in a wife, and in a husband. We can also add to this counselling from biblical counsellors. **Proverbs 11:14** says, *"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."* Importantly, a biblical counsellor is one who confronts you with your responsibility in the situation *from the Word of God alone*.

4. Act as seems fit

The final stage then, believe it or not, is do what seems best to you. Sounds shocking? Consider a verse often misquoted: *"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart"* (**Psalms 37:4**). That verse does not mean that God will give you a blank cheque for everything you want in life. It means this: as you make God your chief desire, your desires will change to be His desires, and He will be pleased to fulfil those desires.

See, when you are obeying God's will, then you will be maturing to love what He loves. So as you find your delight in Him, He will be pleased to give you what you desire. So when you are saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, suffering, satisfied, submissive, and you have gathered wisdom – all things being equal – do what you want.

If you are obeying God's revealed will, then the thing you are thinking of doing cannot be a violation of any of those things, unless you are lying to yourself. If you have prayed for wisdom,

and gathered it from the Word and others, and nothing in the Bible places it in doubt – and you desire it – then do it. You might say, “That’s not very spiritual.” In fact, if you are in the will of God – you are spiritual.

Listen to how Paul made a decision: *“Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone” (1 Thessalonians 3:1)*. We thought it good. We were in the will of God – and that’s what we wanted to do – so that’s what we did. Realise that God has the power to overrule a decision we make, and He may do that.

- **Proverbs 16:9** – *“A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.”*
- **Proverbs 19:21** – *“There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.”*

This means that God’s secret will *will* take place, even if you get off base. God gives us a certain latitude in our decisions. If you obey the revealed will of God as well you know how, and use wisdom, then you can do what you see best, and leave it to God to unfold His exact plan for you.

At a point, Paul and his group wanted to go to Asia, but **Acts 16:6** says, *“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.”* God stopped them. That’s where circumstances play a part – God makes it impossible. But Paul and his group did not wait to see if they heard Chinese music by accident before they decided that they wanted to head east. They wanted to, they went, and God intervened.

If we are obeying His revealed will, seldom will you find a decision repulsive. It may seem difficult, but as a submissive child, it will still be what you want to do. But the key is – stay in the revealed will of God. Seek wisdom. In that state of obedience to God, your desires are not selfish – so do what you think is best, what seems good to you, and allow God to guide the rest.

Our problem is we are too often too analytical. Is this me? Is it God? Is it Satan? Is it the flesh? Instead of debating philosophy, rather seek to make a decision using wisdom. Just make sure what you are deciding does not violate Scripture, that it does not take you out of the revealed will of God. How will I know that? Study the Scripture. **Hosea 4:6** says, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”*

See, obeying the revealed will of God is like a train ride. Being in the will of God is like getting off at the correct train station. You’re in the right town. From there, you may make a wrong turn here and there, but they are not sinful turns, and God will make sure the road winds up taking you to the correct destination anyway.

Being out of the revealed will of God is like getting off at the wrong station altogether, and now asking for street names to your destination. You are miles off. You need to get back onto the train of the revealed will of God, and from there – ask for wisdom for your decisions which you know are in His will, left or right, and then do what you see as best. Do what you desire, as one who desires God.

So instead of mystically thinking about if we have peace or not, instead of waiting for a four-leaf clover to tell us whether or not to do something, let us be as practical as God has been with us.

Obey His revealed will. Be saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, satisfied and suffering for Him. Then don't worry about His secret will. Get on with your life. When it comes to some of the bigger decisions, do what you do in the smaller decision – once more, obey the revealed will of God, ask Him for wisdom, gather it from others and the Word, apply it, and if nothing prevents you – then do what you want to do as an obedient child of God.