

What is God's will, and what is our response to it? That is a question I will make an attempt to bring some light to this morning. My material for this message will come mostly from a pamphlet by Charles Swindoll written in 1976.

First, let me give you the dictionary explanation for **WILL**: 1) *A choice or determination of one having authority*; 2) *the mental powers manifested as wishing, choosing, desiring or intending*; 3) *power of controlling one's actions*.

With God's will the paths that lead to an understanding of his plan are strewn with the litter of confusion, mystery, frustration, guilt and superstition.

God isn't playing a guessing game with his people. His will for us is neither puzzling nor hidden within some deep, dark cave requiring magical words to let us in on the secret. Contrary to popular opinion, anyone who sincerely seeks his will can find it.

Here are a few samples on how unbelievable some people can search. Like the woman who had been trying to discover God's will on a decision that was almost impossible to determine, she finally boiled it down to one of two options. As she drove down the street, she told the Lord "if it is your will that I choose option A, then let the light at the next corner stay green until I get there." (WOW!)

Or the young Christian struggling with his career choice --- as he was driving and praying in Washington D.C. he ran out of gas in front of the Philippine Embassy. He got his answer. God wanted him to be a missionary and serve the Lord in the Philippines. (Another WOW!) I wonder what this young man would do if he found himself stuck in an elevator with a young single woman named Mary? Would that be God's sign to marry her?

How about the Christian who sat at the window with his Bible open and allowed the wind to whip the pages over as he picked out a verse for the day? His finger fell at random on the words: "Judas went out and hanged himself." Bewildered and shocked, he tried again and landed on "Go and do thou likewise." Further dismayed, he quickly tried a third time as the wind and finger method led him to "Whatsoever you do, do it quickly." Isn't that ridiculous?

We find people using all kinds of methods to find God's will. But in the Bible we find ..... in Ephesians 5:17 we read "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Then in Ephesians 1:3-14 we read..... *I went to my Parallel Bible I use at home and chose the new International Version as being the easiest to understand in lieu of the King James Living Bible or the Revised Standard Version.* Listen closely; this is from Paul's Letter to Ephesians: "Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ, for he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us, with all wisdom and understanding and he made known to us the mystery of his **WILL** according to his good pleasure which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment --- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession --- to the praise of his glory." (There you have it.)

Once we have accepted Jesus as our personal savior we need to go to the Bible where we have sixty six books filled with precepts and principles, and the better we know his word, the more we will know his will.

Some of the statements that appear in the Bible are specific black and white truths that take the guesswork out of the way. Just remember this: the primary purpose of the word of God is to help us know the will of God. So become a careful, diligent student of the scripture. Those who are will be better equipped to understand his desires for us.

Here are some specifics from the Bible. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus --- this from 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:15-18. To some it is unconceivable that God's will could be enjoyable and even delightful.

In Romans 12:2 we see very clearly that his will is good, acceptable and perfect. It is not hidden in a traffic light or in the wind turning pages in your Bible. His book, daily circumstances, an inner spirit and some wise friends are all we need to know; that, and a firm belief that Jesus Christ is indeed our savior.

In closing, I lead you to Galatians 5:22: "The gifts of the Holy spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

For a homework assignment, I turned my fan on and let the pages of my Bible flip to Paul's Letter to the Romans, chapter 9, verses 14-24. (Only kidding!)

But if you start there, you may go on to continue to a stumbling block in Zion and so much more.

Paul is our anchor. He was the last to see the risen Christ. On the road to Damascus he was on his way to persecute Christians when Jesus appeared to him and his life was changed. He was chosen by God to bring the message of salvation to the Gentiles.

His letter to the various churches and his fellow believers are the core of who we are and what we believe.

Shall we pray?