

## The Christian Life: God's Will

# 7. Why Are So Many Christians Confused About God's Will?

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From the **TeachingtheWord** Bible Knowledgebase

Part seven of a series. Read [part six](#).

**Confusion and heartache often come because Christians accept cheap and deceitful substitutes for the genuine and all-surpassing knowledge of God's will.**

We are continuing our study of Colossians 1:9-12, focusing on the very important matter of knowing God's will. These verses form a single sentence in the Scriptures:

9. For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;
10. that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;
11. strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;
12. giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

We have been considering seven truths concerning the will of God that we find in chapter one.

Today we come to number six: *The Christian's knowledge of God's will is superior to the world's false and speculative knowledge and wisdom.*

### **Misconceptions About God's Will**

Sadly, many Christians do not truly grasp this vital fact. Why is that? It is because of a dangerous chain reaction that is taking place in many Christians' thinking. The ultimate cause

of many problems in the Christian life is the failure to have a knowledge of God's will. The reason for this deficiency is that we neglect God's ordained means of knowing His will. Why do Christians so often do that? It is because they think, or have been told, that something else is superior to God's ordained way.

Nothing is superior to God's way.

Tragic misconceptions about this issue run rampant among Christians today. Many people hear an evangelistic message in which they are given the impression that if you become a Christian, every problem in life will automatically be solved. There will be no more problems with your husband, your wife, your children, your parents, or your in-laws. All of your financial difficulties will be taken care of. All of your problems at work will disappear; and so on.

Some preachers will tell you that God will speak to you in an audible voice and tell you everything you are supposed to do, step by step.

Today many preachers will tell you that faith is a force, that the vehicle for the exercise of that force is your words, and therefore you can speak your own reality into existence. This name-it-and-claim-it or word-of-faith heresy is rampant on religious television. Its theme is not, "*Thy* will be done," but "*my* will be done." It is the ultimate expression of pride, of the self and of self-will, wrapped in deceptively Christian-sounding jargon.

There are many other variations of these false teachings. Many new Christians fall into these traps, but long-time Christians can also fall prey to these kinds of lies about knowing God's will. Sooner or later - and perhaps after much heartache and disappointment, a true Christian is going to realize that some false teacher has set ungodly expectations in your mind. At that point, it is very easy for a believer to fall into Satan's trap of thinking and say, "Well, perhaps I am not really a Christian at all." The root of the problem is that many Christians have not been taught how to know God's will.

What is the answer to this problem? How does the Christian become filled with the knowledge

of the will of God, in all spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding? Before I give you the answer, let me say that it is an answer that is both too simple, and too profound, for many Christians to want to accept.

### **You Must *Internalize* God's Word**

The answer to all of this is the teaching of the Bible itself - what the Word of God actually has to say about these matters. First of all, the Bible says that we Christians are in a warfare. We read of this in Ephesians chapter six, beginning at verse ten:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

That is the nature of the Christian life. It is a warfare. It involves wrestling. But we must understand that it is not a warfare against flesh and blood, but against the forces of Satan himself. We are not warring merely against human nature, or human forces. We are engaged in a tremendous spiritual battle against a strong and unseen enemy. The warfare never lets up, because the enemy never lets up.

What does God tell us to do in this battle? "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Do not go into the warfare in reliance your own strength, whether physical, spiritual, or intellectual. Be strong *in the Lord*, and in the power of *His* might.

How are we to do that? We are to put on the whole armor of God, Paul says in Ephesians 6:13. And what is the one offensive weapon that we are to take into the battle? We read of it in Ephesians 6:17. We are to take up "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

The most important thing, and the most practical thing that you can do as a Christian, is to prayerfully read and study the Word of God with the objective of *internalizing* it. As I said a moment ago, this solution is both too simple, and too profound, for many Christians to want to accept. Why? Because it is not the easy way. It is not a quick fix. We must apply ourselves to it as a lifetime project. We must never stop until God calls us to glory.

Taking in and digesting God's Word is as essential to your spiritual life and well-being as the physical food you eat is essential to your physical life and well-being. It is the internalization of God's Word that builds spiritual bone, muscle and brain, as it were. It is the internalization of God's Word that equips the spiritual nervous system and the spiritual senses, giving us eyes to see and ears to hear as God desires us to see and hear. It equips us to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). That is how you will gain the knowledge of the will of God, and it is a knowledge that is far superior to the world's false and speculative knowledge and wisdom. The world's knowledge and wisdom will not help you in the conflict in which you find yourself.

### **God's Word Concerning God's Will: Some Examples**

I want to mention just a few things that the Bible tells us about the will of God. We have seen, first of all, that it is the will of God for you as a Christian to be in a life-long spiritual conflict. That is what we find in Ephesians chapter six, and in other passages such as Romans chapters six and seven.

But in this life-long conflict, God's Word tells us that it is His will to make us more and more like Christ (Romans 8:29). While we are engaging in conflict with the enemy, at the same time we are to be resting in Christ. Our salvation is secure in Christ. But one of the primary things the enemy is going to try to do is to convince you, in various ways and through various means, that you are not secure in Christ. Therefore you need to know what God's Word says about God's will regarding your salvation. Romans and Galatians tell you that you are no longer under the curse and bondage of the law; Satan has no standing, no basis, on which to accuse you. You have the rock-solid answer when the enemy raises that accusation against you, as he will

in various and clever ways. You have the answer in the Sword of the Spirit. Your answer is the preeminent Christ, what He has done for you by His death, burial, and resurrection.

God's Word also tells us that while we are in the conflict we are being disciplined and corrected along the way by a loving heavenly Father. It is God's will to discipline us, in order to make us more and more like His Son, and to make us stronger for the conflict, so that we will look "unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith." We read of this in Hebrews 12:1-13.

At the same time, it is God's will that we have an Intercessor who is touched with our infirmities, Jesus Christ, seated at the right hand of God the Father. We read of this in Hebrews chapter four. It is God's will for us to come before His throne of grace boldly and continually, that we may find grace to help in time of need.

From a material and financial standpoint, there may be times of leanness and times of plenty. You will read of both frequently in the pages of Scripture. You have, for example, the prophet's marvelous song of testimony in Habakkuk 3:17-19:

Though the fig tree may not blossom, or fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls - Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.

Also, this testimony of David:

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lends; and his descendants are blessed. (Psalm 37:23-26)

Beware of the trap of thinking that lack of material things is a sign of God's displeasure, and also beware of thinking that material abundance is a sure indicator that all is well between you and your Father. God wants you to hold your life up to the mirror of His Word, so that you can please Him regardless of your material circumstances.

It is God's will to use both want and plenty, both sickness and health, to conform you to the image of Christ and to test you and mature you. There may be thorns in the flesh that God will choose in His wisdom to remove; but as with the Apostle Paul, there may be others that the Lord decides in His wisdom to leave in place in order to show us the all-sufficiency of His grace.

The Bible tells us that it is God's will that there will be times when the pathway will seem dark; we see this often, for example, in the Psalms. But we also see that God has promised to guide us with His own eye (Psalm 32:8). God says that in the dark places He will illuminate your pathway by the light of His Word. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Paul told Timothy that "all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). That also is God's will. And that is why Paul tells Timothy in the very next verses that it is so important for him to stay in the Word of God: "Continue in the things that you have learned and have been assured of."

Let me encourage you to keep on being filled with the knowledge of God's will. Never stop. All of these things, and I have just named a few, have to do with the knowledge of God's will, this knowledge that is far and away superior to any wisdom and knowledge the world can offer.

### **Beware of Cheap Counterfeits**

Not understanding how to know God's will, not understanding what God's Word means when it speaks of spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding, is one of the greatest sources of misunderstanding and spiritual heartache in the Christian life.

Notice the importance God the Holy Spirit places on this matter in Paul's letter to the Colossian Christians, and thus to us as well. Paul's primary concern for these believers is "that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Why was it so? Notice what follows: "that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light."

We cannot stress this enough: The most important thing - and indeed the most practical thing - that you can do as a Christian is to prayerfully read, study, and internalize the Word of God. That is how you will be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding - knowledge which is far superior to the world's false and speculative knowledge and wisdom. The truth is that simple, and it is also that profound.

Before leaving this subject, permit me to briefly say more about about some of the cheap substitutes for true knowledge of the will of God that are being propagated in many churches today, and how they come into the church.

Many people in the postmodern church simply reject the truths we have discussed in this series. They say, in effect, "Do not tell me that all I need is the Bible. That is an insult to my intelligence. It cannot be that simple." And so instead, many Christians go after all sorts of how-to books, videos, and seminars. What do we find lining the shelves of religious bookstores today? Not Bibles mainly, not books to really help Christians study the Bible and thus understand God's will, but so-called self-help books. The subjects sound practical: How to manage your finances. How to raise your children. How to be a leader. How to get along with other people. How to have a better marriage. Do these five steps. Learn these ten principles. Use this formula. Say this prayer every day. And on, and on, and on.

Some of those books and programs - very, very few of them - may be of some help. The few that are truly helpful are so for one reason: they explain what the Bible has to say about how

to deal with these issues. In other words, they are designed to increase a Christian's knowledge of the will of God, which is found only in the pages of His Word, by pointing people to Scripture. But most of the programs that are being promoted in churches today, and sold in religious bookstores, are not worth anything - except perhaps the cost of a match to set them on fire to get them out of people's lives and thinking. The vast majority of these programs have little or no basis in the Bible. They are cheap and confusing substitutes for God's Word. They are nothing more than the same kinds of human philosophy and situational ethics that you find out in the lost world, with some Christian words intermingled to give them a deceptive appearance of truth.

These things are worse than worthless, because they actually confuse people. They lead people away from the Word of God, and they tell them to rely on something else - or worse yet, on *someone* else. Do this five-step program, or practice these ten principles, or repeat this prayer every day, read this man's or woman's books, watch her videos, listen to his talk radio program, or do whatever else it is that the latest fad tells you to do.

The underlying, unspoken message is deadly: Turn off your spiritual brain, and just do this or that. Understanding the Bible is not enough, or it is too difficult. That takes too much time. Here is the easy way, the foolproof way - or at least it is presented to you as easy and foolproof. But when people do not rely on God and His Word, sooner or later they wonder why the five-step program, or the self-help book, or the ten principles are not doing the job. Sooner or later the people who go after these things find themselves right back in the grips of the same problem they were in before. And now it is even worse, because there is greater confusion about the will of God, often coupled with doubts about whether or not a person is saved.

These things are not God's way. They are cheap and deadly substitutes for God's way. God's way to know God's will is through God's Word.

## **What It Means to be Filled With Knowledge of God's Will**

Paul says that he wants the Colossian believers to be *filled with* the knowledge of the will of God. In the Greek language, being "filled with" something signified being *controlled by* something. That is what the Apostle Paul is praying for, for the Colossian believers. That is what the Lord Jesus Christ wants for you. To be filled with - *controlled by* - the knowledge of God's will, in all spiritual wisdom, and in all spiritual understanding.

"Be not conformed to this world," the Holy Spirit commands us through Paul in Romans chapter 12, "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove [that you may examine, and test, and recognize as genuine] what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Christian, do not turn off your mind. Be transformed by the renewing - more literally, the *renovation* - of your mind. Examine, and test, and recognize the genuine will of God, by prayerfully seeking it in His Word alone. Do not accept cheap substitutes, no matter how attractive, or how aggressively they are promoted.

**Next: [Filled With Knowledge of God's Will: For What Purpose?](#)**

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