

How to Find God's Will

Romans 12:1-2

Preface

Illus: Last Saturday, Alabama steamrolled over Florida. With their running back stars Trent Richardson and Mark Ingram, Alabama seemed unstoppable; until yesterday that is. Last Saturday the announcers were calling the Ingram and Richardson, "Fast & Furious". When they interviewed Ingram, he boasted how much he liked that name. Yesterday, there was no finding Ingram for an interview. He hid his head and dashed to the locker room. Week after week we have been reminded that Alabama Quarterback Greg McElroy hasn't lost a starting game since the 8th grade. That boastful statistic is gone for good.

Yesterday's game was a mirror of real life. Sometimes we are cruising along thinking we have the world by the tail. Suddenly things can change drastically and we find ourselves in a slump or a tornado of problems.

This is why it is so important for a Christian to know that he or she is in the will of God. It is a fact; life is going to bring difficulties, tragedy and struggles our way. But we can survive if we are walking in the will of God.

But how do we know if we are in the will of God?

Scripture

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual (reasonable) act of worship. ²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2 NIV

Introduction

Does God have a plan for my life? How do I discover it?
How do I hear His voice? How do I know the will of God?

We all need guidance concerning the great questions of life. Who should I marry? Should I make a certain move? What career choice should I make?

As Christians **we are not "victims of chance" left to hope our "luck holds out."** As God led men and women in Scripture, He wants to lead you and me today.

Illus: A Department of Water Resources representative stops at a Texas ranch and talks with an old rancher. He tells the rancher, "I need to inspect your ranch for your water allocation."

The old rancher says, "Okay, but don't go in that field over there."

The Water representative says, "Mister, I have the authority of the Federal Government with me. See this badge? This badge means I am allowed to go wherever I wish on any agricultural land. No questions asked. Have I made myself clear?"

The old rancher nods politely and goes about his chores. Later, the old rancher hears loud screams and sees the Water Rep running for his life. And close behind is the rancher's big bull. The bull is gaining with every step.

The man is clearly terrified, so the old rancher immediately throws down his tools, runs to the fence and yells at the top of his lungs, "Your badge! Show him your badge!"

Sometimes we are like this man in that we think we have the right and privilege to do whatever we want regardless of what God says. If we could only learn to seek and trust God's will for our lives, we would be so much better off.

In my walk with Jesus Christ of some 38 years I have found that **the will of God happened more as I took steps of faith.** When I

try to the best of my ability to live by the principles of Scripture and trust God that is when I discover His will.

There have been times when God has lead me in a certain direction but most of the time it has been a "journey of faith." And rightly so as the scripture says, *"The just shall live by faith."*

God does indeed guide, He does lead us in His direction.

Abraham was called *"friend of God."* In John 15:15 Jesus says, *"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."*

Friends share secrets and friends confide in one another. God desires for us to know and experience His will. God does not play hide-and-seek. **God wants to lead you even more than you want to be led. God is more concerned about keeping us in His will than we are concerned about being in His will!**

There are concrete, practical steps that we can take to cause God's will to be more easily known to us. Our text today tells us how to find God's will.

Content

1. Finding God's will requires presenting yourself to Him

Notice Paul writes in verse 1, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy..."

Discovering God's will is never a process of bargaining with God. It is not a negotiation where we agree to do certain things for God if He will do certain things for us.

The word "Therefore" is not an arbitrary thought pulled out of the air. Paul is saying because of what God has done, we are to present ourselves to Him.

Dedication to God is the natural response of the Christian who realizes all God has done for him. The Psalmist demonstrated the proper response to God when he wrote, *"What shall I give unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"* It is not "What shall I give that I may obtain those benefits," but rather *"What shall I give because I have received those benefits?"*

Illus: Too many people try God for a while. They reason that God hasn't met their expectations or done enough so they give up.

You will never appreciate God's future work until you have already appreciated God's past and present work in your life.

"I urge you, beseech you, plea with you..." This is not an order or a command but a PLEA from the heart of God that we present ourselves to Him. God is pleading with us to dedicate ourselves to Him because of what He has already done.

The verb translated "present" or "offer" in this verse means "present once and for all". It commands a definite commitment of one's life to the Lord, just as a bride and groom in their wedding ceremony should commit permanently to one another.

We are to permanently offer ourselves to God. Not because of what we expect to receive from Him but because of what we have already received from Him. Out of our love for Him, we give ourselves to Him.

Have you done this?

2. Finding God's will requires living for Him

Paul writes, *"...In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as **living sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God."*

One of the reasons people are not willing to give of their time and resources to the work of God is because they have not really presented themselves to God.

Before we can give of our time, gifts and resources to the Lord we must first give ourselves to God. Living sacrifices are just that; our lives, our entire beings.

Illus: A few years ago I preached a very strong message on tithing. Several people were offended and some even vowed to never come back. What a sad testimony. The preacher can speak of giving of yourself to God but let him talk about giving your money and he has crossed the boundary line.

Though it is possible to give financially and not necessarily be dedicated to God **it is not possible to be dedicated to God and not give financially.**

The point is all giving in our life be it money, time or service to the Lord is the overflow of first giving of ourselves to Him.

God wants all of us; the good and the bad; the talents and the weaknesses; the successes and the failures. He desires for use to present our entire selves to Him. No holding back is acceptable.

This “living sacrifice” we are to offer to the Lord means we surrender our hopes, our plans and everything that is precious to us.” In exchange for the gift He has given us, we give Him ourselves as a gift back. Lose it all to find everything.

Illus: Pam’s mother has many brothers and sisters and they all (well most all) are very nice people. They will do anything to help you. They are constantly passing things along to the younger generation to help them get started with their homes, etc. But one thing I have found out about them is that just because they give you something doesn’t mean you are free to do with it what you want. It is given to you but you are expected to use it or return it. You aren’t free to sell it or pass it along to someone else without permission. In other words, they give things to you provided you do with them what they want.

This is how many Christians “give themselves to God” with lots of strings of expectations attached. If God isn’t going to do what

they expect then they aren’t giving themselves to God. That is not really living sacrifices to God is it?

We tend to want to know God’s will first and then we will decide if we want to give ourselves to it. Like someone saying, “Can you do me a favor,” we respond, “what is the favor?” That’s because we want to know the commitment and rewards first.

God doesn’t work that way. We commit to be living sacrifices to Him and in the process; we find His will for our lives.

Commentator Roy Laurin wrote, "Let us then recognize this, the unspeakable opportunity which is ours. Let us not wait to give God our age but our youth, not our poverty but our wealth; not our sickness but our health; not our days but our years; not our blindness but our sight. And in doing this, we will find our way to unspeakably happiness"

God says, “Give me your life and I will show you my will.” When we learn this lesson we are ready for an exciting life of God continually unfolding his will for us!

3. Finding God’s will requires being transformed from the world

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Everyone yields themselves to something or someone. It’s just a question of who, what and when. Paul states Romans 6:12-13, *“Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to its lustful desires. Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Instead, Give yourselves Completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God.”*

Each of us has a choice. We can dedicate ourselves to the things of the world or to God. You can yield to sin and pay the price or you can yield to God and live life to its fullest.

This world system is spiritually bankrupt and hostile to God. Conforming to the world means giving in to the false forms of gratification the world offers. Christians are free to live outside the realm of sin and corruption if we dedicate ourselves to God.

Make no mistake about it, this world, being Satan's alley, is deadly and its pull is strong! Temptation is great and many people give in to its temptations every day.

"Do not be conformed to this World" The Greek verb "Conform" refers to the act of assuming an outward appearance that does not accurately reflect what is within.

In other words Paul is saying "Don't masquerade as if you belong to the world; that would be patterning yourself inconsistently with who you really are!"

Illus: I know we have some motorcycle riders in our church. No I don't have anything against motorcycles or people who ride them. But I must admit I sometimes get a little amused at these weekend warriors. They dress like the Hells Angels on the weekend and ride in packs with their loud mufflers. They look like bad to the bone bike riders. But in reality they are everyday people; teachers, lawyers, doctors, business men, etc. They aren't really bad guys just men playing with their toys.

As Christians, we must be careful not to masquerade who we are. We are Christians and we must live and act like Christians. We can't allow the world to draw us into the temptation of conforming to its ways.

Don't be a world 'Wannabe!' If you are a child of God, don't hide it, be proud of it.

In this day where it is acceptable to openly mock and ridicule Christians, it is a real temptation to not stand up for what we believe.

2 Timothy 2:12 says *"If we endure, we will also reign with Him. If we disown him, He will also disown us."* We as believers should *"Not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ"*

The world's way of thinking can cloud our thinking and cause us to miss the will of God. For example; If you are having problems in your marriage or you see someone you find more attractive the world will say, "Your happiness comes first, get a divorce." But God has a blessed marriage in His will for you if you will remain faithful and committed to Him.

We must be transformed from this world's warped and selfish way of thinking.

Illus: Someone once asked a concert violinist in New York's Carnegie Hall how she became so skilled. She said that it was by "PLANNED NEGLECT" She planned to neglect everything that was not related to her goal.

You and I must plan to neglect and steer clear of the world's way of approaching life's challenges.

The world wants to influence your mind, so it exerts pressure from without. But the Holy Spirit changes your mind by releasing power from within.

Conclusion

Paul concludes, *“Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Psalm 84:11 says *“No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly”*

Many people have a warped concept of God as being some kind of “celestial party-pooper,” who is just waiting for you to surrender your will to Him so He can make you miserable!

Nothing could be further from the Truth! This is illustrated by the Prodigal Son! The father threw a party for his son when he returned home. God’s will is not only good; it is perfect.

You can study books, you can travel to the Holy Land, you can do all the religious acts you want but until you give yourself to God, you will not find His will.

No plan of ours can improve on the plan of God. We only see bits and pieces; He sees the whole. **He sees the mountain when we see the valley.**

I may not know “What the future holds” but I know who “holds the future.”