What is THE WILL OF GOD for my Life?

(Selected Scriptures)
9/12/08



Introduction: (We need to get out of the driver's seat and let God direct our lives!)

I. NEVER PLAN APART FROM GOD'S WILL (James 4:13-17)

3 Questions to Answer:

A. WHEN YOU MAKE PLANS,
DO YOU CONSIDER THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE? (V. 13 - 14a)

B. WHEN YOU MAKE PLANS,
DO YOU CONSIDER THE BREVITY OF LIFE? (V. 14b)

C. WHEN YOU MAKE PLANS,
DO YOU CONSIDER GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE? (V. 15-16)

II. ALWAYS LET GOD LEAD YOU TO DO HIS WILL! (ACTS 12:25-13:5)

2 questions need to be answered before we know whether or not our next move is the will of God:

A. WHO DOES GOD LEAD TO DO HIS WILL?

1. GOD LEADS THOSE WHO ARE BUSY SERVING HIM (v. 2)
("As they ministered to the Lord")

2. GOD LEADS THOSE WHO ARE EAGERLY SEEKING HIM (v. 2)
("As they . . . fasted")

B. HOW DOES GOD LEAD YOU TO DO HIS WILL?

1. GOD LEADS YOU IN THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (v. 2, 4)

2. GOD LEADS YOU INTO A NEW MINISTRY, NOT OUT OF THE MINISTRY (v. 5)
(He leads us into service, not out of service!)

3. GOD LEADS YOU THROUGH THE AUTHORITY OF A LOCAL CHURCH (v. 2)

III. ALWAYS KNOW WHAT GOD'S SPECIFIC WILL IS FOR YOUR LIFE!

God's will for you is:

A. SALVATION (I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9)
(God wants you to be saved)

B. SPIRIT-FULLNESS (Eph. 5:17-18)
(God wants you to be Spirit-filled)

C. SERVICE (Eph. 6:6; Heb. 13:20-21)
(God wants you to serve Him sincerely)

D. SACRIFICE (II Cor. 8:5; Rom. 12:1-2)
(God wants you to surrender your life to Him)

E. SANCTIFICATION (I Thess. 4:3-8)
(God wants you to be sexually pure)

F. SUPPLICATION (I Thess. 5:16-18)
(God wants you to seek Him daily)

G. SUBMISSION (I Pet. 2:13-15)
(God wants you to submit to authority)

H. SUFFERING (I Pet. 4:12-19; cp. 3:17)
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I. NEVER PLAN APART FROM GOD'S WILL (James 4:13-17)

Just as v. 11-12 did not mean you should never judge, this does not mean that you should not plan. You must! But you should seek God's plans and make them your plans.

(God's will for you is revealed through Scripture, and through His personal working in the details of your life [See Prov. 3:5-6])

The sin described now is planning without God - this is sheer secularistic behavior - it is worldliness!

"Go to now" = come now, listen now.
(Move [change] the way you're thinking)

V. 13 describes a traveling business man, who has all the details of part of his future worked out. he has everything predetermined!

1) He has a predetermined plan - "Today or tomorrow"

2) He has a predetermined place (destination)
He plans to travel - Do you seek God's will before you decide to move?

3) He has a predetermined period of time

4) He has a predetermined program (he plans what he will do. Do you ask God for His will for your career?)

5) He has a predetermined purpose (he plans how much he will prosper. Are you dependent on God's will?)

He displays "calculated arrogance" (cp. v. 16). No one can alter his plans - not even God.

3 Questions to Answer:

A.WHEN YOU MAKE PLANS,
DO YOU CONSIDER THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE? (v. 13-14a)

The language reflects assurance and self-confidence; they assume that the outcome of their plans will occur exactly as planned.

Nothing in the future can be predetermined by you! Jesus said, "Take no thought for the morrow."

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow . . ." (Prov. 27:1)

READ Luke 12:16-20.

We should never make plans and then ask God to bless them!

NOTE: There is a big difference between telling God, "I want to do so and so; please bless my plans." and praying, "What is thy will for me, O Lord? Help me to plan as thou wouldst have me plan, so that I may do thy will." (Colson, p. 73).

B.WHEN YOU MAKE PLANS,
DO YOU CONSIDER THE BREVITY OF LIFE? (v. 14b)

Vapor = ex. breath appearing momentarily in the cold air; ex. smoke that quickly dissipates; ex. steam from a tea kettle.

Other figures applied to the duration of human life:
"a shadow that declineth" (Ps. 102:11)
"a breath" (Job 7:7)
"the cloud" (Job 7:9)
"grass" (Ps. 103:15)

God tells us to number our days (Ps. 90:12 - "So teach us to number our days--that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom")

If we would remember how short life is, we would put a different priority on our planning (ex. you pack a suitcase differently when you have much time, than you would if there was a fire in your house).

C.WHEN YOU MAKE PLANS,
DO YOU CONSIDER GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE? (v. 15-16)

We tend to make our own decisions, then get ourselves in hot water, and expect God to "pay the bill."

People say: I want God's will for every area in my life--and then they are mad, disappointed, etc., when God gives it to them. EX: "I'm willing for God to break up this dating relationship." (yet they are not really) . . . "I am willing to do God's will just as long as it is not _____."

1.When you seek God's will,
it shows your dependence upon God (v. 15)

"If the Lord will" = shows God's sovereignty.

God alone can make our plans prosperous!

"If the Lord will" = 2 ideas:

1) we are saying "If God permits me, I will . . ."
Acts 18:21 - After going to Jerusalem, Paul said, "I will return again unto you if God will (permit)
I Cor. 4:19 - "I will come to you shortly if the Lord wills."

2) we are saying "If God gives me life, strength, opportunity, I will . . ."

Paul said: "I trust in the Lord that I will come to you shortly" (Phil. 2:19, 24). That is, "if it is the Lord's will."

We depend upon God for life itself ("we shall live"), and we depend upon Him for ability ("and do this or that")

2.When you don't seek God's will,
it shows your arrogance against God (v. 16)

Such worldly (secular) overconfidence reveals pride and dethrones God out of your life!

Some wrongly think that the will of God is optional: something they can accept or reject.

It's an obligation! You cannot "take it or leave it"

We say to our children: "Who do you think you are? You need permission from me - I am you dad!" . . . Our lives belong to God (our Father). We are His children (and servants). We are not our own. Therefore we must acknowledge that Christ owns us.

CONCLU: V. 17

Your planning is a moral issue - if you plan wrong (without seeking God for direction), it is sin!

For you to know that you should seek God's will, and for you not to do it, is sin!

Jesus taught that the servant who knows his father's will and does not do it will be punished with a heavy whipping (Lk. 12:47). "To whom much is given . . . much required"

God not only has a plan for the world, He has a plan for your life.

He has a "race marked out for us" to run (Heb. 12:1).

He has "good works prepared in advance" for his "workmanship" to do (Eph. 2:10).

"Too many Christians look upon the will of God as bitter medicine they must take, instead of seeing it as the gracious evidence of the love of God" (Wiersbe, p. 129).

We need more than careful planning; we need prayerful planning.

Have you been doing God's job? Who do we think we are?

Guiding your life is His job!

* Never plan apart from God's Will

II. ALWAYS LET GOD LEAD YOU TO DO HIS WILL! (ACTS 12:25-13:5)

How do you know when God is leading you?

How do we differentiate between our doing our own selfish, independent will, and our doing God's will?

Sometimes what God wants and does not want is obvious. For example, God never leads a person contrary to His Word. God never leads us to do anything sinful.

Some have tried saying:

"God has led me to date this unsaved man . . ."
"God has led me to divorce my mate . . ."
"God has led me to quit coming to church . . ."
"God has led me to work at this night club . . ."

God's will never contradicts God's Word!

Some things are obvious about God's will. It's obvious that God wants us to love Him, give to Him, tell others about Him, serve Him.

What is not so obvious is - Where do I serve Him; How do I serve Him, etc.

In Acts 13:1-5, we will see some principles that will help us to determine whether or not it is indeed God who is leading us.

We make decisions everyday. Decisions to seek a good job; seek a place to settle down and live; seek a life's partner (mate).
In all the major decisions we make, how can we be assured that God is in it?

Acts 13 is a pivotal point in the book of Acts.

The emphasis moves from Peter's ministry to Paul's. From the church at Jerusalem to the church at Antioch. From the Gospel remaining in Palestine to the Gospel going to the uttermost parts of the earth in fulfillment of Acts 1:8.

V. 1

"Prophets & Teachers" - were men gifted by the Holy Spirit to provide leadership and direction for the early church (Eph. 4:11, 12).

A prophet - received direct revelation from God during this transitional time period when the N.T. was not yet complete (I Cor. 14:3).
A teacher - taught the O.T. Scriptures and showed Christ's fulfillment of them, and then taught how to live the Christian life from the teachers of Christ which were handed down from the Apostles.

NOTE: the variety of nationalities and backgrounds God uses in a local church: Barnabas, a Jewish Levite from Cyprus; Simeon, a black man (nick-named "Niger") from Africa; Lucius from Cyrene in North Africa; Manaen, a man who had aristocratic (upper class, royal) connections with the Roman government (Herod Antipas); and Saul (Paul), a trained Jewish rabbi from Tarsus in Cilicia.

We must let God lead us to do His will!

2 questions need to be answered before we know whether or not our next move is the will of God:

A. WHO DOES GOD LEAD TO DO HIS WILL?

1. GOD LEADS THOSE WHO ARE BUSY SERVING HIM (v. 2) ("As they ministered to the Lord")

V. 2

The word "ministered" refers to service of a spiritual nature.

NOTE: Ministering to the saints (cp. 11:26) is ministering to the Lord!

Never forget that whatever you do for a fellow child of God in this local church you are doing for Christ. (SEE Mt. 26:34-46).

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me" (Mt. 26:40)

Mark 9:41 - "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lost his reward."

(SEE V. 5)

We all are to be involved in one form of service or another.

The ministers had a minister (John Mark). We are all ministers. I serve you, many of you serve me (in various ways), and together we are serving Christ!

1.Barnabas & Paul faithfully served (12:25)
(They were dependable; they finished the job)

12:25

Barnabas and Paul had faithfully carried out the menial task of bringing relief money to Jerusalem (Acts 11:30).

Those who are faithful in little things will be given greater responsibility.

Mt. 25:21 - "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

SEE Luke 16:10, 11 (NOTE: Paul and Barnabas were faithful, so God knew He could trust them with true riches).

Paul looking back at this point of God's calling him, said: And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." (I Tim. 1:12)

2.Barnabas & Paul continually served (v. 2)
(They were consistent; they didn't quit the job)

If you are not already at work in the ministry God has given us to do here, what makes you think you will work when you move to another location? What would lead you to believe that when you become trained, then you will serve . . . or when you go to the foreign mission field then you will serve?

The work of missions must begin at home!

You can't suppose that you can live any way you want, and that someday God will knock you over the head and call you into some great work for Him.

God never moves parked cars! (He moves those who are in motion)

God's will (desired purpose) unfolds as we are busy serving Him right where we are!

2. GOD LEADS THOSE WHO ARE EAGERLY SEEKING HIM (v. 2) ("As they . . . fasted")

"Fasting" does not merely refer to going without food for self-denial's sake. It refers to going without food so that you can spend the time normally spent eating - praying! In the Bible, prayer is linked to fasting (cp. v. 3; Ezra 8:23; Neh. 1:4; Mk. 9:29; Acts 14:23; I Cor. 7:5).

NOTE: Nowhere is fasting commanded in the Bible for Christians; it was totally voluntary.

Fasting points to their dedication and intensity in spiritual matters.

The Spirit leads when He sees sincere devotion.
Prov. 3:5-6 - Trust in the Lord
Don't trust your own understanding
Keep acknowledging God
(in all your ways)

B. HOW DOES GOD LEAD YOU TO DO HIS WILL?

1. GOD LEADS YOU IN THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (v. 2, 4)

1.The Spirit's Leading is personal

The Spirit is personal; and He leads us personally.

The Holy Spirit is personal (not a mere force)

--He speaks
--He refers to Himself with personal pronouns ("Me; I")
--He is God!

The Holy Spirit leads us personally.

Whenever you make a move for God, it is important to know that it is indeed the Holy Spirit leading you and not some other spirit, or your own independent decision.

The Holy Spirit evidently called out Barnabas and Paul with an objective, verbal, spoken voice. Not like the way He calls preachers today!

How does the Holy Spirit call today?

1)By the Sword of the Spirit (His written commands are His call) - Mt. 28:19-20. The call of the Great Commission is a matter of obedience, not some "experience." If you want a call, go home tonight and I will call you on the phone and quote Mt. 28:19-20 to you!

2)By the Conviction of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit's conviction is His call)

3)By the Internal Promptings of the Spirit (your sincere willingness and desire to serve is God's call put into you by His spirit) - Phil. 2:12-13; I Tim. 3:1.

4)By the objective opening and closing of doors of the Spirit (Acts 16:6-7)

What is a call?

God calls you when He puts into you:

1) an interest,

2) that becomes a concern,

3) that becomes a conviction,

4) that becomes a compulsion
(Bill Commons, ABWE)

2.The Spirit's leading is specific

The Holy Spirit "calls" and "sends" specific leaders for a specific labor to a specific location.

2. GOD LEADS YOU INTO A NEW MINISTRY, NOT OUT OF THE MINISTRY (v. 5)
(He leads us into service, not out of service!)

V. 2

Paul and Barnabas were called unto ( )
a new work.

1.God never leads us to quit

God never calls anyone out of a ministry in a local church to move them on to a time of rest, relaxation, and vacation from the work of God!

God may call you from work to work; but never from work to retirement.

There is no retirement in Christian service until death! (Rev. 14:13)

Many times Christians are like broken vending machines: They are "out of service!"

If God truly was the one who led you into a ministry to begin with, He won't turn around and lead you out of it unless He is moving you on to more effective service.

He may lead us to change our ministry, but not quit it!

2.God never leads us to worldly pursuits.

God never leads a Christian to change His status (to leave the "state" he is in) for merely secular reasons.

If we are to do all "to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31), we had better not move, marry, or change our vocation unless we know it would be for His glory.

Why do most people move? Worldly reasons. Make more money; live more comfortably. Without considering whether or not you can serve God more effectively by making the change.

3.God never leads us for selfish personal advantage.

NOTE: When God leads you away from a particular local church, it is because He has a new ministry already lined up for you.

He does not lead you out of a church so that you can go hunting for another church. (unless, of course, the church was unBiblical or preaching false doctrine.)

Why do some Christians hop from church to church?

ANSWER: They are only interested in being served, not serving! They carnally think, "This church does not offering enough for me," rather than thinking, "I have something to offer to this church."

When God leads us it is: always for us to serve, not merely for us to be served.

People generally leave churches over a Satanically-instigated personality conflict, not over Biblical convictions. ("I don't think the pastor is flashy enough; the music isn't fast enough or loud enough, etc.)

NOTE: Paul & Barnabas were not seeking a new ministry.

They were faithfully and continually doing the ministry God gave them until the Holy Spirit called them to be foreign missionaries.

If God were to ever lead me out of FBC, three conditions would have to be met according to the pattern in Acts 13:1-3:

1)God would have to fill the leadership position before I left (NOTE v. 1 - three other leaders were left to oversee the work)

2)I would want the approval and blessing of the church in regard to the new ministry God would lead me to (v. 3)

3)God would have to have a new ministry waiting for me to immediately enter.

3. GOD LEADS YOU THROUGH THE AUTHORITY OF A LOCAL CHURCH (v. 2)

The Holy Spirit (in v. 2) told the church to dismiss Barnabas and Paul, which shows how they were under the local church's authority.

NOTE: The church dismissed Paul and Barnabas; they didn't merely walk out and leave (as is the practice so often today).

(cp. V. 1 - "in the church")

The Holy Spirit works through the local church to equip and enlist believers to go forth and serve.

The local church is God's only divinely established program today. Para-church organizations are only good to the degree that they help local churches.

Mission boards do not send out missionaries -- churches do!

These boards are servants to the churches as they help expedite the work (they aid the missionaries with custom procedures, dealing with various governments, sending their support money, etc.).

(NOTE: Paul & Barnabas later reported back to the church at Antioch (Acts 14:26,27)

V. 3

The laying on of hands is symbolic of identification. It expresses fellowship between the church and the two men. It shows a oneness of purpose and a unity.

It shows that the church recognized God's call on their lives and by putting their hands on them and praying, the church is, in a sense, saying: "We are standing behind you, brothers...We are backing you up...Our support goes with you...We are in this together."

A church must be sensitive to the Spirit's call in the lives of its members.

The words "sent them away" reveal how close Paul & Barnabas were to the church.

The words describe how the church"released" them. The church "let them go." Lit. - they "loosed them"; this implies that they hated to see them go.

Paul & Barnabas were, in a sense, in the hands of the church. They were held on to by the church until the church released its loving grasp of them and entrusted them to the Lord and His new work for them.

You can be assured that God is leading you when you fellow church members agree as to the decision you are making, and add their blessing to it (cp. Mt. 18).

III. ALWAYS KNOW WHAT GOD'S SPECIFIC WILL IS FOR YOUR LIFE!

God's will is not difficult to find. It is clearly revealed in the pages of your Bible.

--Basically, His will is His Word.
(the commands that apply to the Christian are His will for the Christian)

--Specifically, His will is stated for us by the word "thelama." This word points to the desire of God, His specific wishes, plans, goals for your life.

We will study Bible passages that use the word "thelama."

Paul prayed continually that the Colossian Christians might be "filled with the knowledge of His will" (Col. 1:9; cp. Col. 4:12).

(Note: A knowledge of God's will will affect your practical everyday walk with God - v. 10).

You need to know what God's specific will is for your life!

God's will for you is:

A. SALVATION (I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9)

(God wants you to be saved)

SEE: Eph. 1:5, 9, 11 - God's will in planning for your salvation.

Jn. 6:40 - "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

You cannot do any of God's will until you are saved!

Those who do the will of God evidence the fact that:

1)They have eternal life

--Mt. 7:21
--I Jn. 2:17

2)They are related to Jesus Christ

--Mt. 12:50

B. SPIRIT-FULLNESS (Eph. 5:17-18)

(God wants you to be Spirit-filled)

"Filled" = to be completely filled with the result that what fills you controls you.

NOTE: Sin prevents filling--grieves Spirit.

Filling =
1.Not a spiritual gift (Ephesians had all spiritual blessings [1:3] already but were commanded to be filled)

2.Not baptism or indwelling (all Christians are baptized in Spirit and indwelt, but not all are filled) (we are never commanded to receive the Spirit)
3.Present tense (continuous filling)
4.Passive imperative (God fills as believer yields)
5.Command (not to be filled is disobedience, sin) (it's not optional, just as commands to forgive, not be unequally yoked, etc.)
6."Filling" = control for biblical living

It's not getting more of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit getting more of you!

RESULTS OF SPIRIT'S CONTROL (v. 19-21)

1.Inward evidence (v. 19)
2.Upward evidence (v. 20) (Thanksgiving to God)
3.Outward evidence

C. SERVICE (Eph. 6:6; Heb. 13:20-21)
(God wants you to serve Him sincerely)

Paul continually makes reference to his apostleship as having been given to him by the will of God.
(I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Ga. 1:4; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; II Tim. 1:1)
God gave you gifts to use for Him, not to waste (II Pet. 4:10-11).

To know God's will and not to do it is terrifying (Lk. 12:47).

Phil. 2:12-13 - "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Man's part (v. 12b) - "Work out your own salvation" [NOTE: God does not say work for it, but rather work it out - life it out - Eph. 2:10]

God's part (v. 13) - He works in you to:
"will" - He gives you the desire to do His will
"do" - He gives you the ability to do His will

D. SACRIFICE (II Cor. 8:5; Rom. 12:1-2)
(God wants you to surrender your life to Him)

Full surrender is the key to knowing God's will
(Rom. 12:1-2)

A willingness to do God's will is the key to spiritual understanding:

"If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine..." (Jn. 7:17)

E. SANCTIFICATION (I Thess. 4:3-8)
(God wants you to be sexually pure)

1. THE MEANING OF SANCTIFICATION (v. 3b-6a)
(God's Plan for You to Stay Clean)

1.Sanctification is:
SEPARATING YOURSELF FROM SEXUAL IMMORALITY (v. 3b)

2.Sanctification is:
STRENGTHENING YOURSELF AGAINST SEXUAL IMMORALITY
(v. 4-5)

3.Sanctification is:
NOT STEPPING INTO FORBIDDEN TERRITORY (v. 6a)

4.Sanctification is:
NOT STEALING WHAT BELONGS TO SOMEONE ELSE (v. 6a)

2. THE REASONS FOR SANCTIFICATION (v. 6b-8)
(God's Provocation for You to Stay Clean)

1.SEXUAL SIN WILL BE JUDGED BY GOD (v. 6b)
(Look ahead to what you will reap!)

2.SEXUAL SIN IS CONTRARY TO GOD'S PURPOSE FOR SAVING YOU (v. 7)
(Look back at what God did for you!)

3.SEXUAL SIN IS REJECTING (rebellion against) GOD
(v. 8)
(Look up at who you are rejecting!)

F. SUPPLICATION (I Thess. 5:16-18)
(God wants you to seek Him daily)

G. SUBMISSION (I Pet. 2:13-15)
(God wants you to submit to authority)

H. **SUFFERING (I Pet. 4:12-19; cp. 3:17)**
(God wants you to be willing to suffer for His sake)

II Tim. 3:12 - "Yea, and all that will life godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Ex. Jesus' desire to do the will of the Father and drink the cup of suffering (Mt. 26:42).

Some of the godliest people in history have swallowed he bitter waters of suffering.

A.Suffering Persecution

Mt. 5:10-12

Ex: Joseph
Ex: Daniel
Ex: The Apostles

B.Suffering Physical Ailments

Ex: Job
Ex: Paul (II Cor. 12:1-10)

CONCLUSION:

Our prayer needs to be: Mt. 6:10 - "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."