

God's Perfect Will
Romans 12:1-2
May 24, 2020

Once upon a time there was a very wealthy man who wanted to find out how his life would end. He had more wealth than he could ever use but he was often isolated and lonely. He wondered how his life would end. "Will I be happy? Will I be sad? Will I be surrounded by friends and family? Will I be lonely?" He wanted to know about his future.

Then he heard about a great fortuneteller. People say this fortuneteller was so accurate that he could predict just about anything. So, this wealthy man decided to pay him a visit. When he met the fortuneteller, he asked him, "How will my life end?"

The fortuneteller gazed into the crystal ball and said, "Your life will end when you die."

The man said, "I know that but my question is 'Will I be content? Will I be full of regrets? Will I die happy?'"

The fortuneteller looked at him straight and said, "That has nothing to do with the future. It has everything to do with what you do in the present!"¹

He is right, isn't he? Our future is determined by what we do today. It is molded and shaped by the decisions we make each and every day. We will face many different circumstances in life. What we do in each of these circumstances will decide what our future will be.

One thing we need to remember is that we should not allow our circumstances determine how we look at life. Instead, we need to let our faith determine how we look at our circumstances.

We need to remember what God's will for our life is. Saint Paul said, God's will for our lives is "good and acceptable and perfect."²

Pause for a moment. Wouldn't it be wonderful if God speaks to us directly and says, "This is what I want you to do"? It would be really nice to know what God wants us to do in each and every circumstance.

¹ An illustration under the subject of "God's will," www.esermons.com

² Romans 12:2b

Many people desperately search for God's will for their lives. When they have a big decision to make, they want to know what God wants them to do. When they are at a crossroad, when they have to make a major decision, they want to know God's will for their lives.

One thing we need to realize is that God wants us to know his will for our life in its entirety. Not for specific circumstances, although sometimes we get very strong convictions for each of our situations.

No doubt that that can happen but what I am trying to say is that God's will for our lives is very much spelled out in the Bible. God's will is not a secret. Actually, he wants us to know his will more than we want to know his will. So, why is it that it is so difficult to find God's will for us?

The answer is we have our own will, and our will is in conflict with God's will. Even if we know what God wants us to do, we don't want to it.

We don't want to do it, because we don't want to change the way we are or the way we live, or we don't want to give up something. We don't want to do it because we are too proud to change, or the necessary change is too inconvenient.

A lot of times we just act upon our desires. We think our desire is God's will. We try to convince ourselves of that. If and when it fails, we blame God. We ask "Why?" "Why is this happening?" Instead of seeking God's will, we act upon our own will. Instead of being obedient to God's will, we pursue our own desires.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, tells us that God's will for our lives is good, acceptable and perfect.

God's will and his plans for us are good. Not only are they good for us, but they are always better than anything that might be outside of God's plan.

God's will is not only good for us, but it is also "acceptable" to us. If we are in the right relationship with the Lord, the only place we can be truly happy is in the will of God.

David Livingstone, one of the greatest missionaries in Christian history, gave his life for the mission field of Africa. Toward the end of his life he said, "I would rather be in the heart of Africa in the will of God, than on the throne of England"

outside of the will of God.” Livingston found the will of God for his life not only good and acceptable, but also perfect for his life.

Our heavenly Father loves us so much that his will and plans for our lives are what is best for us. His will for us is perfect for us but how do we discover this “good, acceptable and perfect will of God?”

Saint Paul gives us guidance in this matter. He says, “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice.” Normally, a sacrifice is something that is killed but according to Paul, God demands not only a sacrifice, but a living one. It sounds like an oxymoron. An oxymoron is a figure of speech where you find two words put together that are mutually contradictory. For example, “deafening silence,” “open secret,” “original copy,” “clearly confused,” “living dead,” and so on and so forth.

If you sacrifice something, it is dead. It is lost. It is no more. If it is not dead, you have not sacrificed it. So, what does it mean to “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice?” It means that we are to give ourselves to God in sacrificial living.

Think about a sacrifice for a moment. What is the acceptable sacrifice? A lamb or a bull or any animal that is offered as sacrifice needs to be perfect without blemish. Offering ourselves as a living sacrifice means that we ought to live our lives as holy and blameless. A sacrificial living is to live our lives as holy and blameless in the sight of God. This is why Paul says, “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.”

The word “holy” literally means “separated from others.” It means to be different from others. This is why Paul says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” Notice there are two very important words presented here: Conformation and Transformation.

All of us are either conformed or being transformed. Being conformed to the world means to be like rest of the world. There is no difference between our lives and the lives of non-believers. That is what conformed life looks like. Being transformed, however, is becoming different from the rest of the world more and more.

Philips Bible translation translated the phrase “Do not be conformed to this world,” as “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.” The Living Bible translates it, “Do not copy the behavior and customs of this world.”

In other words, “Do not become like a chameleon!” A chameleon is a lizard that changes its color with its surrounding. It takes on the color of whatever is around it. In other words, it “conforms.” It changes its appearance without ever changing its inward condition. I am afraid that even many church members can be described as spiritual chameleons.

These are the people who come to church, and while they are in the church, they take on the color of sanctity, holiness, and righteousness. They appear to be “holy and acceptable to God” in the church but when they leave the church, they take on the color of carnality and worldliness. They copy the behaviors and cultures of their surroundings.

We are not to be conformed; we are to be transformed. The Greek word for “transform” gives an English word “metamorphosis.” A metamorphosis is a change that happens from within – from the inside. This change from inside affects our behavior. That is what metamorphosis is. That is what transformation is.

Someone once said, “God formed man, sin deformed him, our schools informed him, but the Lord transformed him.”³ When Jesus Christ comes into our lives, a transformation takes place. When Christ lives in us, the world can see the difference. They can see the reflection of Jesus in our lives.

This transformation is to begin with our minds. Paul says, “Be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” Why the mind? Because the mind is the source of thoughts, and the thoughts are the foundation of behavior. Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”

Our body and mind are interconnected. What we constantly think of eventually comes out in our behavior. This is the reason why we need to read the Scripture and meditate on it each and every day. As we ponder upon his word, his will becomes clear to us. As we pray, God's spirit guides us.

Pray each day when you have a difficult decision to make. Meditate on God's word. Consult with people whose opinions you respect and listen to their counsel. Make your decision and trust God to help you turn that decision into the right decision.

³ From James Merritt's sermon, “*God's Will: Don't Leave Home Without It*,” www.esermons.com

In Jeremiah 29:11, we find these words. “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future.” That is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God for us.

Let us live each day holy and acceptable to God that we may experience and enjoy the very plans God has for us.