

(3) By His HOLY SPIRIT, in response to our earnest prayer, Rom. 8:26-27. We can be sure of God's will when the clear teaching of the Word, the providences and the voice of the Holy Spirit all harmonize, 1 John 5:14-15.

Let us pray for each other the prayer which Paul and Epaphras prayed for the Colossians, Col. 1:9; 4:12, remembering 1 John 2:17; Phil 2:13 and Acts 22:14.

Teach me Thy way, O Lord,
Teach me Thy way!
Thy gracious aid afford,
Teach me Thy way!
Help me to walk aright,
More by faith, less by sight;
Lead me with heavenly light:
Teach me Thy way!

GROWING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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Study 6

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WILL

Scripture Portion, Ephesians 5:1-21

Every Christian should seek to understand the will of the Lord; or, to use a literal translation of Eph. 5:17, we should "not be foolish, but have discernment as to what is the will of the Lord." Some Christians are "foolish", for they have no discernment in the things of the Lord, and this disqualifies them from real usefulness in the service of God. For example:

- (1)** They do not understand the true nature of the Christian life, that it is imparted by a new birth, John 3:3,5,7, and that it is experienced upon receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, John 1:11-13.
- (2)** They do not know the secret of life more abundant, John 10:10, of fruitfulness in service, John 15:5, of deliverance from bondage to sin and self, Rom. 6:11; 7:24-25; 8:2, and of a life of triumphant holiness, 2 Cor. 2:14.
- (3)** They do not understand the true nature and purpose of the Church, which is not primarily an outward organization but an invisible, living organism consisting of every true believer, 1 Cor. 12:12-13.
- (4)** They do not realize that God's purpose in this dispensation is that of forming and completing the Church, Acts 15:14; that the world will therefore not be converted; that the kingdom of God will not be built on earth in this age, and that the world will go on getting worse.
- (5)** They know nothing about God's future program for the world, the Church and the Jew. We find a

wonderful revelation of all these great truths in the Word of God, and if we would understand them we must, 2 Tim. 2:15, with the prayer in our hearts, Psa. 119:18!

Consider the following five progressive truths, and remember that God's will means God's wish and desire.

1. IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT ALL MEN SHOULD BE SAVED

God desires the salvation of everyone, look up 2 Pet 3:9, and notice also Isa. 45:22; 53:6; Ezek. 33:11; John 1:29; 3:16; Rev. 22:17. In His great mercy He has provided salvation for everyone. This is not to say that everybody will accept God's provision. The Word of God never leads us to believe that all will be saved, but it does teach that all may be saved, look up Rom. 10:13.

2. IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT THOSE WHOM HE SAVES SHOULD BE SANCTIFIED

Look up 1 Thess. 4:1-4 and 1 Pet 4:1-5. God's will for His children is that they should be holy, look up Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet 1:15-16; 2 Pet 3:11. If you are His child, John 1:12-13, then God's will for you is that you should be holy; that is, whole, John 5:6; clean, 1 John 1:7 and 9, and constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit, Eph. 5:18.

3. IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT THOSE WHOM HE SAVES AND SANCTIFIES SHOULD SERVE HIM

We are saved to serve. But what is Christian service? The answer to this question is found in Rom. 12:1. The fundamental meaning of service for God is that we present ourselves wholly to God and place ourselves absolutely at His disposal for Him to do His work in and through us; this is His will for every one of His children. The sphere and the nature of our service may

be varied, but the meaning of it is always the same, Rom. 12:1. In the light of this, are you His servant?

4. IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT THOSE WHOM HE SAVES AND SANCTIFIES AND WHO SERVE HIM SHOULD ALSO SUFFER FOR, AND WITH, HIM

Let this truth sink in, for many of God's children are not instructed in it! Look up 1 Pet 3:17. We can suffer because it is the will of God for us to suffer, look up 1 Pet 4:19 and Phil. 1:29, and see what Acts 9:16 says, and notice also the three characteristics of His will, Rom. 12:2.

5. IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT THOSE WHOM HE SAVES AND SANCTIFIES, AND WHO SERVE HIM AND SUFFER FOR HIM, SHOULD ALWAYS UNDERSTAND AND KNOW HIS WILL FOR THEM

The question of knowing God's will is with some of us a very real problem; but should this be so in the light of the following promises, Psa. 25:9; 32:8; 73:24; Prov. 3:5-6; 16:3; Isa. 58:11; John 16:13 and Jas. 1:5-6.

How may we know God's will? How does He reveal His will to us?

(1) By His WORD, in response to our study, 2 Tim. 2:15. The more we study the Word of God the more we become acquainted with the things which are pleasing to Him and which He desires in the lives of His children, Acts 9:6; John 2:5

(2) By His PROVIDENCES, in response to our surrender, Rom. 12:1-2. When we are seeking God's guidance on a certain matter we must take into account all the circumstances, and trust Him so to arrange these that we may understand His will, Psa. 37:5.