***The Will of God - PH06-01

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 1:1***

We continue in the book of Philippians with the opening verse. The apostle Paul has introduced himself and Timothy as the servants of Jesus Christ. Paul is the author of the book of Philippians. He calls himself and Timothy bondslaves of Jesus Christ. We have pointed out that since God is the absolute sovereign in the universe, the Christian logically must view himself as a bondslave of God. However, many Christians are in effect runaway slaves during the time of their life here on earth. It is something that every believer must learn--how to live the role of a bondslave of Jesus Christ. It does not come naturally to us because it violates all of the desires and all of the lusts of our old sin nature.

The nature of a bondslave, we indicated, was twofold, among other things. First of all, he does not belong to himself. The Christian's whole being belongs to God for God's use. The second factor of the nature of a bondslave is that he has absolutely no will of his own. He sets aside his personal preferences. Those personal preferences are often expressions of his old sin nature. As he moves into spiritual maturity, he finds it quite easy to set aside those personal preferences in exchange for the Lord's will for him.

Incidentally, this is more than turning the other cheek. Every now and then, I hear of some Christian who tells me that they have had some abuse from somebody, and that they took this very patiently, and when they got belted, they turned the other cheek. Now that person has belted them on that cheek, and they have no more cheeks left. This implies that you are interpreting that Scripture of your patience under adversity to indicate that you have two occasions on which you will be patient. You have two tolerations. After that, you belt back.

However, I must point out to you that the Word of God does not say, "Turn two cheeks." As you know, it says, "When he strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek," in order to give the right cheek a chance to get rested up. Then when he belts you on the left cheek, it says, "Turn the other cheek," which means go back to the right one that's had a chance to get rested up a little bit while the left one gets rested. Remember it says "other" cheek--not two. Peter further had this confirmed to him when the Lord said that grace-oriented people forgive 70 times 7 time even before they ask you or suggest to you that they have done a wrong and that they need to be forgiven which they shouldn't have to do in the first place.

A bondslave of Jesus Christ at no point exercises his will. He does not demand his rights, and he does not insist on getting what's coming to him. Thank God that God does not give it to him. What he insists upon is subjecting his will and preferences to the will of the Lord. God's plan for each of us is the game plan that we play.

**The Doctrine of the Will of God**

Paul, we pointed, out fulfilled the role of a bondslave of Jesus Christ. This now brings us to an examination of the doctrine of the will of God. It is possible to know the will of God, and it is possible to respond to it and to do the will of God. There are certain guidelines that the Word of God lays out for us that will help us to understand what is involved in the will of God. There are certain types of the will of God, to begin with, that we should be acquainted with.

**Types of the Will of God**

1. First of all, there is what we may call **the directive will of God** or the decretive will of God. This is the sovereign choice of God. This is what God, as the supreme King of the universe, has decided. He, whom no one instructs, and who is not told what to do by anybody else, has a directive will. This is the plan that God has designed for you in particular; for your life; and, for your service.
2. There is secondly **the permissive rule of God**. Man's negative volition is permitted to function and to operate contrary to this directive will of God. Man's will can come along and God allows him to do certain things that are not what God has as the best plan for him. God's justice, in this case, will discipline the rebellion as He permits this rebellion to run its course. I must remind you, however, that the permissive will of God is included in the overall plan--the decree of God. This is not man suddenly imposing something upon God that God cannot control. This too is in the plan. The permissive will of God is a very bad place to be. You're asking for trouble; you can put yourself into that place; and, you can elbow yourself against the purposes of God for you into the position of His permissive will. You will find a great deal of grief.
3. There is also **the overruling will of God**. The overruling will of God supersedes the directive will and the permissive will. God directs our circumstances in this case so that Satan's leadings upon us are frustrated. God takes every choice of your life as a believer and He turns it to good (Romans 8:28). Ultimately, every choice that you make is turned for good. Now you may have to go through a lot of discipline and a lot of suffering before eventually it comes around to that good to which God is going to turn every choice you make. You cannot be a loser in the Christian life. God is going to work it for good, and His overruling will comes into play now. This overruling will is an area of suffering. The permissive will is an area of suffering. The directive will is the area of direct blessing and maximum enjoyment of your Christian experience.

Here are some examples to illustrate these three. In 2 Corinthians 6:14, the apostle Paul writes, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion has light with darkness?" Now it is by this Scripture, the directive will of God, we may apply it in the marriage situation. It is the directive will of God that if you are a Christian, you do not marry somebody who is an unbeliever. The Word of God, in its directive will, is don't marry an unbeliever. If you go to a minister of the Word of God, and some clergyman ignores this principle, he is bringing grief into your life. If he finds that you are a Christian, and you want to marry somebody that's not a Christian, he should not participate in that ceremony. He should refuse to officiate for you in that case.

The permissive role of God in this case is that you say, "Oh, he is such a nice person; he goes to church with me all the time; and, he promises that we are going to rear our children as Christians. He is going to drive them to Sunday school and church every Sunday, and pick him up right after. I will be able to lead him to the Lord." So you say, "I'll marry this unbeliever." And God permits you to marry this unbeliever. After the honeymoon is over, you discover that this unbeliever is still an unbeliever, and he doesn't intend to be anything else but an unbeliever. You move along now in the permissive will of God in a life of self-induced grief and misery, and a life of discipline.

1 John 3:23 is another example: "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of the Son of God." 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that it is the directive will of God that all should be saved. It is the directive will of God that God does not want anybody to perish. Yet, the permissive will of God allows you to say, "No." It allows you to ignore the gospel and it allows you to ignore the offer of Jesus Christ as your substitute, and to enter eternity condemned. The divine justice of God will be exercised against you.

Ephesians 5:17-18 is another example. Ephesians 5:17 says, "Wherefore be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is, and be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." It is the directive will of God that every believer is to be filled with God the Holy Spirit. Yet, you may come to the point in your life where you have sinned and where there is willful rebellion, and you do not confess that sin. You will refuse thereby the directive will of God, and God will permit you to move into His permissive will. You will not be filled with the Spirit, and discipline will follow into your life. So you can go ahead and do what's wrong. You can go ahead and buck your parents and your spiritual leaders and advisers, and you can buck the Word of God, but you will enter the permissive will of God, and grief will come into your life.

Numbers 22:12 through Numbers 31:8 is an extended passage that deals with Balaam, the Old Testament priest who was a believer. You remember the story that he was asked by Balak to pronounce a curse upon the people of Israel. Balaam, because he wanted the money that he was going to be paid, sought to do just that. He was told by God, "You shall not go." God said, "You shall not curse." This was the directive will of God. God said, "No, you will not go with Balak. You will not curse my people." What was the permissive will? He did go. He did try to curse. In this case, the overruling will of God came into play, and he prevented Balaam from cursing Israel. Every time he opened his mouth to curse, out came a blessing, until he drove Balak up the wall with his frenzy that instead of cursing he was blessing Israel. This is an example of where God simply overruled what Balaam was determined to do.

So, first of all, in our study of the will of God, God has a directive will for you. This is what you are to seek; to discover; and, to enter every moment of your life. If you buck this, you may enter the permissive will of God, what God will tolerate you to do, and there will come times when God's extreme discipline upon you will even overrule that which you are determined to do, and will guide to His purpose, but you will be guided through a great deal of personal sorrow.

**Elements of the Will of God**

There are certain elements in the will of God:

1. **What Does God Want Me to Do?**

There is, first of all, the operational element. This is the question of what does God want me to do? When you want to consider the will of God, that's the first question you ask. What does God want me to do? Why in the world am I on this earth living; breathing; working; eating; and, staying alive. What does God want me to do? There has to be a purpose. What God wants you to do is the same for every Christian. That is that he wants believers to be filled with the Spirit, and He wants them to build spiritual maturity in their souls. This is yieldedness to the will of God. What does God want me to do? God wants every Christian, first of all, to build spiritual maturity in his soul, and thereby to be yielded to His plan. If spiritual maturity is built, then you will be on the path to being able to know what to do as per what God wants you to do.

God gives us certain provisions by His grace to enable us to do what he wants us to do. He gave us a Bible which is a completed Bible. He gave us the local church organization. That local church organization has been provided with a program, a system of training in the Word of God. He has given the church certain spiritual gifts for this age: a pastor-teacher; and, an evangelist. The evangelist primarily is to be winning the souls, and the pastor-teacher is to be training the souls. These are spiritual gifts provided for the church. He has also given us individual spiritual gifts. He has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit. He has given us a living human spirit. He has given us the confession of sin technique. He has made us each our own priest. He has given us all of the facets of our soul with which to express ourselves toward God; toward man; and toward one another. All of this has been provided so that we can operate in doing what God wants us to do.

Please remember that doing is important in the Christian life. Sometimes there is a deception placed upon the fact that Christians should be doing. I understand why that emphasis is made. Many times Christians are doing things with the idea that they're going to gain points with God. They're going to gain favor with God. If they do certain things, they will gain His blessing, or they will become spiritual. However, in understanding of the Word of God and in following the operational will of God, the Word of God is to prepare us to do what God wants us to do. That's the whole point of the Word of God--to bring us to where we are doing His will.

That's what's behind the statement in James 2:14, for example, where it says, "What does it profit, my brethren, though a man says that he has faith and has not works, can faith save him?" In verse 17 and 18, it says, "Even so, faith, if it has not works is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, 'You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." Verse 20 says, "But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" The very normal expression of learning the Word of God and coming to spiritual maturity is what James means when he says, "Be not just hearers of the Word, by doers."

So there is a place for doing in the Christian life. Doing in the Christian life includes the faith rest procedure--the dependence in confidence upon God to work out the problems and the elements that are in your life, and to work out these conflicts that you have with people, with circumstances, and in one thing and another. This is depending in faith rest upon God; to live in the Word of God; for you personally to be involved in a study of the Word of God; and, to take it upon yourself to be a student of the Word. I don't mean the kind of a student that sits around and dreams up what the Bible says. I mean a student who has incorporated into his life some kind of authoritative instruction in the Word of God.

We are to be occupied with Christ--not occupied with ourselves. We are to be engaged in a life of prayer. That's a big part of the doing of the Christian life. This is one thing that we fantastically neglect. It is interesting that it is the book of James, which is the book that emphasizes doing, that also points out to us that most of us do not have because we do not ask. Because we are not engaged in prayer, God does not come through for us.

Doing includes witnessing--that opportunity that presents itself to you and me to explain to people how they can get to heaven. It certainly incorporates the exercising of our spiritual gifts. Obviously, you cannot use your spiritual gifts until you have come to a point of personal spiritual maturity through the Word. Without the Word of God, everything is pointless.

So the first thing the (first element) for you to consider in your personal life relative to the will of God is what does God want me to do? Remember that there are many good things that you can do. Local churches are forever plagued, often with people who come from other ministries, and at the church they came from, they did this. This was a great useful wonderful ministry that they were engaged in, and the first thing they do is they move into this local church, and now they want to incorporate that here. Every church has its particular slant and its particular thrust. Every individual believer has his particular spiritual gift, and a particular use of the same spiritual gift that someone else may have. However, every individual is different spiritually than every other individual, so every church has its own thrust. So what you are to do is question number one.

1. **What Does God Want Me to Think?**

There is a second question, and that's a viewpoint element. That is what does God want me to think? This again is the same for every believer. What God wants you to think is His point of view. God wants divine viewpoint thinking. Divine viewpoint thinking comes from having the Word of God stored within our human spirits. From divine viewpoint of Bible doctrine comes the spiritual growth into a spiritual maturity structure in our souls. So what's the key? What does God want me to think? The key is knowing the Word of God. If you know doctrine, it'll be fantastic how you will know what God wants you to think. If you do not know doctrine, do you know what you will think? You will try the old disastrous trick of thinking with your emotions. Nobody can think with his emotions. You will go far afield from the will of God if you try to think with your emotions. Thinking God's thoughts requires His word.

1. **Where Does God Want Me to Go?**

The third element is the geographical element. Where does God want me to go? This is not the same for every believer. This is different for each believer. There is a specific place that God wants you to serve, in a particular place geographically at a certain point of time. A Christian who is filled with the Spirit will respect the instruction that he receives from the Lord concerning where the Lord wants him to serve. You can't make this decision on the wrong basis. This is a moving age. 50% of young adults under 25 move every year in this country now. It is a totally different way of life than we had a few years ago. People are very mobile.

Most of those people never say, "Now I'm going to move from this part of the country to this part of the country. Will my spiritual service be better when I move here than it was here?" This is one thing they never even take into account--whether their spiritual effectiveness and the blessing of their children and their family's benefit will be equal and improve after they make this move (which it will be, if it's God's move), as over against if they remain here. Instead, they say, "Let's see, I'll make this much money here. I'll make this much money here. God wants me here where I make more money."

This is how preachers do it in the ministry: "I make this much money here at this church. If I move to this church, I'll make this much money. Obviously, the Lord wants me here. He's blessing me. He is so good. Oh, praise the Lord." If you are in the ministry, one of the things you discover is that your salary always increases when you change churches. No church is going to have the humiliation of calling a pastor who gets less there than he had where he was at the last place. This is why, in the ministry, the average length of stay in this country is about three years. Two-and-a-half to three years is the average length that a minister stays in one church. Then he moves on, because if you're going to go up in the profession, you've got to keep floating to the next place.

This is disaster to your personal spiritual life whether you are in the professional ministry, or personally as an individual believer. You cannot move to God's geographic area for your life on the basis of whether you're going to make more money. You can't even move on the basis of whether you'll be able to survive.

I can personally testify to that. When I came out of Dallas Seminary, I was in this very auditorium. It was a Sunday night. The pastor of this little work got up and said, "I'm a business man, and I've been running this church. My work is finished here, and I think we should call somebody to this ministry. They passed out pieces of paper, and they said, "Please give us the names of people that might fill this pulpit." When they came in, they all had my name on them.

It was May, and I was graduating from Dallas seminary, and I was the most surprised of anybody. This is because there was one thing that I had already decided during my seminary days. I had already observed that there was one dirty stick job in Christian work, and that was being a pastor-teacher, and therefore I was not going to be that. But I had to reconsider that night. The next issue was, "Well, how much can we pay you?" Well I didn't really need too much. I was married and we had two boys. They were small. They didn't eat much, and we really restricted it. They don't need to grow too fast. They can do that later.

So anyhow the church paid me $25 a week. After all four years in Dallas Seminary, that's about what it was worth--$25 a week. So, humanly speaking, what were my choices concerning my geographic area? Washington D.C. had a bible institute, and they said, "We want you to come and be dean." Viola out on the West coast said, "We want you to come out and teach at Viola." These were all the things that I would by nature be interested in. And here's a big $25 a week job out in a town of 2,500 and three horses.

So, interestingly enough, on the basis of the reasonable and logical evidence, this was not the geographic area. However, on the basis of what the Lord was leading and the evidences that He was speaking to my mind, this was the place, and this was my right place. Consequently, the next Wednesday night, I accepted that which had been offered on that basis. Within one week's time, a man in business came along and said, "I want to see that kind of a ministry develop, and I'll supply another $25 a week to match what the church pays." So within one week of a very brilliant ministry, the salary was doubled. There aren't many ministers who can say that in one week's time, they have doubled their salary. But I did. But the point is that you don't decide geographic calls by amounts of money. Don't ever fall into that trap. It's not only for ministers. It's for you as the individual believers. This is the worst mistake you can ever make. God does not lead you on the basis of economics.

Alright, the elements of the will of God that you will have to answer are operational. What does God want me to do? You must find out His viewpoint. What does He want me to think? How does He want me to view things, people, and myself? How does he want me to get my eyes off our people and onto the Lord? Don't let anybody ever come up to you and give that weak knucklehead excuse that so-and-so disturbed me, and so now I'm no longer going to do this or that. People don't do anything to you. Anytime that anybody comes up to you and says, "Well, I was serving the Lord, and then so-and-so did this, and I'm not going to do this anymore now," I can tell you right now that you're lying. In the depths of your soul, you are looking for a way out of that service or that place, and you're using this as a cover smokescreen excuse. When you become a Christian who is oriented to God's viewpoint and you think like God, only what the Lord thinks is important. People will never bug you. They can't get to you one way or another. The Lord is my captain, and my orders come from Him.

If you are a bondslave (if He is your master), you don't pay attention to what some other poor slave has to tell you, or how some other poor slave badmouths you or irritates you. You are your Master's, and you continue with Him. Where you do it--the geographic element? He guides to that.

**The Mechanics of Divine Guidance**

There are certain mechanics in divine guidance. We have an example of this in Acts 11:1-16. This was in Peter's case, relative to the gospel, going out to the gentile world. This passage incorporates several of the ways in which God guides us to his will. Acts 11:1: "And the apostles and the brethren that were in Judea heard that the gentiles had also received the Word of God." The apostles heard back in Jerusalem of gentile conversion to Christianity under Peter in the experience in the household of Cornelius at Caesarea. When Peter was come back to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him. The legalists jumped on Peter when he got back saying, "You went in to men uncircumcised to eat with them."

The legalists hit Peter with the fact that he was sitting down and eating with gentiles. These legalists were completely ignoring the fact that these gentiles were also members of the body of Christ, and that they had experienced a similar Pentecostal experience that demonstrated that they were indeed part of the church. But verse 4 says, "Peter reviewed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it in order unto them." Peter meets the criticism by relating the factors of God's leading concerning the gentile Christians in the house of Cornelius.

1. **Guidance Through Prayer**

Alright, there is the introduction in these first four verses. In verse five, we have the first item of guidance indicated. This was guidance to the will of God through prayer: "I was in the city of Joppa," Peter says, "praying, and in a trance, I saw a vision, a certain vessel descending, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners, and it came even to me." God brings the information that you need in some way. In Peter's case, he brought it in the form of a vision. God today no longer speaks through voices or visions, and you should not seek God's will and guidance in that way. However, God does lead you as the result of your prayer and inquiry of information to Him. He has some means by which he brings the information you need to your attention.

You should not seek any information from God in prayer on some subject when the Bible has already told you what to do. If you are a woman, and you have this unsaved man that you want to marry, don't ever go to God and say, "Lord, shall I marry this unsaved goat?" God has already spoken to you concerning the relationship of sheep and goats in marriage. So it would be ridiculous for you to go and ask God for guidance there. He will not give you any guidance further beyond His Word.

However, you should pray that God would lead you to the right man or the right woman whom He, in eternity past, has prepared for you. Hebrews 4:16 encourages our approach to that throne of grace. In that respect, you would be right to seek for God's guidance; and, in that respect, through your prayers, He will bring you the information that you need, and He will say, "This is the person."

1. **Guidance Through the Mind**

Secondly, verse 6 says, "Upon which, when I had fastened my eyes (this vision), I considered and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air." Notice the expression, "I considered." Here is guidance through the mind. Peter is centering his attention on something, and he's seeking the divine meaning of that something. This requires a mind that's free of spiritual callouses in order to enable the Christian to think objectively. The Christian who thinks subjectively is a Christian who is emotionally oriented, and that Christian cannot possibly come to the mind of God. He is too distracted. God doesn't guide through our emotions. He guides us through our minds. If you make a decision in the heat of emotion, you are really really out of it. I am really amazed how often Christians, in the heat of some emotion, in the heat of some argument or some debate or some conflict that they have with somebody, they make a dramatic declaration concerning the will of God for them.

If somebody comes and tells you that they are going to make a decision in the heat of emotion, you can just be almost absolutely certain that God is not leading them. The Lord does not lead you into His will in the heat of emotion. He leads you as the result of what Peter did. He saw this vision. God gave him some information, and he considered it. This means that he attached his mind to it, and he began to examine the meaning of the thing. God leads by guiding our thoughts to His thoughts.

1. **Guidance Through the Word of God**

Verses 7-10: "And I heard a voice saying unto me, 'Arise Peter, slay and eat.' But I said, 'Not so Lord, for nothing common or unclean has at any time entered into my mouth.' But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed, do not call common.' And this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven." Here is guidance through the Word of God. Peter received, in this case, a direct revelation directly from God. He heard words spoken of God's explanation of this vision to him. The revelation that you and I receive today is recorded in the Bible. We do not hear voices from God. The revelation that we have directly from God is now in the Scripture. God basically leads us today through the Word which we have stored in our learning process in our human spirits. God has given us a grace method for learning His Word, and this enables us to store it and to use it. So this is guidance through the Word of God. If you do not store it, you will not have guidance.

Please don't fall into that old idea that when you are in trouble and when you have some crisis, you will now go to the Lord for guidance. So you go to your Bible and you start reading to see what God will give you in your guidance. In fact, one of the favorite ways is to close your eyes; open your Bible; and, put your finger down there to see what it says, and there is the Lord's revelation and guidance to you. You may end up doing like the lady who did that one time when she had a great crisis situation. She took her Bible to see what God had to guide her; she opened her Bible; put her finger down; and, she read, "And Judas went out and hanged himself." She said, "That can't be the Lord's guidance to me today." She said, "I'll do it again." She closed the Bible; opened it; put her finger down; and, it said, "Go thou and do likewise."

That's where picking in the Bible with your finger is going to get you with that kind of guidance. If you do not have the Word of God, you're very likely not going to find it when you have the crisis. Then it's too late to secure it. That's why you have to stay on top of these things and be preparing yourself, so that when you do come to your times of crises and your problems, you'll be very stable. You'll know how to handle the thing. You'll know how to come to the Word. You'll have the solutions, and you won't be running around like a scared rabbit to everybody else under the sun trying to find what to do and what the information is. You will have prepared yourself for that moment in combat as a soldier of Jesus Christ.

1. **Guidance Through Providential Circumstances**

Verse 11 says, "And behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me." Now here is guidance through providential circumstances. These three men arrived even while Peter was still on the rooftop in Joppa searching the Word of God that had been revealed to him. These men had previously left Caesarea for Joppa. Now, practically before Peter's vision was even completed, they were at the door. What had happened? Well, God was directing the men to this action. This is what we mean by a providential circumstance. God is directing our circumstances so that we have indication of His will.

This is a very forceful direction. You should become well acquainted with this. The circumstances of your life are very regularly directed and channeled in such a way that there are a clear finger-pointing from God saying, "This way, Christian. This is where we're headed. This is where I want you to go." You should not ignore circumstances, but you must confirm that these are circumstances that are providential--that they are from God. That means that you match them up to doctrine; you match him up to the principles of the Word of God; and, you verify them as compatible with God's point of view. This is because Satan can also set up circumstances. Satan can give you fantastic beautiful opportunities to do exactly what you want to do. This may be exactly wrong and exactly sinful. Satan will give you opportunities to do that very sinful thing, and you will say, "Isn't this wonderful how God has providentially really provided me with this opportunity. It must be all right to do this. So confirm that the circumstances are not of Satan's doing, but that they have been of the Lord's provision.

Also, don't fall into the trap of hanging out the fleece either. This is a technique that Gideon used, whether it was right or wrong, and there's some question about that. Certainly in the age of grace, we are guided by the completed Scripture that we have, and by the spiritual maturity that you have developed in your soul. So don't be putting something up to God and saying, "Well God, if this happens, I know you want me to do this." That fleece-hanging went out with Gideon, and if you persist in it, it will hang you.

Verse 12: "And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house." Here is guidance through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit never guides a believer apart from the Word of God. How did Peter have this guidance? He had this guidance because the Word of God had just been given to him. He knew what the Lord wanted him to do as a result of what he had been told. The Holy Spirit never guides apart from the filling of the Christian. Unless a believer is filled with the Spirit, with all known sin confessed, He cannot guide that believer. The Holy Spirit never guides a believer apart from the knowledge of doctrine. This is the only way that the Spirit of God will guide you. He will not guide you through your emotions. He will guide you through your thinking, and your thinking will guide your emotions. "He bade me go." This is the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, and He will teach you on the basis of what you know.

1. **Guidance Through a Frame of Reference**

Verses 13-15 have guidance through comparison or through the development of a frame of reference: "And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, who stood and said unto him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell you things by which you and your house shall be saved.' And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning." There was a repeat Pentecost experience here among the gentiles. The phenomenon that happened at Jerusalem happened at Caesarea. This confirmed that gentile Christians were also part of the body of Christ just as the Jewish Christians were, as Ephesians 2:14 indicates. God set up this occasion to make this comparison. He providentially brought together an opportunity for Peter to be able to make this comparison. Peter had the frame of reference from the Jerusalem Pentecost. He was able to compare what was happening in this situation.

1. **Guidance Through Scripture Memory**

Verse 16 says, "Then I remembered the Word of the Lord, how He said, "John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." This is guidance through Scripture memory. Here he is remembering something. He's remembering the Word of the Lord--that which was spoken in Acts 1:5. Because he knew the Word, he was able to recall the Word. Scripture memory is a very valuable means of divine guidance.

To sum this up, here are the major features of divine guidance for bondslaves. If you would be a bondslave of Jesus Christ, the first thing you need, if you're going to have His guidance, is to have a knowledge of the will of God. In Romans 12:2, the apostle Paul declares to us, "And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

**God's Will that is Stated in Scripture**

There are many things that are stated directly in the Bible to be God's will. These things are clearly the things that we need a knowledge of.

1. **Being Born Again**

For example, it is stated clearly that every person is to be born again (2 Peter 3:9, 1 John 2:17, 1 John 3:23).

1. **Sanctification**

It is the will of God that all believers be sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3). This refers to being set apart unto God in your daily experience. That means being in fellowship with God so that you are under His direction and control.

1. **Filled With the Holy Spirit**

It is the will of God that all believers be controlled or filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

1. **Give Thanks**

It is the will of God that Christians should give thanks to God in everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18, Romans 8:28). If God is guiding His children, then we should act in thankfulness for that guidance. Thus, when we suffer, we may understand that this is guidance from God. We suffer, and we should thank God for that suffering because it is designed for blessing. This is true even when we are disciplined. When God disciplines, it is because He's driving you toward 1 John 1:9 to make confession to get back to the place of blessing.

1. **Suffering**

It is the will of God that believers should suffer (1 Peter 3:17, 1 Peter 4:19). Suffering brings blessing. Suffering brings spiritual maturity far more quickly. Just think of the times that you have suffered as a believer. Think of the things that you have experienced as a Christian, and how often that has informed you and alerted you and tempered your spiritual life as a Christian. You learn fast. Suffering focuses our attention on the things in life that are really important: our fellowship with the Father; knowing doctrine; and, using our spiritual gifts and service. Suffering helps us to see what's important and what is not.

1. **Trust**

The Bible says that believers are to trust in the Lord. This is His will for all bondslaves (Proverbs 3:5-6). The mind (or the heart) is to be on divine viewpoint, and not on our own human viewpoint understanding.

1. **Divine Good**

It is the will of God for us to be productive of divine good (1 Peter 2:15). We produce divine good from the filling of the Holy Spirit; from the use of doctrine which we have stored in our human spirits; and, from our spiritual maturity structure--a threefold source.

Some things in God's will are not stated clearly. We have to decide that on the basis of doctrine that we know. There is no guidance, however, for any Christian apart from a knowledge of the Word of God and this filling of the Holy Spirit.

**Yieldedness**

Another element to remember is yieldedness to the will of the Father (Romans 6:13, Romans 12:1) Yielding is not a one shot experience. Some people get the idea that yielding is a one shot experience. Here is what yielding is. Let's take our example of the two concentric circles. The outer circle represents our eternal fellowship that we enter at the point of salvation. The inner circle is temporal fellowship. This is fellowship in time. At the point of salvation, we enter that inner circle. That inner circle is the place of yieldedness. You are a yielded Christian when you are in that inner circle. The moment you sin, you are taken out. You are not taken out of salvation. You are still in the outer circle, but you are taken out of the inner circle, and you are no longer in the place of God's blessing. You are no longer yielded. When we confess our sin, we come back into that inner circle, and we are now yielded again.

This is what it means to be yielded. This is what it means for Christ to be Lord of your life. It is not something that you just decide someday that from now on, Christ is going to be Lord of my life, and from now on, I'm going to be yielded. It is deceptive for Christians to be given that idea. The practice of confession in 1 John 1:9 is the technique to achieve yieldedness. Yielding is a command from God. Romans 12:1 says that we are to present our bodies. That is in the aorist tense which means that at every point of carnality, we are to use 1 John 1:9 to get back into the inner circle. The principle of yieldedness to the will of God you'll find stated in Romans 6:13. The means is 1 John 1:9. Yieldedness, in other words, means being willing to do the will of God even before you know what that will is.

**Guidance through Spiritual Growth**

We also have guidance through spiritual growth. 2 Peter 3:18 speaks about our growing in grace. Grace is the sum total of the plan of God. Our positive volition toward Bible doctrine builds spiritual maturity in the soul. Guidance is one step at a time. Therefore, it is a growth process. Guidance from God is a step at a time--not the whole picture. Therefore, it is something that we grow into.

There are certain hindrances you should be aware of relative to your spiritual life. You will fail, as a bondslave, if you are ignorant of Bible doctrine. You will not be able to respond to the will of God. You will then lack a spiritual maturity structure in your soul because you don't have the materials with which to build it. Therefore, without spiritual maturity, you will not be able to enter very far into the will of God. Your guidance receptivity is too low. Also, there is any point of carnality; any point where you are not yielded; and, any point of willful known sin will also blank out any guidance from God into His will. So if you are concerned to play your role as a bondslave, these are the major features. With these factors, you can enter into your role as a bondslave of Jesus Christ with all the joys and all the exhilaration that that position connotes, and that that position is in our experience.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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