***The Doctrine of the Will of God  
  
RV69-01***

We are studying the letter to Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22. This is segment number 22. It has become evident, as we have studied this letter, that it is possible for a person to be born again spiritually, but still to be spiritually blind. Carnality permits the old sin nature to blind the spiritual discernment of a believer. This was the trouble with the congregation at Laodicea. Spiritual blindness is especially disastrous because the Christian doesn't realize that he lacks spiritual insight. That's one of the problems with lacking spiritual understanding – to have eyes that are blind to spiritual realities. You don't realize that you're in that condition.

The only solution for spiritual blindness is to remove the scales from the eyes by confession of one's evil to the Father. Confession restores the believer to the status of spirituality, and to the restoration of spiritual sight. The eye salve of spirituality heals the blindness to spiritual things. This is what they needed in Laodicea. This is what we as believers constantly need today.

One of the major losses to the sightless believer is the understanding of the will of God for his life. If you do not have eyes that can spiritually discern, then you are blind to what God has in His plans for you. You will muddle around, and you will wander around. You will end up in all kinds of blind alleys. You will be chasing rabbits. All the while, you will be thinking that you are open and moving forward to what God has in His plans for you.

The Word of God makes it very clear that there is indeed a divine plan for every believer in the family of God. Ephesians 2:10 teaches us that in these words: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them." When you came into the Christian life, you came into a plan – a total and complete plan, and over that plan was written your name. Within that plan was a series of details, which were to be executed by you: because of your particular gifts; because of your particular temperament; and, because of your particular circumstance and background – everything that constitutes you as a child of God within the body of Christ. There is a divine plan for each believer, and it varies from believer to believer. Someone else cannot substitute for you in the Lord's work. Someone else may have to take up the slack of work that was necessary to be done. That work was laid out as an objective for you to achieve, but if you fail to achieve it, then the Lord brings in somebody else as a replacement to achieve that particular objective.

So there is a need in the life of the believer for day-by-day signals of our Father's path for us. Spiritual eyes which cannot see place one's whole life in danger of being wasted. No greater tragedy can strike a Christian than to waste his life.

**The Doctrine of the Will of God**

So, we're going to look at one of the consequences of having spiritual eyesight – one of the consequences of being able to see spiritual things because you are in the status of spirituality, where God the Holy Spirit can make the things clear to you that you need to know. We're going to look at the doctrine of the will of God.

1. **The Types of the Will of God**

There are, first of all, three types of the will of God. We'll begin by looking at those.

* 1. **The Directive Will of God**

We may call the first one the directive will of God. This is what we would call the sovereign choice of God. This is His decretive will. This is the plan that God has designed for you in particular. This is what the Lord wants you to do. That's His directive will.

* 1. **The Permissive Will of God**

There is a second type of the will of God. We may call that His permissive will. The permissive will of God means that man's negative volition is permitted to operate contrary to the directive will of God. The permissive will comes in when you are negative to the directive will – when you are resistant to what God's directive plan is for you. God's justice demands that He discipline a believer who is in this kind of rebellion, while he is permitting you to run your course in His permissive will. His permissive will is not just one that you can have as an option – an alternate that you can take. If you do, you take it at personal cost; you take it at personal loss; and, you take it as personal discipline. The permissive will, of course, is included within the decretive will of God. There are no surprises.

* 1. **The Overruling Will of God**

Then there is a third type of will which we may call the overruling will of God. This supersedes the directive and the permissive wills of God. God directs circumstances in such a way as to frustrate Satan's will which has moved you away from God's directive will. God takes every choice in the life of a believer, and He makes it for good. That is the great and dramatic statement – the promise of Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." This is the overruling will of God.

This is a very comforting thing to know, when someplace along the line, your eyes become blinded to spiritual reality by some act of negative volition resistance; by some idea; or, by some human viewpoint concept of your own that you're trying to shove into your life, and usually shove off against other people as well. God's permissive will comes into play. You are permitted to start running that course, but His overruling will is always there, ready to do again for you that which is His blessing designed for you. It will never be what it could have been had you stayed in the directive will in the first place. It will never be in eternity what it could have been.

You have all heard the story of the of the Persian rug weaver, who was asked by an observer who was watching him perform the intricate work of weaving this rug and working in the design. The man asked, "What happens if somebody makes a mistake in the pattern?" And he said, "Well, then we redesign the pattern, and we incorporate it in such a way that it is almost as good as the original plan." That's what God does in the overruling will. He comes in, and He brings about that which is almost as good as the original plan.

So, all of us, in one way or another, sit in some situation where we have botched up our lives. We foul things up, and in a lesser or greater degree, all of us are potentially able to do that. The thing to remember is that God's grace has made provision for straightening it out. If you will not go with His directive, His permissive will will shift into gear and permit you to start running your course. When you open yourself to His positive leading, His overruling will will come into the picture and direct you once more. In fact, on occasion, His overruling will will be so stringent that it will override you, in spite of yourself, to prevent you from some path; from some disaster; or, from some evil.

So, let's look at a few examples. 2 Corinthians 6:14 says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship does righteousness have with unrighteousness, and what communion has light with darkness?" This verse declares for us the principle of the directive will of God to the effect that we are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Let's apply this to the marriage situation: not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. That means that if you are a Christian man or woman, you do not marry an unbeliever. You are not to be unequally yoked with someone who is a goat in God's sight, while you are a sheep in the family of God. That's His directive will.

However, you come along, and you believe that God has called you to dating evangelism, so you start dating some character who is out of the family of God. It may be some girl that's all slob, and of no spiritual quality at all, because you're going to redesign her, and help her to find the Lord. Eventually, you lose sight of reality. You get disoriented, and you find yourself where you believe that what God wants you to do is to marry this unbeliever. God's permissive will comes into operation, and you are permitted to marry the unbeliever. The result will be a life of misery, and a life of discipline. God will have to re-weave the pattern of your life.

You may also apply this in terms of people who are believers. No greater warning could be given to anybody who's contemplating marriage than to never marry beneath yourself spiritually. Never marry somebody who is beneath you spiritually, especially if it's the man. If you're going out with, somebody who is a spiritual incompetent; if you go out with someone who is a spiritual neutral; or, if you go out with somebody who is a spiritual zero, or at the lower end of the scale, then you are inviting into your life that kind of spiritual leadership. That's the kind of leadership you will get; but, worse yet: that's the kind of leadership your children will get in time. It is a serious matter to say, "I'm going to step out of the directive will of God, which says that I don't put myself in relationship to an unbeliever, and I don't put myself in marriage to someone who has no spiritual orientation. Therefore, I cannot share the first thing that a person has to share – the first intimacy of marriage." The first intimacy of the relationship of two human beings who are entering marriage has to be spiritual. If there is not intimacy in terms of their human spirit, everything else is lost.

The second will be the intimacy of their souls. That's what engagement is for. The third would then be the intimacy of the body. That's the order in which you have to follow. It's spirit; soul; and, body. God's directive will is that you don't get in that position. For one reason or another, you ignore all the warnings; you ignore all the scriptural admonitions; and, you go into it. Now you've got the permissive will. Get yourself set for a lonely life when it comes to spiritual things. If you have hooked yourself into someone who is spiritually disoriented; indifferent; and, out of it, I can promise you that you're going to get it.

Let's look at another example. 1 John 3:23: "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ." Here is the directive will of God. The directive will of God is that you should believe in Christ as Savior. The directive will of God for every human being is that they should be born again. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that, "God is not willing that any should perish." But you exercise negative volition against the gospel. God's justice rightfully then condemns you, and His permissive will comes into operation, and His permissive will allows you to reject the gospel and to suffer the consequences of that rejection. The consequences are serious and eternal, as spelled out in John 3:36: "He that believes on the Son (that's the directive will of God) has everlasting life. He that does not believe the Son (that's the permissible will of God) shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." There is a consequence when you choose the permissive over against the directive will of God.

Every person who has ever been born into the human race comes to a point, sooner or later, of God-consciousness. The book of Romans describes that for us in the opening part of that book. Remember that we studied how everybody comes to God-consciousness. Once you come to the awareness that there is someone out there, you also have to make a decision. The directive will of God is that you should find that one – that you should seek that one. But if you go negative toward the fact that you're aware there is someone out there, and you reject and resist Him, then that's the end of the line. Permissive will comes into operation, and you remain in your darkness. But if you come to positive response to God consciousness, then God is obligated to bring you the information of the gospel so that you may be saved, and that's exactly what He does. He gives you the testimony of creation. He gives you the testimony of providence. You put two-and-two together, and you say, "Somebody is out there who made this and who makes this thing work, and I want to know Him." Or you may say, "I reject Him."

**A Heathen**

Why is a person a heathen? What puts a person in the category of being described as a heathen? A heathen is a person who has gone negative to God consciousness, or has gone negative when he heard the gospel. That's what makes a heathen. You're not born a heathen. A heathen is a person who has been negative at the point of God consciousness or at the point of hearing the gospel.

Ephesians 5:17-18 says, "Wherefore don't be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." The directive will of God for every believer is to be filled with the Spirit. We've gone over that in considerable detail. I think you understand now why that is important. That is what they lacked in Laodicea, and that's why their eyes were blind. The permissive will of God is for you to refuse to yield in confession of known sin. You are not filled with the Spirit as a consequence of moving into the permissive will of God. You also bring yourself into the circumstance of discipline.

The next verse coming up in our section here, in Revelation 3:19, says to these people who are in reversionism, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent." What is the will of God? The will of God is for you to respond to that discipline. Get out of the permissive will, and get back into the directive will of God. The directive will of God is for you to be filled with the Spirit.

**Balaam**

One great example that we will not look at in detail is in the Old Testament. That is the example of Balaam, which is recorded in an extensive passage beginning in Numbers 22:12 and going through Numbers 25:18. Without going into the excessive details, you remember that Balak, the heathen king, wanted Balaam to use his authority to pronounce a curse upon the people of God before they met them in battle. When this proposition was presented to Balaam, for financial benefits, God said to him, 'You shall not go.'" The whole concept of cursing the people of Israel was a human viewpoint concept because the Lord said, "They are a blessed people. They are My client nation. You will not go to curse them." That very clearly was the directive will of God. When he got a proposition the second time to go and curse these people, he again decided that he was going to consider the matter, the Lord said, "No, you shall not curse them. To curse the people of God is to call demonic influence into action upon the people of God, and you will not do that." That was the directive will of God: "Balaam, stay out of it." Balaam did not stay out of it, as you know. He insisted that he was going to go. He insisted that he was going to gain the material rewards of bringing this curse upon the people of God.

So, he shifted into the permissive will of God. The permissive will of God enabled Balaam to proceed to curse the people of God. Then you remember that the overruling will of God came into play, as he was on his way, when his donkey that he was riding stopped and refused to go forward. He beat the animal. The animal fell down. He struck the animal, but the animal would not go forward. Finally, the animal spoke to him, and asked him why he was mistreating him in such a way? Then Balaam's eyes were opened, and he saw what the donkey had seen – an angel standing there in the pathway with a sword in his hand. That was one of the all-time classical examples where there was more brains under a person than above him. There was more insight under him than above him.

The old English describes the donkey as a jackass. Who was the ass in that question? The overruling will of God said, "You're not going to be it, Balaam, even though you're bound and determined." How often do you want to act like a mule, and the overruling will of God comes in and says, "I'm not going to let you do it? I'm not going to let you be that kind of a jackass, in spite of the fact that you're determined and willful that you're going to do it."

1. **The Elements of the Will of God**

There are certain elements of the will of God also that we should be aware of.

* 1. **What Does God want me to do?**

We may call the first one the operational element. The operational element in the will of God asks the question: what does God want me to do? Basically, what God wants you to do is the same for every Christian. Basically, what God wants us to do as believers is to be filled with the Spirit, and to proceed to build spiritual maturity in our soul. You may search the Scriptures all you wish. This is the starting point. Whatever else you may do within the body of Christ, and whatever else you may do in Christian service, this is where it all begins. It is the will of God that you be filled with the Spirit and that you build spiritual maturity. This constitutes being yielded to the will of God the Holy Spirit.

There are certain provisions of grace to enable us in our doing, and we will not go into these in detail. Most of you are well acquainted with these, but these details have been provided by God for us to execute the operational element of the will of God in our lives. These include the fact that God has provided us with the completed canon of Scripture. We have a completed Bible, and it is preserved for us in an inerrant form. Another element is the local church organization with its program of training in Bible doctrine knowledge. Then there are the pastor-teacher and the evangelist gifts, along with all the spiritual gifts of the individual believers that are extant and operational in this age for Christian service. There is the provision of the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide the believer. There is the provision of a living human spirit at the point of salvation as a reservoir in which to store doctrine. There is the confession of sin technique for maintaining the status of spirituality. There is the universal priesthood of the believer so that each of us approaches God on our own, and in personal privacy of that approach. Then there is the soul with its various facets for functioning in our daily lives in terms of our mentality, our will, and our emotions.

When we move into doing the operational facet of the will of God, doing includes things like the faith rest technique; living in the word; occupation with Christ; prayer; witnessing; and, exercising our spiritual gifts. All of these are included in the operational element of the will of God for us as individual believers, and it all begins with: what does God want me to do? *God wants you to be spiritual Christian.* That is point number one. He wants you to be a spiritual Christian and to proceed from there to spiritual maturity.

* 1. **What Does God want me to think?**

There is a second factor when we talk about the will of God, and that is the viewpoint element. This asks the question: what does God want me to think? This, again, is the same for every believer. What God wants you to think is divine viewpoint. Divine viewpoint comes with the full knowledge of the Word of God when we have stored it in the human spirit. From divine viewpoint of doctrine comes the basis of spiritual growth for developing a spiritual maturity structure, and going on to what James describes as that super-abounding grace position of super grace living. The key to all of this (the key viewpoint in the will of God) is *to learn the Word of God*. The learning of doctrine and acting upon it gives you divine viewpoint.

That's why the devil wants to minimize and degrade and belittle the learning of the Word of God. He wants to discredit the teaching of doctrine. If he can do that, he's won it all. The reason for that is if he can do that (if he can dissuade a local church from hammering out the enlightenment of God's word), people will not have God's viewpoint. And, without divine viewpoint, all is lost relative to you functioning within the will of God.

* 1. **Where Does God want me to go?**

Then there's a third element in the will of God, and that's geographical. This is not the same for every believer. This asks the question: where does God want me to go? This is different for every Christian. There is a specific area on the face of the earth that God has in which you are to live; in which you are to develop your Christian life; in which you are to rear your family; and, in which you are to execute the use of your spiritual gifts – in a particular place, and at a particular given time. This is a very important question that people have to decide, relative to the will of God for them.

The businessman that I mentioned to you last time said something else in the course of our conversation, out of his elation over 15 years of wandering around, and finding the Word of God on the recorded form of the Berean tapes, and finding that here's where reality was. He immediately sensed that here was the potential of forward motion for him in the Christian life that he's been denied for many years, and which his family has been denied. He, in the course of that conversation, said, "And it may be necessary for us simply to move up here from South Texas." How often have we heard that? And I said to him, "If you were here on Sunday, we could point out several people in this congregation who did exactly that." God said, "My will for you is to be executed in the geographical location of Irving, Texas."

Irving, Texas is a very famous town in the United States. It is. Do you know that Irving, Texas has issued the third largest number of building permits in the United States? We're number three in the whole United States in issuing building permits. I don't know if that's because every time you put up a chicken coop, you have to have a building permit, which multiplies it, but nevertheless, that's pretty impressive. This town is headed for the big time. For some people, the big time is because, here they have found, by God's directive will, the living and powerful Word of God. It's not that they could not have found it someplace else. Here and there, there are places where expository preaching is carried on, and it is a rising viewpoint. It is a rising exercise more and more. This is being captured.

We recently had two students from two different seminaries in the local area. Both of them were decrying the fact that they can see that the schools that they attend had veered off in their frame of reference to an emphasis upon secondary things, and they are losing the vision of the fact that what God calls them to do as ministers in the pastorate is to execute the teaching of the Word of God. That is still uppermost for the Lord, and if you cannot do it in one place, by one means or another, then He will enable you to shift gears to a different geographic position.

That also should caution you to realize that you don't just pull up stakes and shove off when the Lord has you in a place that is oriented to the Word of God, and you understand what's going on in terms of the local church, and in terms of Christianity today, and where it's all at. You don't just pull up stakes and shove off because you happen to work for a corporation that says, "Hey, you. You, the guy with the ring in your nose, when we jerk that ring, you come, and we're ready to put you over here at the other side of the country;" and, willy-nilly, you run off and take off because that's where your employment goes, instead of telling them to hang it on their nose. You're not going to yield spiritual opportunity unless the Lord says, "I'm going to move you from here to here, and you'll have equal spiritual opportunity there." And don't pretend to yourself that it's there unless it really is.

We have had many examples of people that the Lord had prospered because they understood the element of the geographical will of God for them, and they took action accordingly.

1. **The Mechanics of Divine Guidance**

Now there are certain mechanics that are involved in divine guidance, and we may illustrate this by turning to Acts 11:1-16. This is, of course, the bottom line. When I walk out of here tomorrow morning, I need to know something. I have some factor in my life that needs to be decided. I want to know: how is the Lord going to lead me? How am I going to understand and come to a grasp for that specific thing that He has designed for me in His plan?

We have the story here of Peter being used to open the ministry of the new era of Christianity to gentiles. This is probably something like 11 years after Pentecost has taken place. It has been a Jewish church. It has been a Jewish operation. Gentiles have not been involved. Now the Lord is ready to make another major move forward, and make another major clarification concerning the shifting from the age of the law to the age of the church. In Acts 11:1-4, you have an introduction: "The apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the gentiles had also received the Word of God." The apostles in Jerusalem hear that there has been conversion to Christianity among gentiles under Peter up at Caesarea:

"When Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, 'You went in to men uncircumcised, and you ate with them.'" After so many years of Christianity being exclusively a Jewish operation, the legalists had developed a very powerful base. As you remember, in our study of the book of Romans, they had developed such a powerful base that they were telling people that if their males were not circumcised, they could not be born again. They were totally disoriented legalists. These legalists attacked Peter because he sat down and he ate with gentiles. Gentiles were called dogs by the Jews. A dog is a dirty word in the Bible. Dogs in the Scriptures were not the cute little puppies and house pets that we think of today. A dog was a loathsome animal. He was a scavenger. He was like a pig. He was part of the unclean animal category. A dog was a very degrading thing to call somebody. It's not so nice today either, for that matter, but it was particularly offensive in biblical times.

Verse 4: "But Peter reviewed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it in order unto them saying." Peter meets the criticism of eating with these gentile dogs by relating the factors of God's leading of him, relative to bringing gentiles into the body of Christ. Peter said, "I'm going to relate to you just how this came about as a leading of the Lord." In verse 5 through 16, you have several factors, then, in divine guidance.

* 1. **Prayer**

In verse 5, you have the factor of prayer: "I was in the city of Joppa 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 unto me." God brings information that Peter needs. God brings information to us in some way as the result of praying for that information. In the case of Peter, as was done in the early era of the church, God used visions. Peter did not seek guidance to the will of God through prayer, however, in relationship to something for which he already had a direct command. You don't go to the Lord and ask for divine viewpoint guidance on something that the Bible has instructed you on.

We need to go back again to the situation concerning marrying an unbeliever. I don't know how many times I have seen people, particularly women (because they are emotionally-oriented), pursuing somebody they should not pursue, and they have said to me that the Lord was leading them. Yet, there was a biblical reason why that could not be, and why the marriage was out of order. When I would point this out to them, they would simply brush it aside and override it: "The Lord is speaking to me because I have prayed about this and I know His will. He has spoken to me." Well, whoever spoke to them, it wasn't the Lord. *When the Bible condemns something, then there is no grounds for going and asking the Lord for it.*

You can relate to that very easily. Some of you could probably use a little more money. Do you think you should pray about whether you should see if maybe you could go out here tonight and catch somebody on a dark parking lot, and make a fast heist to improve your financial status? Why don't you pray about that: "Lord, would just lead me to some poor slob that's got a lot of money on him (that's not too strong) that I could catch out in this situation, and, Lord, I'm going to give you 10%?" I mean, that's monstrous even to think about it and to discuss it. Why? Because the Bible has already spoken: "Thou shalt not steal." Keep your hands off of what doesn't belong to you. Therefore, you don't go to God and ask Him to give you guidance in the matter of thievery.

There are certain things that you do ask God for. Hebrews 4:16 stresses the principle of going to God for guidance: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." You and I do have times of need, and the Bible does not give us the answer. *Then* we go to the Lord (this was Peter's situation), and you ask for information, and His grace comes through.

While you do not marry an unbeliever, and you don't have to pray whether God wants you to marry this particular unbeliever, what God does want you to do is to pray that you will be led to your right man or your right woman. And you pray that you will be open to that leading, and that you will be looking to the Lord to lead you to that right person. You should be praying now for the person you're going to marry someday, especially if you're not married. You should be praying about that person that someday you're going to marry. If you're planning to get married, you ought to be praying about that confirmation – that this is the right man or the right woman. And you don't have to go chasing around to do this.

As I have pointed out before, Adam and Eve are the pattern. How did Adam meet Eve? Because God brought her to him. God didn't go to Adam and say, "Now, Adam, if you'll go looking around behind the trees in the garden, I have a big surprise for you out there." No, he didn't send Adam to go playing the Pink Panther around the trees to see what he could discover. He brought her to him.

Your right man or your right woman may not come into your life until someplace way out in the middle of Saudi Arabia where you're pumping gas at a gas station; she zaps up in her four-on-the-floor; there you are; the Lord has brought you together; you take off from there; and, you live happily ever after. You should pray about the person that the Lord wants you to marry. That's a legitimate area of prayer, as well as everything else that is uncertain to you.

* 1. **Our Mentality**

Acts 11:6 shows that guidance comes through the mentality: "Upon which, when I had fastened my own eyes, I considered and saw four-footed beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air." Peter looked upon this sheet, which is filled with animals, and he considered it. That means that he gave thought to it. He was seeking the divine meaning of what he was seeing. He was looking at a circumstance of his life, and he was matching this up to his divine viewpoint frame of reference in order to interpret it according to what the Lord was trying to say to him. You and I are faced with that all the time. We have to face what the Lord is saying to us through a variety of circumstances that come into our lives, and through a variety of factors that we have to put into some kind of frame of reference. And to be able to consider this, in terms of "with eyes that can see," you're back to the need of spirituality.

Also, you're back to the need of having a soul that's free of callouses. If your soul is calloused over, you will not be able to think objectively. The kiss of death in the Christian life is to think subjectively. That is the devil's playground. It requires objectivity in the Christian life for you to be able to handle yourself, and to not play into the devil's hands, and lead a lot of other innocent people with you. Emotional thinking is subjective. It distracts from the mind of God. The Lord does not guide us in the heat of emotion. So, don't get married in the heat of emotion. That is not the Lord leading you into a decision, for example, under that circumstance. God leads by guiding our thoughts to His thoughts, in one way or another.

In verses 7-10, we have seen also that God guides our minds through the Word of God: "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: 'Do not call common what God has cleansed. And this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven." Here, Peter is receiving direct revelation from the Word of God. He heard the Lord speaking. The Word of God came to him to inform him as to what the Lord's plan was for him. Our revelation from God today is now static. It's completed. It's in the Scriptures. God leads today, basically, through the Word of God, as it is stored in our human spirit, for the Holy Spirit to illuminate and to direct us. Without that word, you have very little leading from the Lord. The grace system of perception, which we have studied recently, enables you to store God's Word for use for guidance for God's divine will.

* 1. **Circumstances**

Then in verse 11, we see that guidance is provided through circumstances: And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me." This is guidance to providential circumstances. These three men arrived even while Peter was still on the rooftop in Joppa. These men had, of course, left Caesarea for Joppa sometime before Peter's vision. God was directing the men to act. That's why we say it was a providential circumstance. It is something that He brought about in order to execute His will in the life of Peter.

You and I must test circumstances with the statements; with the doctrines; and, with the principles of the Bible, in order to verify that they are providential. Satan will set up circumstances and opportunities for us to do that which is evil, and to reject the Lord's will. Don't be too quick to say, "This door is open. Therefore, I know this is the Lord's will. He's providentially opening the door." You better check and see whose hand is on the doorknob before you go through. You can only check by matching the circumstances and the situation up against the principles of Scripture. You might say, "I don't know those principles." Then you're going to have trouble recognizing whose hand is on the doorknob.

Also, you don't hang out a fleece like Gideon did. That was legitimate in his time. It is illegitimate for people who are constantly indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and who have the Word of God for their guidance. *Don't put out the fleece.* That is not God's way of leading us into His will.

* 1. **The Holy Spirit Himself**

Then verse 12 indicates guidance through the Holy Spirit Himself: "And the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house." The Holy Spirit never guides a believer apart from the Word of God. We've already indicated that. The Holy Spirit never guides a believer apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit. We've indicated that spirituality is eyesight to know how to be led. The Holy Spirit never guides believers apart from the knowledge of doctrine: "He told me to go. That is the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. He tells us to do things in accordance with the Word.

* 1. **Our Frame of Reference through Comparison**

Then verses 13-15 show that God leads through our frame of reference – through comparison: "He showed us how he had seen an angel in his house who stood up and said unto him, "Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell you words by which you and all your house shall be saved. As he began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning." The phenomenon of Pentecost was repeated among the gentiles at Caesarea. Peter had a frame of reference because he understood what had happened. This was a biblical frame of reference. He saw what had happened, and he compared it. He immediately knew that he was looking at the real thing. He confirmed thereby that the gentile Christians were as much a part of the body of Christ as Jewish believers. This is the same principle that Paul enunciates in Ephesians 2:14 of the middle wall of partition (separation) being broken down. God set up the occasion here to make the comparison. Verses 13-14 indicate that it was God who set this up for him to be able to make this comparison.

* 1. **Scripture Memorization**

Then, verse 16 says that the Lord leads through Scripture memory: through remembering the Word of God; and, through memorizing Scripture: "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.'" Peter remembered what Jesus had said, as it's recorded in Acts 1:5. Peter knew the Word of God so that he could recall it at the proper time for guidance into the will of God at that point in his life. That's why memorizing Scripture is important, provided that you understand what the verse means.

There are certain major factors that come into play in the divine guidance for bondslaves. These factors are very critical for you to be able to move forward in the will of the Lord for you. These are the elements that we will conclude this study with at our next session.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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