Chapter Nine

Understanding God's will

**This section will try to put all of these things together, and into a proper perspective. We will try to understand clearly what the Bible is trying to teach us. The Bible was written to bring us to the point of seeing the whole picture clearly.**

**An example we can use is a jigsaw puzzle. There are many pieces and shapes. They all depend on each other in order to produce the final result; a picture or some object. Most people try to work the edges first. This gives the foundation to build upon. As you add pieces you get pictures. You might construct the barn or the mountain. You will put the water in and keep it separate from the sky. The flowers and animals are put in the proper place. In time, you have a complete product. The word of God is much the same way. Before Christ, they had bits and pieces. They had a partial picture of what was to come, but never saw the complete picture. There were too many pieces missing. Christ added these pieces along with the help of the Holy Spirit. As we look and learn, we see that we are also a part of this puzzle as well.**

**As you can tell by now, all of these subjects we have covered in this study are related to each other in one way or another. This chapter deals with knowing the will of God. So that we might understand what God wants from us.**

2 Kings 23:3 (NKJV) Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant.

**The previous verse is really self-explanatory. A study of the Old Testament will show that during the period of history when kings ruled the nation, the king led the people. The king was also the spiritual guide for the people. In most cases, the good kings led the people back to serving and worshipping God. The evil kings took the people further into paganism and idolatry. This particular king was Josiah who was the last totally good king of Judah. Notice in this verse that the people followed along and also took a stand for the covenant that Josiah had made with God.**

**We need to know what God's will is for us. Simply stated; we must be like God to be pleasing to Him. That sounds like an impossible task, doesn't it? Well, the Bible commands and advises us over and over that we must be like Him. If the Bible tells us that, we have to know that it is possible, because God would not require anything of us of which we were not capable. The Bible is and can be our guide. The Bible tells us about God and it tells us about His will.**

Psalms 37:23 (NKJV) The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

**Notice the language here. To explain: "And God delights in the way of a man whose steps are ordered by Him. The man who obeys God is pleasing to God.**

Psalms 32:8 (NKJV) I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

**God will instruct us how to go and He will watch over us.**

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

**We (Christians) are the workmanship of God. We are His hands to do. We are His feet to go. We are the lights, by which others will be led to God. We (Christians) are established to do good works. What are good works? The work that God gave us to do is considered as good works.**

Ephesians 5:17 (NKJV) Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

**Some religions teach that we cannot understand. Some teach that only the clergy can understand and give guidance. Some teach that God has to move someone in a miraculous way to give them understanding. We know for sure that the will of the Lord is to obey His commandments.**

Isaiah 58:11 (NKJV) The LORD will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

**He will guide, as long as we let Him.**

Isaiah 30:21 (NKJV) Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand Or whenever you turn to the left.

**This could be what we call providence. We find ourselves blessed in a particular circumstance and want to give God the credit. Things we do not fully understand concerning our welfare, we attribute to providence.**

Proverbs 15:19 (NKJV) The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, But the way of the upright is a highway.

**Just look at all the ways in which God directs us. He tells us how. He shows us the way. He gives us examples. He gives us commands. He gives us precepts. He has given us everything we need (2 Pet 1:3) to do His will. Even though God has done all of these things, it is still our responsibility to learn and know his will.**

Joshua 1:8 (NKJV) "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

**"you shall meditate in it...have good success"**

Psalms 1:1-3 (NKJV) Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; {2} But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. {3} He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

**"he meditates day and night."**

Colossians 1:9 (NKJV) For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

**"...filled with the knowledge....wisdom and spiritual understanding."**

2 Peter 3:18 (NKJV) but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

**"...grow in the grace and knowledge..." The key word is to grow.**

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NKJV) But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, {15} and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. {16} All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, {17} that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**"...you must continue...” in the Holy Scriptures. Notice it says "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...” If it is in the book, then it comes from God. That is why we must study the word and apply the word in order to live by the word.**

**God's commands are to know and grow. His grace does this. His gospel does this. That means that our obedience to His gospel will produce positive results. When we obey Him, we are pleasing to Him. We worship Him in action. We worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24). The following verses show that God desires our obedience.**

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NKJV) For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, {4} who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

**"...God our Savior, who desires...." God desires all men to be saved, so He made it possible through His Son.**

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV) The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

**"...Lord... not willing that any should perish...” So He made it possible through His Son that man does not have to perish, but have eternal life.**

**God set forth the conditions and laws that would effect us before the foundation of the world. God had a plan for man long before He said "let there be light". God set the various laws in order. There are the universal, natural, and physical laws. He also set forth the spiritual laws. We know that anytime a law is broken or violated that there are consequences. A person falls hundreds of feet and dies. Why? Because, the body is not built for this type of stress. When a spiritual law is broken, there are consequences. The eating of the fruit brought sin and death into the world. Along with these, this action brought evil and the influence of Satan who is the enemy of God. When we sin, we are separated from God.**

**Communication between God and man**

Daniel 9:3-4 (NKJV) Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. {4} And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments,

**Throughout history, man has used many ways to communicate with God. Many of these ways were outward appearances to go along with the humility and devotion of the person worshipping God. Prayer and supplications are common for us today, where fasting, sackcloth, and ashes are found in the past. The idea of fasting is to deprive oneself of something necessary or important. During this period the person is dedicating themselves to prayer and consideration of God and their relationship with God.**

James 1:5 (NKJV) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Psalms 143:8 (NKJV) Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning, For in You do I trust; Cause me to know the way in which I should walk, For I lift up my soul to You.

Psalms 143:10 (NKJV) Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness.

**Some examples of fasting include:**

**Marital sex**

1 Corinthians 7:5 (NKJV) Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

**And food.**

Matthew 4:1-2 (NKJV) Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. {2} And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

Deuteronomy 9:9 (NKJV) "When I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water.

1 Kings 19:8 (NKJV) So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

**Sometimes they would deprive themselves of comfort in order to help them realize humility. To sit in ashes is to sit in something worthless with no value. Sackcloth is very rough and not designed for clothing. Some of these patterns of suffering came as a result of heathen cultures and practices.**

Daniel 9:3 (NKJV) Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

Daniel 10:3 (NKJV) I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

Ezra 10:6 (NKJV) Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came there, he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity.

Nehemiah 1:4 (NKJV) So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

2 Corinthians 6:5 (NKJV) in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

**God's calling**

**God calls all people to obedience. Many people in the world have a misconception of this calling. They feel you must have a "personal experience" or that the Lord must call you for a particular purpose. As in the case of Isaiah, this is a voluntary response. In all my studies, I can only find a few individuals who were selected by God to perform certain tasks. Outside of these few, of every thing everyone has ever done; it was done on a voluntary basis. There is only one person in the whole bible that was called to preach the Gospel. That person is the apostle Paul. Every person who fills a pulpit does so by his own compulsion or circumstances.**

Isaiah 6:8 (NKJV) Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

**The calling of God is one of the most controversial issues in the religious realm. Many religions have their own ideas about the calling. Many people, although sincere, are lost by practicing error. God's plan of salvation was designed long before it came into existence. The problem with most of the world's religions is that man is trying to bring God closer to the masses. What they should be doing is bring the masses to God.**

**Human institutions of religion are trying to make service to God as convient as possible in order to keep the masses.**

**God's plan of salvation**

**God has a plan. This plan has a design. This plan has a blueprint. That plan is God's will. That design is found in the mind of God. That blueprint is found in God's word. There is a pattern that needs to be followed. There are rules that must be adhered to. All of these have to be done God's way. Not man's way. We call this plan the "plan of salvation".**

**We usually use the format of five separate acts, although in actuality it is only four. After hearing the Gospel (the good news concerning the Christ), we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. We then recognize that our lives to this point have been in rebellion to God. We have sinned. We have been separated from God. We need to repent of our past lives out of sorrow that we did those things. Along with the repentance is the affirmation that we will change our lives to be compatible with God's will. After this, we make the good confession of our belief. When you think about it, the confession is not a one time statement, but a living, and continuous action. Then we must be baptized for the remission of sins. The baptism is in the pattern of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

**By proclaiming a doctrine other than the above, is to take away from God's word. When people do this, they are claiming that the bible is wrong. If any one part of the bible is wrong, God could not have written it. It is therefore useless for any purpose. Anyone who teaches a doctrine that leaves out a part of the plan of salvation is a false teacher. Anyone who adds to this plan is a false teacher. The Bible also calls them a liar.**

John 3:5-6 (NKJV) Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. {6} "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Titus 3:5 (NKJV) not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NKJV) For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

**Too many religions try to eliminate baptism as being essential in the plan of salvation. The Bible offers too many verses of scripture to tolerate such a false notion. Either the Holy Spirit lied to us to tell us to do something that was unnecessary, or these people are proven to be false teachers. Also notice the relationship of baptism to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Notice that the people did not receive the Holy Spirit until after they had been baptized. Notice in every case of conversion in the Bible, that the people did not rejoice until after they had been baptized. And also notice that every case of conversion in the Bible includes baptism. How can anyone say that baptism is not essential to salvation?**

Romans 8:9 (NKJV) But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Romans 8:16-17 (NKJV) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, {17} and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

**I've often said that the biggest word in the bible is "if". "If" means a certain condition must be met in order to receive something.**

1 Corinthians 6:19 (NKJV) Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

**"God now controls the Christian. The Christian must live for God (not himself).**

Ephesians 1:13 (NKJV) In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

**We receive something because we did something. We received the promise of the Holy Spirit because we believed (and obeyed).**

**If you will look at the conversion of Saul in the book of Acts, you will notice that Paul did not pray the sinner’s prayer. Paul prayed fervently for three days and was told he needed to be baptized to wash away his sins. Any doctrine that removes the essential nature of baptism makes the Holy Spirit a liar. Are you willing to do that?**

**Holy Spirit Indwelling**

Acts 2:4 (NKJV) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 4:8 (NKJV) Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

Acts 7:55 (NKJV) But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,

Acts 13:52 (NKJV) And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

**These examples above deal with the miraculous nature of the Holy Spirit. This is the fulfilling of the promise of Jesus to the disciples when He promised to send the Helper, or the Comforter.**

**Christians are also filled with the Holy Spirit, but in a different way.**

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV) And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

Galatians 5:16 (NKJV) I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (NKJV) Do not quench the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30 (NKJV) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

**Just to clear up another idea about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit wrote the Holy Scriptures. As the scriptures control and guide us, we are being led by the Holy Spirit. As we are led by the word of God and live our lives accordingly, the Holy Spirit leads us. The Holy Spirits purpose is to declare or make known the will of God.**

**There are no special revelations that take place today, because we have the Bible in print and we do not need anything else. Anyone, who claims a visit by the Holy Spirit, usually comes with a doctrine different than the one we already have. Once again we have the need to throw the bible out the window, because they are telling us that it no longer applies to us.**

**God's direction**

1 John 1:9 (NKJV) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. {2} And do not be 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.

Psalms 139:23-24 (NKJV) Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; {24} And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalms 19:12-14 (NKJV) Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. {13} Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. {14} Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Ephesians 3:16 (NKJV) that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,

**We have to let God direct our paths through this life. We must rely upon God. We must put our trust in Him. God directs us through His will.**

Romans 8:28 (NKJV) And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

**Knowing about God and all that He requires of us is only the beginning. Once we grow, we will be able to understand our purpose in life. We will see how and why we worship God. We will see the importance of worship and obedience. We will look upon others with the same compassion that Jesus had, and try to teach them how they can be saved from eternal destruction.** **This is what His purpose is. It is the salvation of souls. He wants to save as many souls as possible. God is asking you to help in meeting that purpose.**

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