

Romans

Bible Study

God's Will

Romans 12:1–2

Romans 12 begins the culmination of Paul's teaching in chapters 1–11 about the proper Christian walk. He has been describing the Grace-life of the believer today, in contrast to the Law-life of the believer in Israel during the previous dispensation. Israel was under the Mosaic Law and had to live by, and die by, its 613 ordinances. When they sinned, they had to follow the Law to get back onto fellowship with God. If they intentionally broke the Law, there was no more sacrifice that would cover their sin (Hebrews 10:26; Numbers 15:30). The Law spelled out God's requirements, but it is not to be used as a vehicle to obtain righteousness (Galatians 3:21). Instead, the Law highlighted man's inability to become righteous by making sin more sinful (Romans 7:13). The Law condemned, but righteousness came through Jesus Christ (Romans 8:3–4). Since the requirements of the Law have already been fulfilled in us through Jesus Christ, we are no longer under the constraints and condemnation of the Law. When we are walking by the Law, we are walking in the power of the flesh—the old nature. The Law actually activates the old nature, the very thing we are told to consider dead (Romans 6:11–14).

Living the Law-life requires the flesh to activate as we try to obey God by doing things we think will please Him. Living the Grace-life is understanding that we are to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, giving ourselves to God as a living sacrifice so that He is controlling us, not our flesh.

God's will

Although previous lessons have discussed what God's will is for our lives, it is such an important part of a worthy walk (Colossians 1:9) that it bears repeating. Here are some important facts we need to know:

1. God's will has been revealed.
2. God's will is discoverable and provable.
3. God's will is specific.
4. God's will is focused on Him, not me.
5. God's will can only be understood today by understanding the Dispensation of Grace.

God's will has been revealed

Can you imagine a boss who wants you to obey him and please him, but does not tell you exactly what he expects? That sounds somewhat ridiculous, but it is exactly how many believers view God. They think we have been left on this earth to figure out what God wants us to do. They often do this by sensing in their spirit what God wants, reading events as signposts (closed door, open window), interpreting dreams, following inner peace or learning to listen to their heart. These are all prone to be misinterpreted and misunderstood because they are open to different interpretations. This is a dangerous way to live if you truly desire to please God. What if you misunderstand the interpretation of a feeling or an event? What if Satan gave us a "sign" and we thought came from God? God did not equip the believer to understand how to interpret these inner urgings and external "signs."

Can you imagine if the Apostle Paul wrote that he had a feeling in his heart that he should write to the Romans, or visit the Philippians? Would Pharaoh have been impressed if Moses came to him and said that he sensed in his spirit that he should let Israel leave to worship God? When God speaks, He always speaks in a clear, unmistakable way. Those to whom He communicated knew without a doubt what God was saying. This is true in this Dispensation of Grace because God's will has been revealed to us.

God's will is discoverable

If God's will has been revealed, it only makes sense that it is not only discoverable, but provable. Knowing this is important because this will lead us to find and prove what God's will is. This is an absolute that is missed by most people. His revealed will is contained in Scripture, specifically within the Apostle

Paul's 13 books written to the Church, the Body of Christ. It is also provable, as promised in Romans 12:2. That means we can discover what it is and know that it is what God desires. Paul leaves no doubt that God has left us with everything we need to know about what He want us to do. We are not left "hanging" without knowing exactly what God's will is. With His word and the Holy Spirit, we are able to find out what God's will is for me right now.

God's will is very specific

When God wants us to obey Him, He makes His will very clear. Adam was told outright that he was not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam didn't wake up one morning and sense in his spirit that he would make God really happy by not eating from that tree. God came to him and told him exactly what He expected.

The same can be said of Israel. Israel, under the Law, needed to heed the Law in order to please the Lord (Joshua 22:5). That was God's will for Israel. He made His requirements very clear so that there would be no question about what He desired. Can you imagine how Israel would act if they used today's standards for understanding God's will. "I sense in my heart that God is leading me to rest on the Sabbath." "I couldn't find a dove to bring to be sacrificed, but the Lord opened the door for me to bring this snake." "I feel a real peace when I worship this idol."

This, however, is what many people do in this Dispensation of Grace. God has told us exactly what he expects of us within Paul's 13 books written to the Church, the Body of Christ. Most people throw His requirements out the window to make room for their own qualifications for pleasing God. Instead of reading and studying God's specific instructions for the Church (which define what His will is), believers tend to make up their own set of specifications to follow, doing what they self-define will please Him.

God's will is about God

Most people, especially in today's society, think God's will is all about what they should be doing instead of about what God is doing. When most people ask God what His will is, they are thinking about what they should do, where they should go, whom they should marry, etc. God's will is not about our selfish little needs, but about what God desires. How shall I walk in the Spirit? How can I please God as I live out today? How can I grow to be Christ-like? The second set of questions are not about me, as I live out my life, but about the person God wants me to be. It is being God-centered instead of self-centered.

This in no way takes away from God being interested and active in my personal life. God uses the indwelling Holy Spirit to help us make decisions that are most beneficial for Him and thus best for the believer. There is nothing in Scripture that tells me what job to take (in most instances), but we are told that God loves us and we can make appropriate choices by depending upon Him for wisdom in evaluating our choices. In most cases, we are free to choose any job available, any school to attend, any place to live just as freely as we can choose what socks to wear or what breakfast cereal to eat. The Bible, in general, gives no input in those areas. However, Scripture is very clear about how God expects us to live for Him, as a living sacrifice, living in a worthy manner. These specifics will be addressed in the following lesson.

God's will varies by dispensation

God's will changes according to how He deals will man. For instance, it was God's will that Adam refrain from eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He was free to do anything else. This is no longer God's will for mankind today.

Another example is the nation of Israel. God gave Israel the Mosaic Law and told them that they were to obey the Law. If they broke the Law, the Law had remediation built in to bring the offender back into God's perfect will (Joshua 22:5). God's will for the believer changed with the introduction of the Dispensation of Grace through the Apostle Paul. He tells us that we are no longer under Law, but under Grace. We no longer will be operating within God's will if we try to live under the Law (Galatians 5:1-5).

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