

THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL

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God's will is a mystery revealed (Eph. 1:9). How wonderful it is that a believer can know it!

I. KNOWING HIS WILL

Ephesians 1:10-12 tells us what the mystery of His will is. It says:

"... that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ... being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of HIS OWN WILL, that we should be to the praise of His glory..."

Think of it! God wills to "gather together in one all things in Christ." This means that God wills the restitution of "all things." Does this surprise you? It shouldn't. God also wills that "all men be saved." But this does not mean that all men will be saved, or that all things will be restored. Not at all!

One awesome aspect of the mystery of His will is that GOD HAS LINKED HIS WILL TO THE WILL OF MAN.

When man refuses what God wills, man can, and does, thwart the will of God!

But despite the fact that "all" do not will to be saved, God will "gather together" a people "to the praise of His glory." He will accomplish His predestined purpose. He will work all things after the counsel of HIS OWN WILL!

Who, then, will be "gathered together to the praise of His glory?" Who are the "us" that He blesses in Ephesians 1:3, that He chooses in verse 4, that He predestines in verse 5, that He makes accepted in verse 6, that He abounds toward in verse 8, and to whom He makes known the mystery of His will in verse 9?

The Jews looked at the Gentiles and said, "The 'us' is us!" The Gentiles looked at the Jews and said, "The 'us' is them!"

But the glorious revelation of the mystery of His will is that THE 'US' IS WHOSOEVER WILL! (Eph. 3:6-9, Rom. 10:13)

Participation in the great "gathering together" is by faith. It is for all who believe. The mystery of His will was an intolerable teaching to the Jews who believed so strongly that they were God's chosen people, and that they alone were predestined to participate. On the other hand, it was good news indeed to the Gentiles that God would say to the Jews, "It is my will to save 'whosoever will'." (Eph. 2:8, 18-19)

So the first chapter of Ephesians teaches us that:

God wills to save "whosoever will" (Eph. 3:6, 9).
God wills that the "whosoever will" be His sons (Eph. 1:5).
God wills that His sons be holy (Eph. 1:4).
God wills to "gather together all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10).

Now, how does this will of God affect me? Let me put the answer in the form of a couplet so that we can remember it.

GOD'S WILL FOR MY BEST
RELATES TO THE REST.

By "the rest" I mean God's will for the billions who are as yet unsaved. The thing I must remember is that the will of God for me, as to the kind of house I live in, the type of work I do, or the girl I marry, is related to His will for "the rest" of mankind who have not heard the Gospel. His will for me is related to the final "gathering together of all things in Christ." Therefore His will for "all" must be the governing factor in my walk and my work. It must shape my life-style. It must guide me in the choice of my vocation. It must be my primary consideration in choosing my wife. Why? Because God's will for my best relates to the rest! I am part of the grand plan of God, and I can only be happy and fulfilled as I find His will for me in it.

II. WILLING HIS WILL

It is not enough to know the mystery of His will. I must "will" that His will be done. The first thing, then, to "come under" when praying for God's will, is my own will. It is an exercise called "submission." To some, Christian living is a struggle... a struggle between God's will and their own. This kind of believer often agonizes in prayer, but his agony is due to his determination to have his own way. He seeks divine permission to follow his own will! The struggle only ceases when he gives up and "lets God have His way."

Blessed is the believer who makes a total commitment... who, for all time, lays aside his own will. That believer will have

solved the problem of resistance to the will of God. This does not mean that his struggles are over. . . not at all! He will still have to pray, but his praying will address itself to the problem of "finding" the will of God, rather than the problem of "submission" to it.

Total commitment to the will of God is more a matter of "willing" than of "wanting." Since the will of God often involves self-denial, suffering, and sacrifice, it is not "natural" to want it. This is where the obedience of faith comes in.

When Jesus was praying in the garden of Gethsemane, He did not want the will of God, but He willed it. He abhorred the cup of sin. He prayed that it might be removed. He did not want to drink it. . . but He did. He willed to submit to His Father's will!

Some people think they have to enjoy doing the will of God. They talk about "fulfillment" . . . they talk about "success" . . . they talk about "happiness." They feel that if they don't experience these things they are out of the will of God. Now, doing the will of God is often fulfilling. It often brings success. It often brings happiness. But not always. Doing the will of God is not always rewarding, but it is always right, and that is what is important. There is no place you can go that is higher or better than the center of God's will. . . be it Calcutta or the Kalihari!

The person who wills to do the will of God should face the fact that he will possibly be poor, and will possibly have to suffer. Jesus became poor for our profit, and Paul suffered gladly in order that the heathen might hear.

Don't get me wrong. God is not against riches. After all, the streets of the city of God are pure gold. It is only when the getting of gold thwarts the will of God that it becomes a curse. But more times than not, that is exactly what it does. That is why Paul said that "they that would be rich fall into divers temptations" (I Tim. 6:9) What temptations? The temptation to seek gold more than God. The temptation to do our own thing rather than His!

This explains why God sometimes wills that I suffer. Now, can it be that God is "against" gold and "for" suffering? Not at all! But ponder now the will of God. He is "for" bringing many sons into His family. . . He is "for" the harmony and fellowship of His sons. . . He is "for" my holiness. . . and He is "for" the praise and the glory that His sons are predestined to bring to His name. He will do whatever is necessary to accomplish His purpose. Therefore these things are for my "best." He wills them for me. . . that I might be a better son.

Will gold make me less like Christ? Then away with the gold, good as it is! Will suffering make me more like Christ? Then bring on the suffering, bad as it is! "Thy will be done," prayed Jesus, and went to the cross. "My will be done," determined Judas, and sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver!

III. WANTING HIS WILL

Perhaps the reason God's will continues to be a mystery is that we seek the "best" for ourselves without regard for the "rest." We set our hearts on what we want and think the will of God has been done because we get it. Conversely, when we don't get what we want, we conclude that the devil has thwarted the will of God. Could it be that what we have willed may not have been "best for the rest?"

We hear much about faith that will get you what you want. "Name it and claim it," they say, because, "you can have whatsoever you will if you have faith." Unfortunately, this kind of "claiming" emphasizes "my" will. It gives top priority to what "I" want. "But," you say, "God wants me to have what I want." Wrong! God wants you to want what He wants!

If I say that God wants me to have what I want, it means that I expect God to act according to my will. It means that if I want a house, a job, or a wife, God is duty bound to give them to me. It means that my will is supreme... that His will is secondary and servant to my will. If I say that God wants me to have what I want, I make God my "genie." My "faith" brings Him out of the bottle! This kind of "claiming" exalts the "sovereignty of self." It "uses" God. It expects God to jump to the tune of "faith."

It is far more important that God's will be done than it is that I get what I want. How wonderful it is, however, when I want what God wants! Careful, now! I didn't say that it is wonderful when God wants what I want. I said that it is wonderful when I want what God wants... which means that I bow to His will, and not He to mine.

There is joy... real joy... in wanting what God wants. Jesus experienced it. Take that day in Samaria, for instance. The disciples had gone into town to buy bread. They undoubtedly passed a woman with a water jug. She meant nothing to them, for they were pre-occupied with the present. They were looking for meat to eat... something to satisfy inner craving.

Jesus was in need of meat, too, but His Father's plan took precedence over all else. He was more concerned about doing His Father's will than He was with filling His stomach. . . hungry as He was. So, when He saw the woman, Jesus saw her as part of that future "Father-family" scene. . . that great "gathering together in one all things in Christ." He saw her as a trophy of His own imminent travail. He ministered to her, and told her of the water of life. He told her that He was the Messiah, and she believed Him.

After the woman had returned to her village to tell her people that she had found the Messiah, the disciples urged Jesus to eat. His face radiant with joy, Jesus turned to His disciples and exclaimed, "I have eaten!"

In the days of Napoleon, there lived a mighty chief in southern African named Chaka Zulu. He was a military genius. His armies were disciplined and trained in the art of warfare. His soldiers were not allowed to marry, and they lived for one thing only. . . to fight and to kill. Their "meat" was to kill. They talked of killing. . . they dreamed of killing. . . and they could hardly wait for the next battle against their enemies. Chaka equiped them with a short sword called the "assegai," and taught them to whip back the enemy's shield with the edge of their own, and to plunge the "assegai" into the heart of the victim with the cry, "Ngadla!" . . . meaning, in the Zulu language, "I have eaten!"

When Jesus ministered to the Samaritan woman that day at the well, He whipped back her defenses, and plunged the Sword of Truth into her hungry heart. When the disciples tried to alleviate His hunger with ordinary food, Jesus cried in triumph, "Ngadla. . . I have eaten!"

Oh, that we would learn the mystery of His will! Oh, that we would "will" to do His will! Oh, that His will would become our "meat" . . . that we would find our fulfillment and our joy in "doing the will of Him Who has sent us, and in finishing His work!"
