

# Romans

## Bible Study

### God's Specific Will

#### Romans 12:2

Our last lesson showed how God's will was revealed and is discoverable, provable and specific. All through Scripture God gave people the information they needed for them to live within His will. Adam could be in God's will by not eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Noah would be in God's will by building an ark. Moses was in God's will by leading Israel out of Egypt. The nation of Israel remained in God's will by following the Mosaic Law (Romans 2:17—18). Jesus remained in the Father's will by obeying what He was told. In each case, they absolutely, without any doubt, knew exactly what God wanted them to do or not to do. Outside of that they had complete freedom to do what they wanted to do. They didn't need to check in with God for every action they took. They were able to do anything as long as it didn't violate what God told them.

The Apostle Paul was told specifically what he was to do beginning on that fateful day while traveling to Damascus. He was told that he was the apostle to the Gentiles (2 Timothy 1:11). He was told not to go into Asia (Acts 16:6). He was told to preach the Gospel of Grace (Acts 20:24). He was told to travel with Barnabas to preach the gospel (Acts 13:2). There were other things that he desired to do outside of what God specifically told him. He ignored an "open door" of opportunity because of his concern for Titus (2 Corinthians 2:12–13). He desired to be in Jerusalem for the Passover (Acts 18:21).

If God wanted someone to know something specific, He told them in an unmistakable manner. To those to whom God spoke, there was never any doubt about what He was saying. Even Gideon, who twice asked for a sign from God (the fleece), had already been told precisely what he was to do (Judges 6). He showed a lack of faith by insisting on verifying, through the fleece, what God had already clearly stated.

Today, in this Dispensation of Grace, God's will has been revealed. It is not revealed by internal feelings or having peace or by asking for signs. God's will is fully revealed within Paul's 13 books, Romans through Philemon.

#### **Finding God's will**

It seems obvious that if we would like to know what the Bible says about God's will in this Dispensation of Grace that we find verses that specifically mention God's will. The first verse that comes up is found in Romans 12:2. According to this verse we can know and prove God's perfect will by renewing our mind. The renewing of our mind is necessary because we are brought into this world with a natural view of things instead of a spiritual view. The natural view is a humanistic, godless way of thinking, which is the only way a human can think until they have become regenerated at the point of salvation (Ephesians 2:1—7). According to Titus 3:5, this renewing is a work of the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit does not work in a vacuum, but alongside the word of God (1 Corinthians 2:12—13; 1 Thessalonians 1:5). When we take in the word of God, the Holy Spirit gives us supernatural understanding of what it means and how to apply it. This is why the word of God is called the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12). It is the Holy Spirit who guards and protects God's word so that the standard of sound words remains untainted (2 Timothy 1:13–14). The combination of God's word and the indwelling Holy Spirit will transform our thinking from worldly thoughts to spiritual thoughts. This renewing and transformation is necessary for us in order to be living within the will of God.

God's will is about walking in the Spirit. When we are walking in the Spirit we are in perfect harmony with God and we are thus living within His perfect will. We can confidently make decisions and move forward in our Christian life when we know what God desires for us. We need to model our lives after Ephesians 4:17—24. We put off all those things that are of the world and put on the new man, our new

nature, that was made alive when we were saved. There is nothing good living in our old nature, which is why Paul says that since it is dead we should live as if it is dead (Romans 6:2, 11—13). Notice that Ephesians 4:23 stands between our old nature and new nature. Putting on the new nature, walking in the Spirit, requires that we renew ourselves by the power of the Spirit. The Greek word for renewing is in the present tense, indicating that the renewal process is something that we need to do continually. It needs to become a normal action minute by minute.

Although we are living in the world, we need to live by godly principles. According to Ephesians 6:6—7, we are doing the will of God by serving God in all that we do. We are not really working for our boss, but are serving God by serving our boss to the best of our ability. No matter what we are doing, we are to do it heartily as if doing it for the Lord, not for men (Colossians 3:23).

### **Living God's will**

So what do believers look like who is walking in the Spirit and living perfectly in God's will? First, they will be exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control. These are not goals for us to attain, rather they are the result of a proper Christian walk, a measure of a proper walk. Here is what a proper Christian walk entails, and what God expects of all believers.

On a personal level, we are to be careful about what we think. From Philippians 4:8—9 we are to think on things that are true, lovely (honorable), of good report; anything that has virtue or praise. All of these things are included in Pauline doctrine and are to be practiced, imitating Paul's example. This means that we need to know Paul's doctrine if we are to follow his doctrine.

We are to cast off the works of darkness and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, making no provision for gratifying the lusts of the flesh (Romans 13:11—14). We are to obey the government because God instituted government (Romans 13:1). We are to pray without ceasing, give thanks in everything and abstain from all appearances of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:17—18, 22).

Although Paul says much about how individuals should act, much more is said about how we are to act toward other believers. Almost everything we do should revolve around the edification of each other. We can learn much about God's will when we do a study about the "one anothers" of the Bible. As Romans 12:10 states, we are to demonstrate brotherly love to one another, preferring one another. Everything we do we are to be mindful of how it affects other believers. We are not to judge each other (Romans 14:13), but to accept each other as Christ accepted us (Romans 15:5—7), although we are to admonish each other and encourage each other to grow in Christ (Romans 15:14). We are to care for and serve each member of the body of Christ, bearing each other's burdens (1 Corinthians 12:25; Galatians 5:13; 6:2). We are to always remember that we are members of the one Body and are to love, care for, admonish, teach, forbear and forgive one another (Ephesians 4:2, 25—32; Colossians 3:9—17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 5:11—22). This is what God's will is for every believer, and what it means to be the living sacrifice of Romans 12:2. Ephesians 6:6—7 sums up what it means to do God's will. We are to be servants of Christ, not of ourselves, or just to please men. God's will is focused on God, not on me. The will of God is for the believer be sanctified, holy, set aside for God, not for our own purposes (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Once we fully understand God's revealed will we can move ahead confidently as we make both major and minor decisions. We don't have to fret that we are outside of God's will by choosing the wrong job, the wrong spouse or the wrong school if we understand there is complete freedom in making decisions as long as it does not violate God's revealed will. We can be sure that the indwelling Holy Spirit gives us wisdom, and that if God desires for us to be in a certain place at a certain time He will absolutely make that happen. How great is it that we can stand firm and move confidently forward knowing His will.

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