

Message: Discerning the Lord's Will, Part 1

TEXT: Ephesians 5:11-17

Introduction

- A. How many decisions do you think you make in a day? How many do you think you've already made today?
- B. Every day you and I inevitably make hundreds and thousands of choices - what do I wear, eat, speak, enjoy, use, do, etc. Every word we speak and step we take is a choice.
- C. All of our choices have consequences, some perhaps appear more circumstantially enduring and significant than others, but all in fact are significant, because there exists a God with whom we will give an account for every choice we make.

Matthew 12:36 "But I tell you that **every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.**

- D. All choices, even the seemingly small ones, are opportunities to walk in regard or disregard for the Father's exalting Jesus Christ as Lord, and purposing to sum up all things under His headship. All of our thousands of daily decisions reflect faith or a lack of faith in Christ the Lord.
- E. No wonder Christ's apostle, Paul, speaks with such passion and urgency when he writes to the church ...

Ephesians 5:15 Therefore **be careful** how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then **do not be foolish**, but **understand what the will of the Lord is.**

F. Outline:

- 1. What does the command mean - understand the will of the Lord?
- 2. Why is understanding the will of the Lord important?

I. What does the command mean - understand what is the will of the Lord?

A. What is "the will of the Lord" we are commanded to understand?

- 1. We must first distinguish between two aspects of God's will.

Deuteronomy 29:29 "**The secret things** belong to the LORD our God, but **the things revealed** belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

- a. The "secret things" refer to all that God has decreed from eternity to take place, most of which is not known to us until it happens. E.g., Aubrey Neely's survey trip was cancelled last Wednesday, but we didn't know that God decreed that to happen until it happened. So we call this His decreative or providential will.

Acts 1:7 He said to them, "**It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed** by His own authority

- b. The "revealed things" refer largely to God's commandments, precepts, which call us to live by faith in conformity to Himself. They also include what He reveals of God's eternal purposes in Christ, which is to impact our conduct. So we call this His moral or preceptive will.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For **this is the will of God, your sanctification**; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what **the will of God** is, **that which is good and acceptable and perfect**.

- c. Christians sometimes make the mistake of interpreting God's "perfect will" in Romans 12:2 as including circumstantial matters that have nothing to do with sanctification - going to the perfect college, getting into the perfect career, buying the perfect house, etc. But "perfect" in Romans 12:2 is a reference to His will, His commandments lacking nothing for our holiness.

Psalms 19:7 **The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul**;

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that **you may stand perfect** and fully assured **in all the will of God**.

- d. Dangers of misinterpreting "perfect will" in Romans 12:2 include (See chart: the logistical blueprint theory)

- (1) self-centered vs a Christ centered view of what is important in creation. God is sought to advance and bless our personal agendas.
- (2) we are tempted to prioritize circumstantial success and happiness over Christlike holiness.
- (3) we wrongly discourage people who have made choices with negative lasting circumstantial consequences that they can never fully realize their highest destiny, God's "perfect will" for their lives, when in fact, their highest destiny is realized by their being conformed to the image of God's Son, so that God's destiny for His Son might be realized!!

Romans 8:29 For **those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

- (4) we assume God requires us to discern that which He typically keeps secret from us - future outcomes, preventing us from fully enjoying the favor of God toward those being faithful.

Ecclesiastes 11:2 Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for **you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth**.

James 4:13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." 14 **Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow**. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

- (5) we end up contriving means of divine guidance (fleeces, coincidences, etc.), instead of learning to be wise.

Psalms 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. 9 **Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check**, otherwise they will not come near to you.

2. So the will of the Lord we are to understand in Ephesians 5:17 is His revealed, moral will embodied in His commandments, teaching us how we should daily "walk" or live in the image of Christ.

Ephesians 5:15 Therefore be careful how you **walk**, not as unwise men but **as wise**,¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil.¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but **understand what the will of the Lord is**.

B. What does it mean to “understand” the will of the Lord?

1. To know His will and not do it is not “wise,” but “foolish” (5:15,17).

James 4:17 Therefore, to one who **knows the right thing to do and does not do it**, to him **it is sin**.

2. Typical of Hebrew thought, understanding is both knowing and doing the will of the Lord.

Psalms 14:2 The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are **any who understand, who seek after God**.³ They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one **who does good**, not even one.

Matthew 13:23 "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and **understands** it; who indeed **bears fruit** and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

3. The will of the Lord can only be done when it is done sincerely from the heart unto Christ.

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, **in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ**;⁶ not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, **doing the will of God from the heart**.

II. Why is understanding the will of the Lord important?

- A. Because God is summing up all creation in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:9 **He made known to us the mystery of His will**, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, **the summing up of all things in Christ**, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him

- B. Because Jesus teaches his disciples to desire and pray ...

Matthew 6:10 'Your kingdom come. **Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**.

- C. Because only those who do the will of the Father will enter His kingdom.

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, **but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven**.

- D. Because it is those who do the will of the Lord who are united with Jesus in God's family.

Mark 3:35 "For **whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother**."

- E. Because those who finish doing the will of God will receive God's promised of inheriting a place in God's eternal city.

Hebrews 10:36 For you have need of endurance, so that **when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised**.

- F. Because the one who does the will of God lives forever!

1 John 2:17 The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; **but the one who does the will of God lives forever**.

- G. Because all who do the will of the Father by believing in Jesus Christ His Son will be raised up by Christ on the last day to live eternally with Him!

John 6:40 "For **this is the will of My Father**, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Conclusion

Ephesians 5:15 **Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil.¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**