

Discerning God's Will

Selected Scriptures

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00:02

Well, this morning we're going to take an opportunity to deviate just a little bit from what we've been looking at. The plan today was to begin looking at the Beatitudes that are in Matthew chapter 5. But I've kind of felt in light of this week, in light of what I shared with you a few moments ago, that there are some other issues that I think that we could address this morning that are equally important. And I've titled this Discerning God's Will.

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How do you discern God's will? How do you know God's will? Is it even possible to know exactly what he wants? I mean, because sometimes when we think about God himself, there's so many things that we don't know and we don't understand, and so many things that are kind of mysterious to us. And we're even told in Scripture that the secret things belong to the Lord, but the things that are revealed belong to us and our children.

01:02

And so this morning I want to talk about some of those things that are revealed, some of those things that are extremely clear in Scripture. Actually, these things that I want to mention to you this morning, we're told in Scripture that they are God's will. So we can't miss that for sure. So this morning as we begin to do that, I want to go where we always go, and that is to the Word of God. And I want us to examine it carefully, and I want us to...

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just with all of our heart, give our attention to what he has to say. And of course as we talk about examining, the examining is not necessarily for the church, but it's necessarily for each individual in the church. Yes, we make up the church, we're part of the body of Christ, but for the will of God for his church to be carried out, there's certain key things that have to take place. We have to remember too that the work of the ministry is all of ours.

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It's not just mine. Yes, I'm called to be a pastor and the Lord had called me to do that a long time ago, well over 34 years ago. But what about the rest of us? Because not everybody is given that kind of calling. I understand that. And so we do need to understand that the work of the ministry belongs to every single person. And let me just first start with

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with the gifted men God has given to his church. Ephesians 4, 11 and 12 says, and he gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.

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That's the work of the gifted men that God has placed over His church to equip you for the work of the ministry. We know that there are no longer any apostles. We know that there are no longer any prophets. And I know that those two terms are used so loosely today to where some churches believe that they still have apostles and some believe they still have prophets.

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But my understanding of Scripture is that those two offices ceased a long time ago. But what about everybody else? I mean, we hear it right there talking about the gifted men God has put in the church, and the last two that are left are pastor, teacher, and evangelist. But what about everybody else? Well, that's answered in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 58, if you're writing this down. And it says this,

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Brethren, so you hear who he's talking to. He's talking to the entire church. And he tells them this, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. Now, who is to be involved in being steadfast? Who is involved in being immovable and always abounding in the work of the Lord?

04:17

Well, it's every believer, every child of God. We're all involved in the work of the ministry. We're all told, according to Matthew 28, 19, and 20, to make disciples of all the nations. We're told to teach the gospel. We're also told to live the gospel. And so that's given to everyone. And so this is what we are to do with all of our heart.

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But I want to talk about, as I said, that there are other things that are extremely specific because it has a phrase in there that says this is the will of God. Now, we know 1 Corinthians 58 is God's will because we believe in the inspired Word of God, right? And we believe in that Paul and what he wrote was inspired. And so therefore the Holy Spirit says through Paul, be steadfast, be immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

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The Holy Spirit says to me as a pastor teacher to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

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So this morning I want to talk about those phrases that we find in Scripture that says, this is the will of God. And I want to begin first of all in 1st Thessalonians chapter 4. And so I'd like to invite you to start right there with me by turning in your Bibles to 1st Thessalonians chapter 4. We're going to look at a number of verses, but there's going to be a number of them, as I said, that specifically use this phrase. Let me take a moment and read the first seven verses.

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and see if you can hear it as I read it. Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that as you receive from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God, just as you actually do walk, that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God.

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your sanctification. That is that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion like the Gentiles who do not know God, and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.

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For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

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Now the word that's used there for sanctification is the same word that you may have translated in your version of the Bible as holy.

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We know exactly what he's talking about when he says the word sanctification in verse 3 because he says that you abstain from sexual immorality. So when he's talking about being holy and being set apart in this particular context, he's talking about being sexually pure. He's talking about not being involved in sexual immorality, which was pretty rampant during this time just as it's rampant during our time.

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Which is where I find it so interesting where churches have caved on this issue. Because the scripture has always been clear about sex being between a husband and a wife, a man and a woman. Not a man and a man and not a woman and a woman. Or not adults with kids, that's called pedophiles. It wasn't any of that. It was always between one man, one woman.

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husband and wife for life.

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And we get it from Genesis, God is the one who ordained marriage. And to have, of course, people come along and want to change the definition of marriage and make it between two equal genders, which they're not even calling it that now. But here we see that being set apart, being holy in this context, is referring to this. But over in 1 Peter 1, 15 and 16,

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It tells us, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior, because it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy. Now in that context, he tells us exactly what he's saying, because he says, in all your behavior. So he's not doing like he did, or that is like Paul did in 1 Thessalonians 4, and specifically talking about this issue of sexual immorality.

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No, he's talking about in 1 Peter as he quotes from Leviticus that God's plan and God's will for all of us has always been that we be like Him. That we be holy as it says, as He is holy. Because He is holy, He requires holiness.

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Now here's how it fleshes out. And I don't know if you followed me over to First Peter, but if you haven't, just go ahead and move over there for a second.

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and go to chapter two.

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And here's how it fleshes out in all your behavior. Chapter 2 verse 1. Therefore, putting aside all malice, all deceit, and hypocrisy, and envy, and all slander. So here's where it fleshes out. If we're told to be holy as God is holy,

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we are told to line ourselves up under the standard that he gives, not the standard that you and I come up with, then it includes dealing with things like this. We're not talking about just sexual immorality, we're talking about hatred, we're talking about deception, we're talking about hypocrisy, we're talking about envy, and we're talking about slandering.

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The scripture is very clear as you read the New Testament, especially for the New Testament church that there are behaviors that you and I are to ascribe ourselves to. And the behavior is that we are to be holy.

11:06

Now I believe it starts right there because I believe everything kind of flows out of that. You and I are to be holy because it's written, for I am holy. It's just like Matthew 5 48. Jesus told the crowds, part of that sermon on the mount, you shall therefore be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect. So he lays out the standard. The standard is God.

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Unfortunately, we don't look to God for this standard because we feel like that's too unattainable. We can't reach that. We can't be like God because, you know, we are fallen, sinful, finite creatures.

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But yet, when God saves you, who comes and takes up residence in your life? It's the Holy Spirit, isn't it? And we're told in Galatians 5-16 to walk by the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. We're told that the fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace and long-suffering and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness. These things issue out of our yielding to the Holy Spirit.

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So we can be holy as he is holy.

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But one of the reasons why we can be holy is he is holy because as a child of God, as a one in which Christ is saved, he has imputed to us his righteousness. We are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. And again, we have the Holy Spirit. And he is also the one who helps us to understand the Bible, the Word of God. And so again, we are to be holy.

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and we are to put aside all sin. One Puritan writer, William Jenkins, he tells us there is nothing destroyed by sanctification, but that which would destroy us.

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See, that's what being set apart to God does. It causes you to deal with the vices in your own heart, to deal with the sin in your own life. And beloved, as we come to the Lord's table here in just a few moments, that's really what the Lord's table is for, is to get us to examine ourselves and to make sure that we are being holy as he is holy, that we are walking by his Spirit. So that's the first one, we are to be holy.

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The second one is found in Romans chapter 12. So let me invite you to go to Romans chapter 12.

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And many of you are familiar with Romans 12, 1 and 2, which says this, Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 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.

14:06

So in order for me to prove what the will of God is, I have to make sure that I'm presenting my body as a living and holy sacrifice. I have to make sure that I'm not conforming myself to this world, but I'm being transformed by the renewing of my mind.

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How do I renew my mind? You do it with scripture. Then when I have done that, then I'm able to prove what the will of God is. That which is good and acceptable and perfect.

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When he talks about, in verse 2, do not be conformed, the word conform means to form or mold one's behavior. And you know when you're around unbelievers, they tend to influence you in that way. They mold you into their ideas. They mold you into their worldview. And frankly, folks, what we're hearing today that the church is not pushing back against is

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We're hearing a world view that the church should never agree with.

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We're not hearing a worldview that promotes the truth of the Word of God. We're not hearing a worldview that promotes the truth of Christ or His gospel. No, what we're hearing is a worldview that's opposite of that.

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And when you're hearing people come along and saying, well, I'm a Christian, but I'm a homosexual, and that there are homosexual Christians, and how do you get around that in scripture when scripture calls it an abomination? Well, the way you get around it is you say, well, that's not what that means.

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You get around it by reinterpreting it to make it say what you want it to mean. And frankly folks, that's really just the way sin works. We reinterpret the Bible to make it say something that will accommodate this sinful desire, this sinful behavior that we're giving ourselves over to.

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But we're not to be formed or molded to the behavior of the world with this particular pattern or this particular set of standards. You could actually look at it in this way. It is to shape your behavior. It is to conform your life. And it's even like Warren Wiersby says, worldliness is not so much a matter of activity as of attitude.

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Now you might not be involved in vices like I read just a moment ago in 1 Peter 2, 1 or 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, but you may have the attitude. And you have to make sure that you deal with that too. Because we want our attitudes to be that which is pleasing to God. We don't want to just go through the motions and externally obeying, but we want to obey from the heart, right? We're told to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our mind, and with all of our strength.

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You're to give everything about yourself to Christ and walk with Him and obey Him and follow Him.

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But there is the temptation and there is the danger of not loving the Lord God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Wasn't that what the church at Ephesus was guilty of? They had left their first love. They were doing all the other things right, but the very thing that mattered the most was their love for God, their love for Christ, their love.

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for the truth and I do believe they love the truth but somewhere in the process their affection for Christ had had died down it had waned

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We don't want to just be involved in activity. We want to have the right attitude. And by the way, going back to the fruit of the Spirit, that is attitudes. Love is an attitude. It's also an activity. But in order for that to be an activity and to truly love in a selfless manner, I have to have the right attitude to do this. Or it's all gonna be about me.

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and I'm gonna do everything I can to twist and turn and manipulate every situation so it's about me. And I can go along and say, well, you know, I'm loving.

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But I'm not loving an attitude. I'm loving an activity. John MacArthur says, worldliness is any preoccupation with or interest in the temporal system of life that places anything perishable for that which is eternal. So he broadens it to where your preoccupation or where your interests are in the things of the world and it's placing those things before what is eternal or who is eternal.

19:04

In the words of Ephesians 4.1, Paul says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, "implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling "with which you have been called." And I've told you on other occasions when he talks about walking worthy, the term worthy means scales. That's where the word comes from. And we know what scales are. We have something on each side of a scale, and if something is heavier on one side, what's it do? It goes down and the other side goes up. Well, he's saying in our life,

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that our calling and our living need to match. We have a high calling, and therefore our life should match the high calling that we have. And so he wants it to be balanced. Walk in a manner that is balanced with your calling to what you've been called. So we are to be holy. We are.

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also to be those who are not conforming to this world. Third, we are to be filled with the Spirit. We are to be filled with the Spirit. And if you will go over to Ephesians chapter 5.

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In Ephesians chapter 5, in verse 18, where he gives the command to be filled with the Spirit, he tells us in the previous verse that we are not to be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Well, what is the will of the Lord? He says it in verse 18,

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We all know that drunkenness is devastating to an individual as well as to a family. I remember my own personal life of all those years when I did that and not remembering half the time how I got home. Not remembering maybe how I got a bruise or something on my body got hurt. How did I get this? I don't know. I don't remember. After I got saved, one of the things I went back and told people I used to party with, I said, you know what's different now? I can remember the night before.

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and the night before that, and the night before that. I don't forget it anymore because I have some kind of stimulant that's keeping me from remembering it. And in the case of the Ephesians, this was more of a religious thing. Because the temple of Diana, and their temple worship, and the temple of Bacchus was getting drunk and communing.

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with the gods and through that drunkenness was committing sexual immorality, sexual orgies and so forth. So it kind of gives you a backdrop as to why Paul would make some of these statements. That being sanctified means not being immoral sexually and also being sanctified here.

22:02

means that you're not giving yourself over into drunkenness, you're not thinking that you're gonna commune with the living God through that means. And some people, it's not drunkenness, some people it's just drugs. If you've ever been around anybody on drugs, sometimes they get real philosophical. And they think that they're now this expert on the Bible, or this expert about God when they're really out of their mind.

22:28

because of the drugs. But notice he says there, but be filled with the Spirit. And the idea of being filled is the idea of being controlled. In fact, this reads this way in the Greek text. It says, be being kept filled with the Spirit. It's interesting that this command is passive. It's not active. What's that mean? Well,

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Because it's passive, it means the Holy Spirit has to fill you. You can't fill yourself. But you have to put yourself in the place where you can be controlled by Him. And hence, go back to what we've already said. If you're living a holy life and you're not conforming yourself to this world, you are putting yourself in the place where you can receive from the Spirit of God and you can be controlled by Him. Otherwise, you're controlled by your flesh.

23:24

Otherwise, you're controlled by your fallenness. Look what happens when you're filled with the Spirit. Because I know sometimes we talk about Spirit-filling and we say, well, how do I know when I'm filled with the Spirit? Do I speak in tongues? And there are many Christians out there that believe that that's the only evidence to show that you're filled with the Spirit. Well, let's use something that's not pointing to a temporal sign gift like tongues, and let's look at what he says after that.

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He says in verse 19 that when you're filled with the Spirit, you'll speak to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. You'll sing and make melody in your heart to the Lord. Do you ever have those days to where you just have those hymns or you have those spiritual songs about the Lord and they're just running through your mind throughout the day and that's what's preoccupying your mind and you're just thinking about the Lord as you sing these songs. I love the hymns.

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I listen to them, I like to hear different people sing them, and sometimes people will kind of remake them a little bit, but you know, frankly, the hymns the way they are are perfect. You know, they're fine. They don't really have to be remade to fit a modern, contemporary culture. Just give us what's already there. And I know when I came here seven years ago, that was my passion, and I remember saying this, that you know, my desire is to sing the hymns. I grew up on the hymns.

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You know with the hymns that I grew up on, you know where I grew up on them at? Right here. It was back in the seventies, my family went here. I went here. And this church is always saying hymns. Yeah, every now and then we'd sing a chorus or two of something else and even when I had been introducing to you some other songs, they have been put out by a group called Sovereign Grace and they're called Sovereign Grace Hymns. They're very good.

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and they would be more like a modern hymn, but they follow the same idea of a hymnody when you look at what a hymn is compared to another song. But he says here that you speak to one another, you speak to each other in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and you make a melody in your own heart. And your melody is directed to the Lord.

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So you have praise in your heart. That's how you know you're filled with the Spirit. Second way you can know that you're filled with the Spirit is in verse 20. He says, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God, even the Father. So when you're thankful for what the Lord's doing in your life, you're looking at the trials that you're experiencing and you're able to count it all joy, as James 1.3 says.

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That's a result of being filled with the Spirit. Because you know how hard it is to give thanks when you're going through some difficulties in your life, right? Look at the next one, verse 21. And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. And let me just continue to read, because he talks about being subject, and he says in verse 22, wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church.

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He Himself being the Savior of the body, but as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their own husbands in everything. Subject, what's that mean? Well, it's talking about submission. You're submitting according to what the Lord has ascribed in His word, and wives are submitting to their husbands.

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And frankly, when you get down to verse 25, it's really somewhat of a mutual submission, but in this role of submission and headship, those two areas are talking about roles in the family. Just as there are roles in society, there are roles in the church, not everybody does the same thing, not everybody is in charge. I mean, it's like we've said, you maybe have used this before, wow, there's a lot of chiefs, but there are no Indians. Everybody wants to be a chief. Everybody wants to tell everybody what to do, but nobody wants to be a follower.

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Look down at verse 25, he gives another response. So we have so far praise, thanksgiving, submission.

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Look at verse 25, husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her so that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. That he might present to himself the church in all her glory having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies.

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own wife loves himself for no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it just as Christ also does the church because we are members of his body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself

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And the wife must see to it that she respects her husband. So what's the command for husbands? Love your wives. Love them sacrificially.

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This also is a response to being filled with the Spirit. If I'm filled with the Spirit, I can love my wife just the way he's saying right here. But if I'm not filled with the Spirit, I can't. Because again, it's all gonna be about me. It's gonna be a selfless love. I'll love you only if I can get something back from you. Only if I can use you. But here the love he's talking about here, love that we've talked about on many occasions, is the word agape.

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Agape love is this sacrificial love that loves regardless of whether it's returned or not. And that's the kind of love that is demonstrated to us in Christ. We couldn't love Him because of our sin, but He loved us and He met us at the greatest point of our need, and that is by dying for our sins. Greater love has no man than this, than one lay down his life for his friends. John 15, 13.

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And so we're seeing here different kinds of love that are mentioned, but they are all talking about love. One is a sacrificial love in verse 25, verse 26, you got a purifying love, verse 28, you have a caring love, verse 31, you have an unbreakable love. All that's a sermon in and of itself, but there you go. Look at the response here. But it doesn't stop. Look at chapter six. Look at verse one, children.

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obey your parents in the Lord for this is right honor your father and mother which is the first commandment of the promise so that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth so even children can be filled with the spirit and obey their parents and honor their parents and then of course verse four fathers do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord and

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Parents need to be filled with the Spirit as they nurture their kids along, right? Look at verse five, slaves be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling and the sincerity of your heart as to Christ, not by way of eye service as men pleasers, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the heart. With good will, render service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. And here,

31:19

most if not all the churches during this period in history had slaves. Every one of them. And I know when we hear the word slave we think of the negative aspects of it, but you know slavery was in the Bible. And slavery wasn't even condemned in the Bible. You know what was condemned about slavery? Was how their masters treated their slaves. You remember when we went through 1st Peter?

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That entire church was full of slaves. When we went through 1 Corinthians, that church was full of slaves. Chapter seven, he mentions specifically how that they are to react to their masters. He did the same thing in 1 Peter when he talked about persecution because that entire letter had the theme of persecution and suffering. And many of these slaves, yes, did suffer at the hands of their slave owners.

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And I know everyone looked forward to the year of Jubilee because at the year of Jubilee they were released. All debts were cancelled at the year of Jubilee.

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but the attitude and the treatment, because look at verse nine, and masters do the same things to them and give up threatening knowing that both their master and yours is in heaven and there's no partiality with him.

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So just look at that. As a result of being filled with the Spirit, you'll have praise and thanksgiving and submission and sacrificial, purifying, caring and unbreakable love. Children will be obedient to their parents and honor them. Fathers will nurture their children and not provoke them to anger. Slaves will be obedient to their masters and not just serving them when they're in their presence, that's the eye service.

33:08

and being men pleasers, but they do it from the heart. It says doing the will of God from the heart, they're slaves of Christ. And then the masters, of course, they give up their threatening. They stop abusing them. Now, again, and I'll say this and we'll move on, but you can go in the Old Testament and you can see there was all kind of reasons and ways in which someone can indenture themselves to someone else. And you even take the example in the book of Exodus. Who became second to Pharaoh in Exodus?

33:38

Joseph, right? You remember that he had the dream, or that is Pharaoh had the dream, and Joseph interpreted it, and there were going to be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine, right? Remember when all that went on? And after the Egyptians, they ran out of money. They started doing their possessions, their land, their animals. And then when all that ran out, they sold themselves, all with an effort to stay alive.

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Because they said, you know, what's the point? You know, if I can't have food to live.

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I'm not going to make it. So I'm going to indenture myself to you and to Pharaoh, and in return, you'll give me food, grain. And that's exactly what happened.

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We are to be filled with the Spirit. This is a key element in our Christian life. This is a key element in the body of Christ. And of course, you've heard me say this too. The parallel verse is Colossians 3.16, which says, let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

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Now that sounds just like Ephesians 5. In fact, it is a parallel to Ephesians 5. If you took Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5 and put them side by side, most of it matches up. It's almost word for word identical.

So he's basically telling us, in order to be filled with the Spirit, you just need to be controlled by the Word of God.

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and how you're going to be controlled by the Word of God. You need to saturate your mind with the Word of God so that that's what you think. So when you have situations going on in your life, your reaction is with Scripture, not by the flesh.

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So we see that we are to be filled with the Spirit. We are not to be conformed to this world. We are to be holy people as unto the Lord. The next one, and we find two places over in Hebrews 13, so let me have you to go to Hebrews 13.

36:05

And the next one is that we are to submit to those who are in authority over us.

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Society functions that way. Everything functions that way. If you have a job, then you have an employer that's employed you. If you are self-employed, then you are both the employer and the employee. If you employ people to help you, then they're the employees and you're the employer. But you still have laws and regulations and things like that that you have to submit yourself to that the government has issued. So there's always someone over us.

36:41

Did you know that's true in the church? Just as I said a few moments ago, there are roles. Now let me give you three verses that talk about this. The first one's in chapter 13, look at verse seven. It says, remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you, and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Wow, that's pretty profound.

37:08

And that also says of those who lead you, those who are the ones that speak the Word of God to you, have to make sure that their lives are consistent with what they're telling you, to make sure their lives are consistent with the Word of God, because you don't want to imitate someone who's in sin, right? I mean, Paul would say, imitate me as I also imitate Christ.

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So he put Christ up there and he says, I'm following Christ, and as long as I'm following Christ you imitate me.

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if you need a human example in front of you. And we do need human examples. We live that way. We have people around us, we have people we meet, we have people we talk to, and sometimes you meet people and talk to people and you go, man, their attitude is awesome and my attitude needs a check. Because when I'm around that person, that person's...

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just how they view life and how they view trials and how they walk through the Christian life with joy. I want that and I don't want to succumb to my trials and succumb to all the problems that are in this world and in my life. I want to imitate them. It's attainable, believe me. Another verse is in verse 17, same chapter, look down verse 17. He says obey your leaders and submit to them. Why?

38:38

for they keep watch over your souls as those who must give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for them." Is that what it says? No. It'd be unprofitable for you. Why is it unprofitable for you? Well, would you rather be under the joyous leading of a pastor or elder, or would you rather...

39:08

have friction and...

39:12

have problems going on because you're not willing to follow and you're not willing to submit to their leadership. Listen again, the only time that we're not to follow anybody is if they're headlong in sin. We don't follow that. We follow them if they're following the Word of God. We follow them if they're following Christ. And it's not very hard to figure this out because we have the Bible. And we can exactly go there and see

39:41

what they're doing, what they're saying, what they're living, and does it match Scripture?

39:48

Another verse I give you, and it's not in Hebrews, but it's over in 1 Thessalonians. So if you will go to chapter five of 1 Thessalonians and notice verses 12 and 13.

39:59

He says, but we request of you brethren that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. So that verse tells us right, that there are those who have charge over us in the Lord, there are those who give us instruction, there are those who diligently labor among us.

40:27

And he says right here two times, number one, we are to appreciate them. And the idea of appreciate is the Greek word oida. Oida means to know. What does that mean then? Well, he's saying we request of you brethren that you know those. And the idea of knowing them is not just to know about them, but know them intimately. A lot of times, and I've heard this over the years because I've been doing this for almost 35 years.

40:56

I've been pastor that long. And I've heard sometimes people say, well, the pastor doesn't know me. But this verse would say, do you know him?

41:09

It's a two-way street. Yes, the pastor is to know the condition of the flock. Yes, he is to know you. Yes, he is to care for you. I already read that in Hebrews. But do you know him intimately? And verse 13, do you esteem them very highly in love because of their work? Because what they do? Because they lead you in the Word of

41:41

So the will of God is simply that we are to submit to those who are an authority over us. I saved this one toward the end because it's also a one that can be somewhat difficult, but let me have you to turn to Philippians 1. Philippians 1 and I want you to look at the last two verses of chapter 1 verses 29 and 30.

42:09

It says, for to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to what? Nobody wants to say it, right? Suffer for His sake. Experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me and now here to be in me. You know what? When you suffer, that is God's will. I told you about a.

42:33

commercial I heard on the radio, Christian radio one time, and it said, it's not God's will for you to suffer. You ever yelled back at the radio or the TV? I was like, that ain't what that says. Philippians 1.29. Let me read it back to you how the Greek does. It has been graciously granted to you not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. It's a gracious granting.

43:03

God has graciously given this to us, not just to believe, but also to suffer. And then he says, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me. Well, what kind of conflict did Paul have? Well, if you go to 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, listen to what he says in verse 2. But after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

43:33

So he talks about his suffering in Philippi. Well, we can trace that too. Go to Acts 16. In Acts chapter 16, Paul and Silas, they come into this area called Philippi, and there was this slave girl running around saying these are the servants of the Most High God, and that went on for several days, and Paul was pretty annoyed with it because she was demon possessed. She had an unclean spirit, so Paul turned to her, said to the spirit, come out of her.

44:03

and the unclean spirit came out. And when that happened, the people that were profiting off her abilities, her demon abilities, now no longer profited. They no longer could have any money because it's just like people that have their fortunes told or have their palms read or to do the tarot cards or whatever, you know. People make money doing that kind of thing.

44:34

These people that employed her were making money and all of a sudden it's over with now because Paul casted the demon out. And so they stirred up the crowds. They stirred up the people and they took Paul and Silas and they threw them in jail. And before they threw him in jail, it says in Acts 16 22, the crowd rose up together against them and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.

45:02

And when they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely. And he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

45:17

Did they do anything wrong?

45:21

What did they do wrong?

45:25

Well, again, they cast the demon out, and the demon came out, and they no longer had an ability to tell people their fortunes or future. And this stopped them being able to receive any money over this. So again, they stirred up the crowds, and they beat them, threw them in jail. You know what one of the problems was with this? If you read the rest of the chapter, Paul and Silas were Romans, and you do not beat a Roman. You do not do anything to a Roman without a trial.

45:52

That's why in the very end, Paul appealed to Caesar, because they kept putting it off, and he was under house arrest and so forth, and he kept appearing before the different governors, and nothing was happening in terms of him being released. And so on the final occasion, he appealed to Caesar. He had that right, every Roman citizen had that right, and Paul was a Roman citizen. He didn't acquire that citizenship by money, like some did.

46:21

He was born a Roman citizen. Big difference.

46:28

So Paul says over in 2 Corinthians 4, again talking about the conflict that he's had, he said, we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed, but not despairing, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed, always caring about in the body, the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. So he says, we're afflicted, we're perplexed.

46:57

were persecuted, were struck down. That's the suffering he experienced. You know, right after he became a Christian, he goes and speaks in the synagogue in Damascus. That was the very place he was going to arrest Christians. And he goes in there and he starts proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah. Well, that threw everybody in confusion because he had a reputation. They knew who he was. And now look at him. He came here to arrest Christians and now he's

47:27

He's talking about the Lord and the way that they're talking about. And so they began to persecute him. And in one case he had to be let down on the side of the wall in a basket to escape his persecutors.

47:41

However, in 2 Corinthians 12, verse 7 and following, Paul said this, because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, see, Paul had received revelation from God, and he was told not to share it, not to tell anyone about it, and he saw things that he was not to utter.

48:02

and to keep him from exalting himself, becoming prideful over this revelation he had received, he says, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, and to keep me from exalting myself. So to keep him humble, God gave him a messenger of Satan, a demon who persecuted him, who tormented him.

48:32

And that kept him humble. And it says in verse 8, concerning this, I implored the Lord three times that it might not leave me. And he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. And so, hey, if that's the case, therefore, I'd rather boast about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I'm well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties for Christ's sake. For when I'm weak,

49:02

then I'm strong. So he got the message about that. He said, I'm not going to keep asking. God says it's going to stay and this is going to continue. Well then I'm going to find a way to rejoice through this. I'm going to find a way to learn from this.

49:19

We have this verse over in 1 Peter 4 19. It says, Therefore those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. You suffer, keep doing what is right. Don't stop, don't give up. Stay committed to Christ and His Word. Entrust your soul to a faithful Creator. He is sovereign. He's in control. And guess what?

49:50

There are no accidents in your life. If God is sovereign, there are no accidents.

49:58

Shoo on that for a minute.

50:06

So again, where do you go with all of this? Two more places. And I hinted on this one already when I talked about being filled with the Spirit.

50:20

But it says over in X5, if you want to look at X5.

50:25

The apostles had been preaching the gospel. Chapter 3, a lame man was healed. Peter and John.

50:33

Well, the crowds were pretty excited about that. When they saw that miracle, of course, the religious leaders were not. They called them before them and told them to quit speaking in the name of Jesus,



and they refused. So they beat him, and then they released him. After taking the advice of Gamaliel, who Gamaliel was one who also taught Paul,

51:00

And it says over in Acts 5:41 that they went on their way from the presence of the council rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for his name. What did they do? They rejoiced that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for his name. And every day in the temple and from house to house, they kept on teaching and preaching that Jesus is the Christ. What's God's will? God's will is that you give thanks.

51:32

1 Thessalonians 5:18, in everything give thanks. It's easy to give thanks when things are fine. It's not when things are difficult. But it says, in everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. God's will is that we be thankful people, not complaining people, not depressed people, not worried people.

51:56

but we're thankful. Colossians 3:17, whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

52:10

Someone said to give thanks sincerely, one must give more than thanks.

52:15

to give your entire life, right?

52:20

Well, let me give you one more.

52:23

And it's back in Hebrews, and it's just one verse. I want to read it to you. It says, for you have need of endurance, Hebrews 10:36, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised. You know, sometimes things that are promised to us from scripture don't have an immediate fulfillment. You have to wait. What do you need while you're waiting? Perseverance, endurance.

52:53

John Chrysostom said that patience is the queen of the virtues. John Calvin said patience is the fruit and proof of faith. Even Charles Spurgeon, he said patience, patience. You are always in a hurry, but God is not. Isn't that true? God's not in a hurry. We are. I mean, my goodness, we have a heart attack if we can't get our

53:21

drive-through food fast enough. And we think, you know, this is why this is a drive-through. It's supposed to be quick. I know. I don't like to be told to come inside either. Sometimes you get that little message. But I mean, you know, just think about all of this.

53:42

What is God's will? How are we going to discern what God's doing in our life? How are we going to discern what God's doing in his church?

53:50

We have to be holy.

53:53

We have to not conform ourselves to this world.

53:57

We have to be submissive. We have to be thankful. We have to be filled with the Spirit of God. We have to endure and persevere and waiting for the fulfillment of those promises. You know, I know we live in some pretty dangerous times and frankly, you know, the COVID, when all that started, it scared the mess out of a lot of people, didn't it? And some people didn't go back to church, didn't go back to anything. They're still hiding in their homes.

54:28

They're afraid to go out. But my goodness, if you follow the narrative, you can understand why. Look at the stuff that we were told.

54:37

It didn't take long to figure out that it's not everything that they're talking about. Therefore, when I was telling you about the essential church and encouraging you to go see it at the theater, that's telling you how government's persecuting the church and the church in America. We're not talking about, yeah, we talk about two churches in Canada, but we're not talking about, you know, underground churches. We're not talking about churches in China, churches in Indonesia.

55:05

not talking about Nigerian believers, we talked about them and praying for them because they're the that's the one country where the most Christians are slaughtered for their faith. No, we're talking about right here, right here where we live.

55:23

Are you doing the will of God? Are you doing it from your heart? And if you're not, then how can you be part of a decision that affects an entire church if you're not living this way?

55:41

Because again, this is God's church.

55:46

If he wants to shut the doors, he'll shut them. And no one will be able to open them back up, and no one will have any kind of remedy to the problem, and it won't matter how much money you give. If he says it's gonna close, he'll close it. And he's done that in history. You remember when I mentioned the church at Ephesus in Revelation chapter two? You know, the seven churches in Revelation, there were only two of them that didn't get condemned by Jesus. The rest of them did.

56:17

Did you know that those churches went out of existence? Their lamp stand went out? They were no longer a light to the world, so he shut them down.

56:27

You go back and study over these geographical areas, and you can learn from archaeology where churches were built and where all the activity took place. I've been pretty fascinated studying about Capernaum, where Jesus did his, really, his base ministry right there, and learning that one of the reasons why he did it right there is because that was a trade route.

56:54

And there were so many people traveling that trade route. Jesus didn't hide from people. Yeah, he had moments where he needed to be secluded and he would go up to a mountain and pray and he'd spend all night in prayer. Now he ministered to the people and he preached and taught them the gospel. And he went where the people were. Do you go where people are and try to share the gospel with them? Do you leave your neighborhood?

57:23

and talk to people about Jesus, invite them to church. You wanna see some things pick up in a positive way here? Keep talking to people about Jesus. Keep inviting people to church. Keep supporting the work of the ministry. But you do the work of the ministry too. And don't just sit back and let other people do it. Or don't think that you don't have a ministry. We all have a ministry.

57:51

We all have the one and others that are given in the New Testament. We all have spiritual gifts. And we have to use them. But first, you need to make sure you know Jesus.

58:07

In fact, let me phrase it another way. Does Jesus know you? Yeah, He knows you, He knows about you, but does He know you in a saving way? Because there are a lot of people that say, I know Him, but they deny Him by how they live. So they don't know Him.

58:28

They say they have faith, but they don't live by faith. They really have unbelief.

58:38

These are haunting words right here I want to leave you with. It's Matthew 7, 21 to 23. But listen to what it says. 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 will enter. What did he say about the will of God?

59:00

Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name cast out demons and in your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. You lived your life, a lawless life.

59:31

His word, he totally ignored the gospel, even though you said you gave your life to Jesus, or you say that the gospel is what you understand and you're following, but your life does not match it.

59:47

He says, I don't know you. You think you know me? You don't know me. You're not doing my will. See how important it is that we do what God wants us to do? Instead, we function every day thinking, well, I'm gonna do what I wanna do.

01:00:06

And you end up doing it. You know what? When people tell me that they don't want to pray, and I usually tell them, that's when you should recognize that you need it the most, or I don't want to read my Bible, or I don't want to study, well that's when you need it the most. But you know what? If you say that, I don't want to do this, most of the time you won't. I don't want to pray. Satan takes a hold of that. He wanted to make sure you don't pray by giving you distractions.

01:00:33

to make sure that you forget about praying or forget about being in the Word. You'd be too busy. You'd be too busy. That doesn't sound right. You're too busy. You sit down to do the Word or to spend some time in the Word, to read your Bible, phone rings, you answer the phone, you're on a conversation, or maybe for those with electronics, you hear a little ding go off, you got a text message, or you got an email, now you're in looking at all that.

01:01:07

The faith that says, but does not do, is really unbelief.

01:01:17

And so I want to leave you with these words, the words of Joseph Aileen, who is a Puritan pastor. He asked this, how long will you rest in idle wishes and fruitless purposes? When will you come to a fixed, firm and full resolve? Do not you see how Satan cheats you by tempting you to delays? How long hath he be drawn you on in the way of perdition?

01:01:46

If you be not now resolved while the Lord is treating with you and inviting you, much less are you likely to be hereafter when these impressions are worn off and you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

01:02:04

In other words, you need to act on it immediately. And not wait. You know, put it in the words of Mark 8.

01:02:15

that when the seed is sown and it's not acted upon, then Satan comes along and snatches the seed away.

01:02:24

I don't know how he does all that. I mean, I can imagine.

01:02:31

Maybe you have somebody you haven't seen in a long time, you start talking to them, and they tell you they're now into some kind of mystical Eastern religion, and they begin to share that with you. Well, that's one way it's beginning to move your heart in another direction.

01:02:46

whatever it may be, he'll do whatever he has to do to make sure that you're not a follower of Jesus. Or if you are a follower of Jesus, to make sure you're the most miserable follower of Jesus.

01:03:03

So beloved, let's examine ourselves as we share now in the Lord's table. Let's pray. We thank you, Heavenly Father, for your word, and we pray for your help and understanding and applying it to our lives. We pray now as we come to your table to begin to examine ourselves in light of what we heard.

01:03:31

to make sure that we truly are in the faith.

01:03:38

And if we are in the faith, that we are doing your will.

01:03:43

So Lord, as we have this privilege and opportunity to remember what you've done for us on the cross, dying in our place for our sins, may we also be willing to examine ourself and to make sure that we're not entertaining sin and therefore bringing a mockery to what you died for. Help us Lord to stop giving into those sins that you died for.

01:04:13

we pray all.