

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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COLOSSIANS – Hope of Glory
Knowledge of God's Will
Colossians 1:9-10 (part 1)

This morning, we are continuing our study of Paul's letter to the Christians in a little church with a big reputation. Though Paul had never seen them face to face, he heard about what God was doing among them. He had also heard about false teachers who were trying to deceive these new believers through some very convincing lies. So, Paul writes this letter to clarify the truth of the gospel and to confront the false teaching they had heard.

Now, we don't know for certain who all the false teachers were, but at least some of them were telling the Colossians different rules and regulations they said they had to follow to be pleasing to God.

Colossians 2:20–23

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? 23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

We'll look more closely at these verses when we get there, but they help us see some of what the false teachers might have been saying. They appeared to be wise but were promoting a self-made religion that was hyper-focused on what we must do (or not do) to be pleasing to God. They laid out a labyrinth of rules and regulations that you had to perfectly navigate, or you'd live under a curse from God and not His blessings. So, Paul is writing this letter to make it crystal clear that God is pleased with us and graciously chooses to bless us because of what Jesus has done for us and continues to do in us as we simply trust in Him. It's called grace. It's all by God's grace to us in Jesus.

It seems these false teachers were capitalizing on something good that exists in the hearts of true followers of Jesus. We want to live a life that's fully pleasing to Him. We want to live according to God's will and desire for our lives. And one of the ways these false teachers were gaining influence with these believers was by offering them teaching that claimed to be God's will and desire for their lives, a detailed plan that had rules and regulations you had to get just right in order to be pleasing to God. But their plan wasn't from God, and it didn't please Him, it was self-made religion that centered around our work for God rather than Christ's work in us.

And because Paul knows that, from the very beginning of this letter he is laying a foundation of truth that will correct the heresy of the false teachers by focusing on Christ's work in us. So, pick up where we left off last week.

Colossians 1:9–14

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

This paragraph is all a big series of connected thoughts. And there is way too much for us to cover in one week. So, let me quickly give you a few observations that will help us form the basic big idea for this paragraph. Then, we will spend the next few weeks digging in.

Paul is summarizing what he has prayed for these believers since the day he heard about the work of the gospel in their lives. So, this is something he is asking God to do in them. Already, Paul is placing God's work at the center of things.

And what is Paul asking God to do? Verse 9 says he is asking God to fill them with the knowledge of His will. That's the primary request. "Lord, I hear you are doing something powerful in the people of Colossae. Father, I ask you to fill each of them with the knowledge of your will." That's the primary request. That's what we will talk about this morning – the knowledge of God's will.

But knowing God's will has a purpose and it isn't just to fill our heads with knowledge. Verse 10 says the purpose of knowing God's will is so they can walk, or live, in a manner that is worthy of the Lord, the kind of life God finds fully pleasing.

Then, in verse 10, you might notice the translators of the ESV put a colon after the phrase "fully pleasing to God." That's because the phrases that follow are participle phrases that form a list describing a life worthy of the Lord and fully pleasing to him. It's a little easier to see when you break it down...

**bearing fruit in every good work and
increasing in the knowledge of God;**

*11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might,
for all endurance and patience with joy;*

*12 giving thanks to the Father,
who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*

*13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness
and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,*

14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

So, this paragraph is what Paul is asking God to do in the lives of the Colossian Christians. He wants God to give them the knowledge of His will so they can live a life that fully pleases Him. And that gives us the most basic big idea of this paragraph.

Big Idea: God gives us the knowledge of His will so we can live fully pleasing to Him.

The false teachers that had come to the Colossian believers were trying to sell a man-made religion that was centered around a list of rules and regulations they said were necessary to be pleasing to God. But Paul is saying that a life that pleases God doesn't come from following a list of man-made rules. It comes from being filled with the knowledge of God's will.

And that brings up one of the most common questions that Christians ask – What is the will of God and how can I know it? If you are following Jesus, that's a question that is likely circling around your heart and mind all the time. For many, it's a place of deep turmoil. Every day, you are living a life that is filled with choices, and you want those choices to be pleasing to the Lord. You want your life to align with the will of God. But what is the will of God and how can we know it?

So, I want to spend some time considering what the Bible teaches us about the will of God. My original plan was to spend one week talking about the will of God, just so we could have a better

appreciation for what Paul means when he uses that phrase. Yesterday morning, I decided to extend our discussion of the will of God into next week. There is just so much for us to learn, and I'm concerned that trying to fit too much into one week will just add to some of our confusion, especially for those of you who have really struggled with knowing and doing the will of God. So, let's consider the will of God together.

Perhaps the best place to start is with the nature of God Himself. God is infinitely complex. His way of thinking is so far above our way of thinking that there is no way for us to reduce Him or to simplify Him to a level we can completely understand.

Romans 11:33

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

God's ways and thought are so far above us that we can't fully know or completely understand the way He thinks or how He works. That's not to say we can't understand anything, it is just that as we try to understand Him, there are going to be things we just can't quite sum up. Always mystery. And God's will is no exception.

I'm going to be describing three different aspects of the will of God.

- The Sovereign Will of God
- The Revealed Will of God
- The Individual Will of God

Those are three different ways of thinking about the will of God that we find in the Bible. These three categories are for our benefit as we attempt to better understand a God that we can't completely understand. So, if those categories don't help you, then by all means don't feel constrained to by them. I just don't know of a better way to faithfully teach what the Bible reveals about God and His will.

1. God's Sovereign Will

This is a reference to the fact that God has a plan for this universe that He will accomplish by His sovereign power. Before He created this world, He had a plan that incorporated every single thing that would ever happen. By His power, He is accomplishing that plan.

Daniel 4:34-35

...his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

Ephesians 1:11

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

God is working out His sovereign will among the people of this world. And all things are working together for that good plan. According to this aspect of God's will, everything that has ever happened is incorporated into His will for the world. And that even includes the sins of men.

Acts 4:27-28

for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

The most heinous sin that has ever been committed was the murder of the sinless Son of God. And, though God is never the author of sin and never tempts anyone to sin (James 1:13; 1 John 1:5), by His perfect foreknowledge and infinite wisdom, He has a plan that has incorporated all things, including the schemes of Satan and the sins of men, into His good design. When people sin or Satan schemes, they don't overthrow the plan and purposes of God. He saw it coming and is way more than a step ahead. He makes their real choices serve His good plan. He's just that big and good. This aspect of God's will is sometimes referred to as the hidden will of God because He hasn't chosen to reveal all the plans He has willed for the events of this world.

So, to be filled with the knowledge of God's will doesn't mean we will know all the hidden plans and purposes He has. But it does include knowing that God has good purposes and plans that will not fail. Even when people do. If you are trusting in Jesus, Romans 8:28 says that God is working everything in your life together for His good purpose and plan for you.

And this should fill us with confidence and peace. Many of us learned to think about God's will like putting together a piece of furniture from Ikea. It's intricate and detailed and written in a language only 100 people on earth can understand. And if you make one wrong move or decision, you've ruined the whole thing. And that's a crippling thought. People think, "Maybe I married the wrong person and messed up God's will for my life. Maybe I went to the wrong college, or bought the wrong house, or got the wrong job and messed up God's will for my life. Now I'm consigned to living in the loser's bracket of life and can never have the joy and happiness I could have had if I'd gotten it all right.

Friends, I do not believe that is a biblical view of God's will. His good, sovereign plan for this world will come to pass and that includes His good, sovereign plan over the lives every follower of Christ – including you. You aren't on the 10,000th plan of God for your life that He has to keep throwing away and revising every time you mess up. There's nothing you can do about your past but trust God's grace and forgiveness through Jesus and His sovereign plan, the plan that centers around Jesus restoring and redeeming people who've sinned and made a wreck of their lives, providing abundant life in this life to people who would otherwise be doomed to the loser's bracket.

He has a perfect plan, and He is perfectly bringing it to pass. And may He fill our hearts with that knowledge of His will and may our lives be free from fear and filled with joy and hope. That's a life that is worthy of the Lord and fully pleasing to Him.

2. God's Revealed Will

Sometimes this is called God's will of desire or His preceptive will. These are things God has revealed in His Word that He desires for the lives of people.

Deuteronomy 29:29

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

While there are hidden aspects to God's will that we cannot know, God has revealed everything we need to know to live a life that pleases Him. We can be filled with the knowledge of His will, not because we can know everything that God ultimately thinks or wills and desires but because He has revealed His desires sufficiently for anyone and everyone to know what His will for our lives looks like. And how has He revealed it? In His word, the Bible.

Micah 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

1 Timothy 2:3–4

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

God has revealed His will for people in His word, the Bible. Do justice, love kindness, and live in humility before the Lord. Trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior and be saved. That's God's will. It isn't hidden or a secret.

God's will, His desire for us, is most plainly revealed in His word, the Bible and it all centers around Jesus. We'll come back to this next week because I believe this is what Paul is most directly referring to in Colossians 1. I believe he is praying for these believers to be filled with the knowledge of God's revealed will that is plainly given in His word, the Bible. But let's move into the third aspect of God's will.

3. God's Individual Will

God's will includes a plan for your life as an individual. Look at the very first verse in Colossians.

Colossians 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

Paul says it was the will of God that he would be an apostle of Jesus. That's what most of us are referring to when we ask, "What is God's will for my life?" We want to know things like a career or ministry calling. And, since this aspect of God's will can be so confusing for us, we are going to pick up here next week.

I know we are kind of leaving on a cliff-hanger. So, let me give you 3 WAYS TO RESPOND to what we have learned this morning.

1. PRAY

Colossians 1:9

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will. Ask Him for spiritual wisdom. Ask Him to help you understand more and more of His word. Pray for each other. Pray for the people who struggle to believe that God's good plan for their lives isn't ruined. Pray for those people who are struggling to make big decisions and are lost and scared – that God would fill them more and more with the knowledge of His will.

I would specifically ask that you pray every day this week for our time next Sunday. Ask that God will supernaturally work as we gather. Pray for me as I study and prepare.

God has to give us knowledge and wisdom and understand or His will is always going to be a mystery to us.

2. PURSUE JESUS

Colossians 1:16–18

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

God's will is for Jesus to be central to all things – including your life.

Ephesians 1:7–10

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Colossians 1:10

increasing in the knowledge of God – Jesus is God

The will of God for this world and your life centers around Jesus. All of His purposes have Jesus at the center. So, pursue a relationship of knowing Jesus and trusting Jesus. That starts with receiving His forgiveness and redemption. And that continues through daily pursuit of knowing Christ in His word.

If you fix your eyes on Jesus and center your life around Jesus and place your faith and trust in Jesus, then you will live in the center of the will of God because Jesus will live in you. It's all about Jesus.

I want to invite you to trust in Jesus right now.

3. PRAISE GOD

Ephesians 1:11–12

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Think of one truth from God's word that we have seen today and praise God for it. I praise Him that His good and glorious Sovereign will is guaranteed. I won't make it happen, and I won't stop it from happening. All I have to do is trust Him and look forward to it coming to pass.

I praise Him that the most crucial things I need to know about His will are clearly revealed in the Bible. His will isn't an encoded message that I have to figure out on my own.

Praise God. Pursue Jesus. Pray for God to give you wisdom and understanding. That's the kind of life that is worthy of the Lord and fully pleasing to God.