

First Baptist Church Merritt Island  
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February 16, 2025  
**COLOSSIANS – Hope of Glory**  
**Knowledge of God's Will**  
**Colossians 1:9-14 (part 2)**

This morning, we are continuing our verse-by-verse study of Paul's letter to the Colossians by picking up where we left off last week. So, look with me at Colossians 1:9-14.

***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.***

If you were here last week, you might remember that we quickly walked through this paragraph phrase by phrase and came up with this basic big idea:

**BIG IDEA: God gives us the knowledge of His will so we can live fully pleasing to Him.**

I told you we would be using that Big Idea for several weeks because there is too much teaching in these verses for me to adequately cover in one sermon what I believe we need to learn. As a matter of fact, last week and this morning, we are only focusing on the phrase “filled with the knowledge of [God's] will.”

Many, if not most, followers of Jesus live with confusion about God's will. That's why I've felt compelled to spend a couple of weeks giving us a bit of a biblical framework about God's will. While I know we won't have every question answered, my hope is to clarify some critical things that I pray will help you understand what God's will is and what it isn't.

Let me remind you that we discussed three aspects of God's will in our previous study:

**1. God's Sovereign Will**

God has a plan for this universe that He formed before creation and will accomplish by His sovereign power. This plan incorporated every single thing that would ever happen. Most of this aspect of God's will is unknown to us and will not be known until this age comes to an end and we can view all of history from God's eternal perspective and see how He worked all things together for His glory and our good.

**2. God's Revealed Will**

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.

### 3. God's Individual Will

God's will includes a plan for your life as an individual. The very first verse in Colossians says that Paul was an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

The apostle Paul was living out the individual will of God for His life. That included a particular ministry calling as an apostle of Jesus. And, when many of us hear that, we want to live in God's will for our lives, too. And we wonder, "How can I be confident that I'm living the will of God the way Paul says he is living in the will of God?" That question becomes even more complicated when we read the biblical account of how Paul became an apostle – Jesus showed up in the middle of the road and audibly spoke to him and then struck him with blindness as an additional sign. That's not likely to happen for you in your decision about what college to attend or what job to pursue.

So, how do we pursue a life that is aligned with God's will for us?

#### **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,***

As Paul prays for these believers to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, notice there are three essential elements that surround this idea of the will of God: knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

If you want to live according to God's will, those three things are essential – knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

#### GOD'S WILL IS FOR YOU TO LIVE WITH KNOWLEDGE

God isn't trying to keep us in the dark. He wants us to have clear, unmistakable knowledge of His heart's desire for us. That's where the revealed will of God comes in. God wrote a book and it's by that book that He most clearly and powerfully gives us the knowledge of His will for our lives.

#### *John 17:17*

*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*

To be sanctified is to be set apart to God, to be holy and righteous. In other words, to be aligned with God's will and desire for our lives. And Jesus says that occurs in connection with the truth of God's word.

And, for many people, this is an essential reset. When we think about finding God's will for our lives, many of us envision an experience that gives us goosebumps or appears in a dream or comes with an audible voice, "Be an accountant in Florida and buy the silver Honda."

#### *2 Peter 1:16–21*

*For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.*

This is what many people believe is involved in understanding the will of God for their lives. Heavenly visions and voices. And, I'm not saying that God isn't capable of doing that. He certainly is. But His voice has already spoken and notice what He says...

*19 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,  
20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.  
21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Your senses aren't as trustworthy as God's Word. You can be wrong about what you think you've heard God say, but His Word is never wrong. And so, He tells us to prioritize and pay attention to the written word of God in the Bible, which is more reliable than a personal experience of hearing the audible voice of God.

We aren't to pour our energy into getting a sign or signal from God. We are to pay attention to God's word.

Let me give you just a couple of examples.

- *1 Thessalonians 4:3*  
*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;*
- *1 Thessalonians 5:18*  
*give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
- *Philippians 2:14–15*  
*Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,*

God's will for your life is primarily about the kind of person God desires you to be – sanctified. A person of moral purity. A person of gratitude and humility.

People who say they just want to do God's will and then live a life of murmuring and complaining and disputing are self-deceived. What makes you think you would do what God wants you to do for a career if you won't do what He wants you to do in your everyday life?

God's will is for you to be a certain kind of person who is becoming more and more like Jesus, which really means that the center of God's will is that you would know Him in the person of Jesus because you can't do the will of God without the power of Jesus living in you.

***Colossians 1:9-11***

***that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 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; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might,***

Being filled with the knowledge of God's will is directly related to increasing in the knowledge of God. The whole point of the Bible is to reveal Jesus to us so that we can have a living relationship with Him. That's how Christ transforms our lives and makes us more like Himself, as we know Him through His word and yield our lives to Him and worship Him, He changes us and conforms us to His will, by His power and not our own.

We'll come back to that idea in a few minutes. But, let me summarize what we've seen to this point.

If you want to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, then you must pursue the knowledge of His word. As you do, you won't just encounter truth about what God wants you to do, you will encounter the truth of who God is in the person of Jesus. As you increase in a day-by-day intimate relationship of knowing Jesus, you will grow in knowing His will.

That brings us to the second word associated with the will of God in our text: wisdom.

### GOD'S WILL IS FOR YOU TO LIVE IN WISDOM

#### **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...***

The reality is that God's word doesn't address every scenario in our lives or every decision we have to make. That's where wisdom comes in. Wisdom is the ability to put truth into practice. Many of the decisions God allows us to make are wisdom decisions.

And notice that Paul doesn't just pray for them to have wisdom. He prays for them to have spiritual wisdom. That's different than the wisdom of this world. Spiritual wisdom is the kind of wisdom that comes through the work of the Holy Spirit in us enabling us to apply the spiritual truths and principles of God word to our individual lives.

And that's another layer of living out the will of God. He has chosen not to spell out every single decision for us. Otherwise, we wouldn't need wisdom, you'd just need the to-do list. Many of the choices we make fall in this category. Taking one job over another. Buying a car. Establishing a budget. Establishing disciplines for our children. It is very likely that God will not give you a direct message on exactly what to do in those types of things. He wants to make you into a wise person not a thoughtless slave. So, He places choices in front of us that require us to make a choice that applies various truths and principles from Scripture into our lives.

And God has given us the Holy Spirit to enable us to live with the wisdom of Christ in us.

And this is as good a place as any to talk about laying out fleeces and looking for signs and wonders. Of course, God is able to use those things. However, as you study the New Testament, you don't find those things to be a mark of spiritually mature people. If I'm not mistaken, the last time the Bible records God leading His people with those kinds of signs is in Acts chapter 1 when the apostles are asking God for direction on who should take Judas' place as an apostle. Why is that significant? Because in Acts chapter 2, there was a massive paradigm shift for the people of God. What happened in Acts 2? God sent the Holy Spirit to live within His people.

The Holy Spirit in the Apostles gave us the Word of God. And God has given us His Spirit to enable spiritual wisdom in applying His word to our lives. God's will is for you to live in freedom as you make decisions with Spirit-given wisdom.

#### **James 1:5**

***If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.***

Ask God for wisdom and He promises to give it. And, as you yield your life to the power of God's Spirit and learn to hear His voice in His word, your mind and heart will be filled more and more with Holy Spirit-given wisdom.

And that connects closely with the third concept attached to the knowledge of God's will.

## GOD'S WILL IS FOR YOU TO LIVE WITH UNDERSTANDING

### **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,***

In the original language of the bible, the word "spiritual" is attached to both wisdom and understanding. The Holy Spirit enables wisdom AND understanding in us and.

Understanding is "comprehension of truth." It's the ability to understand the meaning or importance of something. The original meaning of the verb form in Greek was "to bring together." The noun form meant "union." It was used to describe two rivers that converged together into one.

So, biblical understanding is what happens when the Holy Spirit enables us to bring the truths of God's word together so that we understand what's most important. This word is sometimes translated as "discernment." We discern God's will for our lives by combining the truth of God's word into our lives.

Let me give you some examples from Scripture.

- We are to understand that God's glory matters most.

### **1 Corinthians 10:31**

***So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.***

No matter what we are doing, the primary goal for all of our decisions is to be the glory of God. So, as we are making choices, we should be considering how our choice will glorify God and make our choices with a desire to glorify Him. Choices that glorify God are in alignment with His will for our lives.

### **Romans 12:1-2**

***I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.***

As we yield our lives to God for His glory, Jesus transforms us by His grace. He causes our minds to be renewed in the truth of His word and, in that way, He gives us discernment (which is another word for understanding) to live out the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- We are to understand that God is glorified by our faith.

### **Romans 14:23**

***But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.***

In Romans 14, Paul is addressing a controversy that had developed among a group of Christians regarding whether or not it was God's will for His people to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Some said you shouldn't eat it because it had been used in demonic temple worship. They thought

you were associating with false worship if you ate the meat. Others said it was perfectly fine to eat the meat since you didn't have to actually participate in false worship to buy it and it was just meat. Let me just point out that no one was crazy enough to think it was wrong to eat meat.

Paul writes Romans 14 to help them through the process of deciding. And His final word on the issue is that what matters most is whether or not you are making your choice from a heart of faith. The choice of meat wasn't nearly as important as the choice to trust God.

This is how God led Abraham to the promised land. Hebrews 11:8 says that Abraham went out from his homeland, not knowing where he was going but trusting God as He went. This is how we are to make many of our decisions and plans.

#### *James 4:13–15*

*Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— 14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."*

This is really interesting. Clearly, James is referring to the hidden, sovereign will of God when He says, "If the Lord wills." What is so interesting about that is that James isn't rebuking these people for making plans and decisions about today or tomorrow without knowing the specific will of God. He doesn't say, "How dare you make a plan or decision without being 100% certain it's God's will." He is actually saying they can't know every aspect of God's will because God clearly hasn't chosen to tell them. So, they should make their plans but do it with humble faith in God to be God and to be Good.

And many of our decisions will boil down to the faith factor. In February 2004, Emily and I packed up all our worldly goods and left our barren homeland of Ohio to move to Merritt Island, Florida. Neither of us had jobs here. We had no idea what God would do. We prayed about it. We used the best wisdom we believed God was giving us. And we took a literal step of faith. We stepped out and said, "Lord, we trust you." I believe God was pleased with that decision, not because we had it all figured out but because we simply trusted God in the choice.

- We are to understand that God is glorified when our faith produces love.

#### *Galatians 5:6*

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

Similar to the debate over meat sacrificed to idols, the Christians in Galatia were conflicted over the issue of circumcision. Some said that Christian men should practice it because God gave it to His people as a sign of their devotion to Him. Others said it wasn't necessary because it was part of the Old Testament law and we are in a new covenant through Christ. Paul says that the real issue isn't whether or not to do it but whether or not we are trusting in Christ in a way that His Spirit is producing love. In other words, there is something more important than circumcision and it's loving our brothers and sisters in Christ.

So, as we are making our choice from that kind of heart, Galatians 5:1 says we are free to do what we believe is best.

- We are to understand that God's spirit provides peace.

#### *Galatians 5:22-25*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

God's Spirit produces peace. So, as we live by the Spirit, we should pay attention to whether or not God's Spirit is giving us peace in the decisions we make. When you understand that, it means if you don't have peace, you shouldn't proceed. Spiritual understanding comes as the Holy Spirit enables us to unite the truths of God's word into God-glorifying, peace-producing, faith-based decisions.

That's how we live a life in alignment with the will of God. Not by cowering in fear that God is an angry taskmaster who is just waiting to zap us with lightning bolts the moment we have to make a decision, but by knowing Him in His word, using Spirit-given wisdom and understanding, and walking in the freedom we have in Christ.

## TWO WAYS TO PRAY

### Prayer 1 – From Someone Who Does Not Yet Understand the Truths of Colossians 1:9-10

Lord, I have no clue what I should do. Should I take this job or wait for a better one? Should I buy this car or wait for a different one? I don't want to mess up my life and I'm afraid I might make a mistake. Just tell me what to do so I can stay inside your plan for my life. Give me a sign or something. Show me the plan...and please do it by Friday. Amen.

### Prayer 2 – From Someone Who is Understanding

Father, thank you that Your will is not a puzzle for me to solve or a riddle to figure out. Thank you that your will is for me to know Jesus and be filled with His Spirit. Thank you for your Word that clarifies everything I need to know Jesus and live pleasing to you. Thank you for promising to fulfill your good plan in me through Christ, so that I don't need to be afraid. As I consider my choices, I ask you for wisdom and discernment. Align my heart with what pleases you. If there is disobedience in my life, make it clear to me and help me repent and trust in Jesus. My life belongs to you, and I ask that you be glorified in me. By your grace, I take this step in faith, believing you are with me and trusting your goodness and mercy.