

(Finding God's Will) 6. Final Consideration

by Zac Poonen

God's will can be known by ascertaining the mind of the Spirit and moving forward in faith, trusting Him to guide and deliver us.

Scripture: Psalm 37:23, Psalm 91:1, Proverbs 16:9, Isaiah 50:10, Joel 2:25, Acts 16:6, 2 Corinthians 4:8, Hebrews 8:12, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Gods Will", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes that God allows perplexity to draw us closer to Him, revealing more of His mind and strengthening our faith. It is important to move forward even when unsure of God's will, after seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Regret over past failures should be confessed to God, who forgives and cleanses us, enabling us to press forward in fulfilling His will. Fear of making mistakes or fear of circumstances should not hinder us from walking in God's perfect will, as He promises to hold us when we fall. Guidance is a personal matter between God and each individual, and we should focus on being available to Him rather than seeking the same type of guidance others have experienced.

Transcript

It should be evident to the reader by now that no perfect formula exists for infallible guidance. Very often we shall be faced with perplexity when seeking to know God's will. God permits this so that we may press closer to Him and thus know more of His mind and receive more of His life.

Times of uncertainty are used by God to sift our motives too. When unsure of God's will, we should examine ourselves to see whether we have fulfilled the prerequisites for His guidance (mentioned in Chapter Two).

God uses perplexity to exercise and strengthen our faith also "Who among you fears the Lord and obeys His servant (the Lord Jesus)? If such men walk in darkness, without one ray of light, let them trust the Lord let them rely upon their God" (Isaiah 50:10-TLB). We should not therefore be surprised or discouraged when we encounter perplexity. Even the Apostle Paul was often perplexed, but he never despaired and gave up (2 Cor. 4:8). God may sometimes show us His will only just before we have to make a decision, and may keep us waiting a long time prior to that.

In any case, He will show us only the next step at each stage. He leads us step by step because He wants us to depend on Him day by day, and to walk by faith and not by sight. When He shows us only one step

at a time, we are compelled to lean on Him. Moreover, if God showed us the whole future, it is quite likely that we would not want to obey Him fully. And so, He shows us just one step at a time and gradually makes us willing to fulfill all His will. To find God's will for our life, therefore, all we need to do at any time is to take the next step that God shows us. As we do so, we will find God's plan unfolding gradually.

There is an ancient Chinese proverb that says, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with but a single step." Abraham went out from his home-country not knowing where he was finally going. He only knew that God was leading him (Heb. 11:8). He obeyed God at every step and God did not disappoint him. None who follow God like Abraham did, need ever fear disappointment.

Deliverance from indecision

Many times we will have to take a step forward while still not perfectly sure about God's will. This too is a part of the discipline of walking by faith, for certainty can sometimes be the equivalent of walking by sight. God sometimes gives us clear assurances to encourage us lest we faint. But many times He expects us to move forward without visible evidences of His approval. Having ascertained the mind of the Holy Spirit to the best of our knowledge, we should move ahead without waiting indefinitely. The Bible says, "We should make plans - counting on God to direct us" (Prov. 16:9-TLB). Looking back over such decisions later, we will find that in spite of the dimness of our vision, God did not let us go astray. In other words, although there may have been much uncertainty in prospect, there will be much certainty and rejoicing in retrospect.

"The very dimness of my sight

Makes me secure -

For groping in my misty way

I feel His Hand, I hear Him say,

`My help is sure'".

J Oswald Sanders in 'Spiritual Leadership' says, "It might be thought by those who have not found themselves in a position of leadership, that greater experience and a longer walk with God would result in much greater ease in discerning the will of God in perplexing situations. But the reverse is often the case. God treats the leader as a mature adult, leaving more and more to his spiritual discernment, and giving fewer sensible and tangible evidences of His guidance than in earlier years". Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, once said in relation to guidance, that in his younger days things used to come to him so clearly and quickly. "But", he said, "now as I have gone on, and God has used me more and more, I seem often to be like a man going along in a fog. I do not know what to do." (Quoted in 'D.E. Hoste' by Phyllis Thompson). Yet whenever a decision was made, God always honoured Hudson Taylor's trust.

If when taking a step in uncertainty we miss the path of God's perfect will, He can be trusted to deliver us. The promise in Isaiah 30:21 (TLB) is, "If you leave God's paths and go astray, you will hear a Voice behind you say, 'No, this is the way; walk here'". God can order circumstances to alter our course when we miss the road. But we should not remain in perpetual inaction waiting for spectacular guidance for every move. A ship can be turned around much quicker when moving than when stationary: so can we.

In Acts 16:6-10, Paul and Silas tried to go into Asia not as a result of any clear leading from the Lord but yet desiring to do His will. They were hindered - perhaps by God-ordered circumstances. Next, they attempted to enter Bithynia. Again their way was blocked. But because they were actively seeking God's will, and not passively waiting for guidance, He led them finally to the place of His choice - Macedonia.

In the smaller details of daily life, guidance is not necessarily a question of constant conscious enquiry. It is a matter of walking in the Spirit. Right relationship with the Lord will lead to right action. In such small details, the guidance of God is not something that we should be acutely aware of all the time. We may be unconscious of it. It is our basic relationship with the Lord that is the important factor, for guidance is a spiritual matter and not a mechanical technique.

Deliverance from regret

Regrets over past failures may torment the minds of some of us. We may have missed God's will in some issue and are now unable to correct it. But regret is futile, for it will only eat up our spiritual vitality and leave us totally unfit for any service for God. Failure should be confessed to God, Who is faithful to forgive us and to cleanse us immediately (1 John 1:7,9). He has also promised not to remember our past sins (Heb. 8:12). If God does not harp on our past there is no need for us to agonize over it. We should therefore turn our back once and for all on those failures. It may not be possible to rectify the blunders, but we can ask the Lord to use the rest of our life, for His glory.

David fell very low when he sinned with Bathsheba and then murdered her husband, Uriah. Yet instead of living the rest of his life in regret, he came back to God in brokenness and repentance. Accepting God's forgiveness, he lived thereafter for God's glory. The Holy Spirit recorded later that David pleased the Lord in all his life, except in the matter of Uriah (1 Kings 15:5). If David had allowed regret to plague his mind, he would only have grieved the Lord further. Those who live with the weight of regret perpetually on their minds only succeed in adding failure to failure. We must forget past failures and press forward to fulfill God's will (cf. Phil. 3:13,14). God can restore to us the years that have been lost (Joel 2:25).

Another temptation is to worry over a past decision which at the time we felt convinced was in the will of God, but which we now doubt. Perhaps the decision has led us into trouble. Or maybe we are now aware of facts which had we known then, might have led us to a different decision. The principle we should always bear in mind is: Never doubt in the darkness what God has shown in the light. If we sincerely sought the will of God and decided according to the light we then had, there is no need to look back now in regret. God is not a cruel despot who delights in making fools of us. He is a loving Father and He will not give us a stone if we ask for bread. If we sought His will sincerely, we can be sure God overruled everything to let us decide rightly. Even the facts that we were ignorant of then, must have been withheld by God with a purpose.

God gave Paul and Silas clear directions at Troas to go to Macedonia, and they went immediately. Yet soon after arrival, they were locked up in prison with their feet in stocks. They could have wondered then whether their senses of guidance was wrong. Had they known their fate in advance they might never have left Troas. But God gave them no warning. Though put in prison, Paul and Silas trusted God. Refusing to doubt in the darkness what God had shown them in the light, they continued to praise Him (Acts 16:8-26). Later events clearly showed they were indeed in the will of God. Getting into trouble is, by itself, no indication that we are out of God's will. If we trust God we shall praise Him in the thickest darkness without any regrets.

Deliverance from fear

Fear of men and of circumstances can make us miss the will of God. Many believers are governed by considerations of security and safety when seeking guidance. They feel that a certain place or occupation is insecure and dangerous, and so rule it out of their minds altogether. But there is no place or occupation in this world totally free from danger. The safest place in all the world is always the centre of God's perfect will. We step into danger only when we step out of God's plan. The one who makes his decisions without seeking God's guidance will be vulnerable to Satan's attacks. But "the one who lives and works in the appointed place of the Most High will be protected by the shadow of the Almighty" (Psa. 91:1 - adapted).

We need to be delivered too, from the fear of making mistakes. The man who never makes a mistake is the man who never does anything. We are students in God's school and we shall doubtless go wrong occasionally. But the Lord is ever near, ready to put things right. Apart from the Lord Jesus Himself, no man ever learned to walk in God's perfect will without making many mistakes. The greatest saints learned to walk in the will of God just as a child learns to walk - through many falls. The child who is afraid of falling may never learn to walk! We must never let such fear keep us from moving forward. Walking in God's will may not be easy but it is a great adventure with Him and He has promised to hold us when we fall - "The steps of good men are directed by the Lord..... If they fall it isn't fatal, for the Lord holds them with His Hand" (Psa. 37:23,24-TLB).

Finally, remember that guidance is essentially a personal matter between God and you. The way God led another person may never be the way He wishes to lead you. The broad principles are the same for all believers, but the exact mode varies from individual to individual. You will only be confused if you seek for the same type of guidance you heard someone else describe in his testimony. Leave it to God how He should guide you. Let your concern be, that you might always be available to Him, to do whatever He desires. He will make it His concern to ensure that you are made aware of His will, and that you are strengthened to fulfill it.

Summary

1. God permits perplexity in order that we may know Him better. He also sifts our motives and strengthens our faith thereby.
2. In most cases, we should move forward even when vague about God's will, provided we have ascertained the mind of the Spirit to the best of our knowledge. We should not wait indefinitely.
3. We should not look back in regret over past failures or past decisions.
4. We must never let either fear or danger or fear of making a mistake keep us in perpetual inaction.
5. We should leave it to God as to how He guides us.

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