

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 – This is How to do God's Will

Intro: A tradesman and his tool. Having the right tool is important, but it is more about becoming the right, skilled tradesman before it is about the tool itself. The tradesman IS the main tool. A man with a superior tool may step out ahead, but if he is not a superior tradesman the gap will be evident soon enough, and the man will fail, all the while searching for the next right tool.

The Bible is a tool, yes, but it is a tool designed to make us a tool in God's hands much more so than it is a tool in our hands. We want to use the Bible like a tool, and it is, but whether we will admit it or not we usually start out by using the Bible as a tool in order to make God a tool to do our will, but Jesus wants the Bible to make us a tool to do His will. 2 Timothy 2:15 – we are a workman, and the Bible is the tool, 19-21 – if we are using the Bible properly (vs.15) we will be changed by it and become the tool used for the work of God. The Bible is the blueprint and we are the tool being used to do the will of God.

Now here in 2 Timothy we also see an allusion to being in our Master's house. Think about that. We must be in the house in order to be used by the Master for His will. Sometimes we say we want to know God's will but we aren't even looking for it in His house. We want the blessing but we aren't even in the building. We want His will but we aren't in the workshop. Our text from 1 Thessalonians gives us the framework of being in that workshop. If we will always be actively doing what our text teaches we will be in the building, we will be used as a tool to do God's will, and if not then we are not even close to the real blessing God wants for us.

God's will is not a tool for us to find and use, we are to become the tool for God to use to do His will. You may think that you have a grasp on this, but most people are not taught this way, they are taught to try and find God's will instead of becoming God's will. This is a fundamental difference in concept that will radically change your life for the glory of God. We don't need to find God's will like a bulls-eye so much as we need to focus on God's will like a laser. We think we have a handle on what has been revealed but what we want to know is what we think is concealed, however, the truth is that we need to focus on what is revealed before we can even live what we think is concealed.

So we use scripture as a tool but it makes us a tool if we use it rightly. Now understanding all that I have just said will make all the difference in understanding our message today about God's will. God's Word is His will and His will is the believer's way. We need less "I want to know what God's will is" and more "I want to do what God's Word says".

You may believe that and say amen to that, but do you practice that? I am afraid almost no one actually does these days, they all want to "know what God's will is" as if they think that they are already doing what needs to be done as far as what He has laid out in the scriptures and they want to go on to asking about some specific directional things when they aren't even facing in the right direction in the first place. This passage of scripture today will point us in the right direction. If we will do these three things that I will mention today, we will be doing God's will and be walking God's way. Then as we move on the path will be clearer than we might have imagined otherwise, and we won't have to ask for directions we will be headed to the right place already and get to enjoy all the stops along the way.

Now if we really believed that and we really understood God's will, we might be seeking to do His will in a different way. Too often, most often we want to know God's will so that we can get there faster and avoid all disaster, but that isn't God's way. Think about John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, or our Lord Jesus, and think about what it means to be in God's will because they were for sure. When seeking to find out the will of God, we may not admit it or even realize it but we often want to know God's will because our goal is happiness. We think it is what will

make us, and God, happy and we can avoid trouble and make ourselves feel spiritual to boot. Our motivations are not as pure as we pretend or imagine them to be.

Like all the other messages in our “This is How to” series, this isn’t everything about this particular issue, but it is foundational. Paul gives us instruction about God’s will also in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6, and so do the other books of the NT, and so on and so forth. Yet this is important because it lays the groundwork, it is the framework of how we should be focused when seeking and doing and living in God’s will. This passage is establishing certain basic principles to ground and to guide us with. If you cannot begin to do these you are not following God’s will for your life. You may be on your way to doing God’s will but you aren’t doing God’s will on the way, which is what I want to talk about today, doing His will on the way.

We can speak of God’s will in three ways. First there is His **will of decree**, the way things will be. It is something He ordains that will happen, such as what we see in Acts 2:23 (we see the compatibility between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man) / 4:27-28 (Herod, Pilate, Jews, Roman soldiers: all different intentions, and each will be judged on the basis of their intentions but they all did what God had predestined to occur) / Isaiah 46:9-10 / Romans 8:28-30 / Ephesians 1:11. We can think of Isaiah 10, where God brings the Assyrian army to punish Israel, and then He punishes Assyria for doing it. Of course Assyria thinks that they are doing this in and of themselves (arrogance) – God decrees in eternity, man freely chooses in time – the intention of the heart is the basis on which the judgment is made. So God’s will of decree is the way things will be.

Second, we speak of God’s **will of desire**, the way things ought to be, those things He expresses as what is best for us, what He wants for our life but is up to us to pursue (cf. Matthew 7:21 / Hebrews 13:20-21). God’s will of decree is what will happen, but God’s stated will of desire can be resisted, ignored, disregarded. People who aren’t Christians are doing that all the time and Christians do it too. Learning and living not to do that but to actually do God’s will is called sanctification. God’s will of desire is simply trust and obedience to His commands.

The third way we often speak of God’s will, and what we most often mean when we say that we want to know God’s will is that we are looking for God’s **will of direction**. We want some individual specific plan for some specific thing we aren’t sure about, and we might even call it the center of God’s will or His perfect will. I understand the impulse that wants to do what is right, of course, and we don’t want to go against the way God is guiding us. But too often we are waiting for some unmistakable impression, some crystal clear direction outside biblical principles, a biblically informed conscience, and the freedom we have as believers. Generally speaking we have all we need without some new “word” we have to decipher.

Does God have some secret specific will for each of our individual lives that we have to keep seeking out, do we have to find it, and what happens when we don’t? Do we “miss out” or “mess up”, and how can we get back on track? Kevin DeYoung, in his book, *Just Do Something*, says, “Trusting in God’s will of decree is good. Following His will of desire is obedient. Waiting for God’s will of direction is a mess.”

Yes God does have a plan for each of our lives, but while we can and should ask for wisdom, most often we find ourselves after the fact tracing His hand of providence back through the events that lead up to where we are. God does have a specific will for our lives, but it is not something that we have to try and figure out before we make a decision. God cares about our future, He does help us make decisions, He does direct our lives, and He does give us wisdom. He does want us to pray about it. There is no doubt God sometimes guides us in such a strong way that we have no doubt about the direction we should go, but we shouldn’t always seek that,

or wait for it, even with the biggest decisions we face. We too often are frozen in fear, or superstitious and silly, yet think we are being spiritual. God does not want us burdened about discovering some hidden pathway when He has already made the main path crystal clear.

We are looking for His will of direction and it is found by following His will of desire. That is the building where we run into it. We will please God when we follow the path He has laid out and if we will follow after His Word as outlined in this passage. What I am talking about is living out the will of God on wherever the path takes us.

This is one sentence, these three things are always to be done, and they are all bound together as the framework for doing God's will. This is doing God's will but it is not everything about doing it, what it is about is a framework of things to encompass all you are doing when seeking and doing God's will. In other words, when we are in the process of seeking and doing and living in God's will, we do these three things, always. Our ambition will be directed towards God.

Rejoice always – Philippians 4:4 – in the Lord / James 1:2-4 – in our fashioning / 1 Peter 1:3-9 – in our future – To be able to do this you must

Pray without ceasing – Luke 18:1 / 2 Corinthians 1:11 – pray for others who nobody prays for, we make prayer an integral part of this church, make prayer an integral part of your life outside the sanctuary, you make any place a sanctuary when you pray there you, bring your sanctuary in there – To be able to do this you must

Give thanks in all circumstances – Ephesians 5:20 – always means timing – everything (all things) means events – in all circumstances not for all circumstances – in everything God is there

The Hebrew word for thanks literally means an extension of the hand (shake hands to give thanks, gesture of appreciation, or to lift hands to show thankfulness) it is an attitude more than an action yet this is one reason among others why we do have a biblical basis for the lifting of our hands in worship. We can cultivate an attitude of gratitude by looking at the Greek word for giving thanks – Eucharist (thanks) (Lord's Supper, Lord's Table, Communion) – giving thanks is the path to the impossible – we can always give thanks for the sacrifice of Christ for my sin.

Presenting Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of this passage

- For the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2) John 16:22, 33
- He even prayed during toughest time, in Garden of Gethsemane (Hebrews 5:7).
- Gave thanks for God Himself and for what we do have (John 6:11 – limited resources / Luke 10:21 – limited influence / John 11:41 – in desperate situation)

This is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. This is how you live out your position; it is a position of responsibility. We do these 3 things because it shows the world and our brothers and sisters in Christ how we value our permanent position regardless of (and more than) our current condition. We declare how great our Savior is despite how awful our situation is. This is a powerful witness! This is how you show Jesus to the world!

When we are in the process of seeking, doing, and living in God's will, we do it this way: we keep a joyful disposition, maintain a constant prayer life and cultivate a thankful attitude. You are called to glorify God with all you do, and that is doing God's will. It is not, "look what I did" or "look what I can do for God", or "look where God is leading me", and not simply "look what God can do through me", but it is "look at God through me" (Matthew 5:16).

God's will is not a tool for us to find and to use, we are to become the tool for God to use to do His will. You don't fashion yourself, He fashions you. When we will be doing these 3 things, God will fashion us as a tool, as the instrument of His will. Instead of trying to find God's will, we need to become God's will. That will radically change your life for the glory of God. Be a tool in God's hands and He will make sure you do His will.