

Lions, Wolves & Sheep, Oh My!

Part 6: God's Will Be Done

(preached 5/29/22)

Please turn to *Romans 8:26*.

PREVIOUSLY we saw how the Gospel defined the relationship between God and the unbeliever, but as of LAST WEEK we transitioned into how it portrays Christ's relationship with the believer—us!

THE GOSPEL & THE BELIEVER.

- When we're born again, we're literally a new person made in the image of Jesus.
- Everything we were before then is dead: the way we believed, our lifestyle, our personal goals & hopes.
- While we're not perfect and will still do wrong, we now pursue the Sanctified life where we pursue holiness, turning away from what God in the Scriptures calls sin.
- We embrace worship, study of the Bible, going to church, and serving the Lord.
- A sign you're truly born again is that people who've known you will see the difference, and perhaps even bring it up to you. They'll say things like "you used to _____." They may even accuse you of not being "any fun anymore"!
- The will and plans of the Lord now become our will and passion.
- All the righteousness we have belongs to Jesus. Any good inside of us and any good we do is because of Him, period.
- This righteousness is compared to a resplendent spiritual robe that we wear and when both God and the Devil look at us, that's what they see!
- Were Jesus to take away that robe, we would become reprobates.
- Therefore our approach to both God and others should be humble because we cannot brag about our own goodness.
- We cannot compare our goodness to others because ours is only there and maintained by Christ.
- Thus I'm antsy when I hear other Christians say things like "I'm a good person" or "I love myself" because of how others are hearing & interpreting.
- Our Christ self is wonderful, beautiful, holy, and priceless! Praise God!
- Yet from where I stand, reading the Bible, and having experienced a small portion of Jesus turning down the dial of the Holy Spirit in me, I can only brag about Jesus as Paul did.
- If I'm going to brag about myself, it will be about my weakness and helplessness—my desperate need for Christ as much now as the day He pulled me out of the murky waters and set my feet on solid ground.

TODAY: GOD'S PLAN BECOMING OUR PASSION. Now that we belong to Jesus, not only do we turn aside from our former sins & lifestyles, but our plans, hopes, and dreams.

MODERN PREACHING. I recognize that some modern day preaching says the opposite, encouraging believers to pursue these things and that God will do whatever He can to promote, fund, and enable the same. Yet I point you to the Apostles who ended up leaving everything to follow Jesus.

Matthew 4:18-22 (ESV)

¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

¹⁹ And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them.

²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

FISHING BUSINESS. Simon Peter & Andrew had a small fishing business and it was how they made their money. While this wasn't the last time they would fish, look at verse 20:

“Immediately” they dropped their nets to follow Christ. Like most young men, I can only imagine that they wanted their business to grow and prosper. Perhaps get to the point where they could buy another boat & hire some employees. It could be a business they left to their sons someday. Yet all of that was abandoned the moment Jesus came into their lives.

INHERIT FISHING BIZ FROM DAD. John and James were likely set to inherit a similar fishing business from their dad, who was working with them that day. The custom of Jewish men that day was to apprentice under their dads until they were 30, then take the business over. Most scholars say the disciples were under 30 when Jesus called them. If that's true, John and James dropped what they were doing thus abandoning earthly inheritance, left their dad behind, to follow their Messiah!

AFTER ASCENSION. After Jesus' ascension, which time period we're in right now, there's no record of the Apostles ever casting a fishing net again...only the one Christ equipped them with: the Gospel.

HATED PUBLIC SPEAKING. Before I was Saved I hated public speaking more than anything. When some class forced me into the role, I would do it then go to the bathroom to throw up—literally. I was going to become the next American novelist like Stephen King, sell millions of books, and show up to fancy bookstores to sign them for adoring fans. I had plenty of other plans, hopes and dreams!

EVIL? SELF-SERVING. Were my plans evil? No...self-serving and prideful to be sure, focused mainly on me and making me happy.

Yet all that came to an end when Jesus appeared to me and said “follow Me.”

GATEWAY’S PASTOR. I still remember the first time the Holy Spirit told me I was going to be a preacher—it was at Gateway’s very first meeting back in 2003. The room was packed and I mean packed! After a lively worship service, Pastor Fran took the pulpit and said the following: *“God called me to plant this church, but in about 3 years He’ll raise up a pastor from among you and I will step down.”*

BELLY FLOP. When he said that, my stomach did a major belly flop that I wasn’t expecting. It took me by surprise so much that I actually asked the Lord “what was that? Did you do that and if yes, why?” *I suddenly saw myself standing up behind the same pulpit as Pastor Fran, preaching!*

TOOK THOUGHTS CAPTIVE. I ****hate**** public speaking and certainly didn’t want to be responsible for a church full of people, most of whom were older and more experienced in the faith than me! The leaders of Gateway had all followed Fran from another church, and hardly any of them knew me, or I them. There was no way this would happen. I immediately took all thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ and rebuked the Devil, just to be sure.

Yet within the time Fran said, his prophecy came true and in mid-2005 I’m standing up behind Gateway’s pulpit, scared absolutely to death.

God not only had a plan, but that was my first major revelation that His plans always supersede mine.

NOT CHEAP—GIVES JOY. What’s more is that God isn’t cheap or cruel: when we submit and obey Him, He turns on our joy and passion for HIS plans, goals, and will! It’s not this terrible heavy weighted obligation that grinds us to powder, but an inspiring journey that brings great rewards!

Romans 8:26-30 (ESV)

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son,

in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Verse 26a: the “weakness” Paul is referring to is the corruption in the world—the curse of sin and death brought about by Adam’s disobedience. Said corruption, as Paul points out in verse 18, are the sufferings of the present time. I believe he means both personal suffering and that going in the world: school shootings, war, pestilence, persecutions, etc.

HELPS US! AIR CONDITIONER. Now look what Paul says right off: the Holy Spirit HELPS us in our weakness. The Greek word Paul used here is wonderful in its translation: to take hold of together. The other day a fellow asked me to help him move a large and very heavy A/C unit, but with the two of us it was a breeze. He said he was tempted to try it himself, but since we were meeting up anyway, he decided to wait.

SUFFERING. We’re all suffering right now from something, whether medical, personal, or just being affected by all the evil in the world.

NOT ALONE! We don’t have to bear it alone! The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness! He will grab hold of that thing we’re wrestling with, the really heavy A/C that’s breaking our back, and He’ll do most of the lifting!

Verse 27: doesn’t suffering, the cares of the world, and our own desires sometimes distract us? Cloud our vision to where we lose sight of Jesus and His plan? Maybe there was a time when we felt we were in lockstep with the Lord and it was amazing! Then things happened....

INTERCEDES. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us according to God’s will to get us back into God’s will. Whether it’s removing some worldly or spiritual obstacle, reassuring us of His love for us, or helping to clear away the fog.... Not only does the Spirit know, but He’s already talking to Father about it.

Verse 28 is the oft-quoted famous one so let’s not take it out of context. Let me quote it again in the AMP version:

Romans 8:28 (AMP)

²⁸ We are assured *and* know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together *and* are [fitting into a plan] for good to *and* for those who love God and are called according to [His] design *and* purpose.

God has a plan that we are under and in. If something has come along to diverge us from it, He works His power for us to get back into it so that we’re once again walking in lockstep with Him. *This verse is not about our will, hopes, and plans working out. It’s all about getting us realigned with His.*

PAUL'S SHIPWRECK. Paul was on His way to Rome when the ship he was on encountered a terrible storm to the point where it wrecked and everyone had to make for shore. Paul was a prisoner to the Romans who, at one point, decided to kill all the prisoners. God wanted Paul in Rome...so He preserved his life from the storm, the wreck, and the Roman soldiers to get him there eventually.

APOSTLES IN JAIL. Peter and some of the Apostles were put in jail to stop them from preaching the Gospel...but that wasn't the will of God. So He sent an angel to free them and they were back at the Temple sharing Jesus with everyone!

OBSTACLES. When we're walking in God's Plan obstacles of all kinds rear their ugly heads, whether human, personal or demonic. Regardless of what type, the Lord will make all things work together for good according to His purpose.

Verses 29-30: show that God has mapped all this out from the very beginning, and I mean **VERY** beginning. Pause and consider this amazing revelation and what it means for you and I.

PRISON BREAK. Years ago I was addicted to a TV Series called "Prison Break" and the reason I liked it so much was that the main character, whose name was Michael, was a man with a plan. He was brilliant and had thought of EVERYTHING ahead of time, down to the most minute detail. His main purpose was to break his brother out of jail, but it went far deeper than that even involving D.B. Cooper and the highest levels of government!

OUTWITTED ALL. No matter the twists, turns, and countermoves...it seemed like Michael had thought of everything and he always outwitted and outmaneuvered everyone.

MIND BOGGLING WORDS. So lets use all the mind boggling words Paul used to describe what God did, in order: foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified. Let's go over each one.

FOREKNEW. God knew/knows everything ahead of time.

PREDESTINED. God determined everything ahead of time, ordained it.

CALLED. God called out to all Whom He foreknew and predestined...think "The Price is Right" when the announcer says someone's name and continues "come on down!"

JUSTIFIED: God freed, declared innocent, and made righteous all those He foreknew, Predestined, and Called.

GLORIFIED: God will resurrect everyone He foreknew, predestined, called, and justified. They will all share in the glory of Christ.

FOREKNEW. God already knew when persecution would happen to you. He already knew when you walk away from Him and fall back into the ways of the flesh and the world. He already knew the time when you would be accused and dragged into court. He already knew when you felt hopeless over your marriage or kids. He already knew about Covid, the Russian-Ukraine War, inflation, and baby formula shortages. He knows every detail.

PREDESTINED. Despite all those obstacles that result in suffering, none of it stops His plan. He already has His goals completely mapped out from the beginning to the end. He has thought of everything—every opposing force, every snafu, every monkey wrench. He’s already got contingences in place for everything.

Nothing will stop His plan from taking place exactly when He wants it to, and how He wants it to. Nothing.

CALLED. There are times when, like wayward sheep, we have all gone astray and not followed after Jesus. Times when we’ve gotten distracted by the cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches. Times when others have caused problems and headaches into our lives and we didn’t respond in a very Christian manner. *Yet He called us anyway.* He still SHOUTED our name and said “come on down!” Or, in His case, “come up here!” He still makes us part of His plan, despite us.

HIS PLAN IS BIGGER—WAY BIGGER—than OUR PLANS, PROBLEMS, DEPRESSION, FEELINGS OF HOPELESSNESS, and WANDERING HEARTS.

JUSTIFIED. Knowing everything we just discussed, He chose to Save us anyway. Have you ever had “buyer’s remorse”? You bought into something thinking it was going to be good, only to discover later it wasn’t and you regret having committed yourself. We experience Buyer’s Remorse because we didn’t know the future. God does...He knows everything. Before we ever _____ He knew that we would, yet didn’t experience BR. He Saved us anyway, cleansed us with the Blood of Christ, set our feet on solid ground, clothed us with His righteousness, and placed His Spirit inside us. He gave us an inheritance that will take an eternity to spend, so rich and gracious is He! He has declared us innocent and nothing can change that.

GLORIFIED. Our great promise, the prize, is our resurrection. Dying and going to Heaven are a transition phase. All the souls of our loved ones in Heaven are waiting in eager anticipation to be raised from the dead and step into God’s Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven. To accompany Jesus in His Revelation 19 army coming here to retake this planet from Satan.

We will all share in the glory Father has given Jesus!

Romans 8:31-39 (ESV)

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

³³ Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.

³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

³⁶ As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,

³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

FOR US, NOT AGAINST. Now we understand the meaning of the famous verse: “if God be for us, who can be against us?” Things can and will stop us when we’re trying to accomplish our own plan, but nothing will stop us when we’re in lockstep with Christ.

Him graciously giving us all things pertains to carrying out God’s will and plan.

REGARDLESS OF WHAT HAPPENS HERE, WE’RE NEVER SEPARATED FROM CHRIST AND HIS LOVE!