

# Nature, Nurture, Choice, & God's Will 5

## *The Will of God*

(preached 9/4/22)

Please turn to *1 Thessalonians 4:1*.

### THUS FAR:

- NATURE: you were born that way.
- NURTURE: you were raised that way (your environment [INCLUDING OTHER PEOPLE] influenced & molded you and still does).
- CHOICE: you picked it (according to personal desires/goals).
- GOD'S WILL: He picked it (also designed, planned, created, and enacted).
- Both angels and humans are made in the image of God and have free will.
- We can choose to believe and obey God, or to disbelieve and rebel against Him.
- Choosing to believe God doesn't diminish His glory one bit nor is it a "work."
- When we believed God for Salvation, it pointed to His Grace and Jesus righteous work on the Cross, not to any wisdom on our part.
- All Christians all called upon to live holy lives after Salvation and we succeed when we present our bodies to Christ.
- When we present our bodies to the passions and desires of the flesh and the temptations this world has to offer, we are slaves to sin and open to influence from the Devil.
- When we present our bodies to King Jesus, however, He empowers us to overcome the flesh and the world and live righteous lives.

TODAY I'll start with a quick follow up of last week, then we'll talk about God's Will.

FOLLOW UP: ***an empowered free will action is to choose to present ourselves to Jesus, and not to try and climb our way out of the pits we dug for ourselves.***

**CHRIST IS GREATER THAN US, OUR SELF-CONTROL (OR LACK THEREOF), OUR TEMPTATIONS, OUR SINS, OUR ADDICTIONS, OUR INSECURITIES, OUR TRAUMA, NATURE, AND NURTURE.**

**Consider an addict.** If they truly want to overcome that which enslaves them, they must choose to present themselves to a program more powerful than they are. They cannot simply choose to flush the drugs down the toilet and try to avoid further access to the same. There won't be enough less harmful vices or activities to fill the void. Eventually they will fall.

OVERCOME. Likewise, you and I must choose to present ourselves to Christ to overcome our own issues. We go to Him, confess everything & repent, and ask Him to empower us with His Grace! After doing so, we'll find ourselves enabled to make better individual choices to avoid temptation. Remember: **SELF-CONTROL IS A FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, and not an act of DISCIPLINE! WE NEED GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT TO HELP US CONTROL OURSELVES.**

TODAY: GOD'S WILL. God's will supersedes everything.

- It's above nature and nurture.
- It's greater than this world and the plans of the devil.
- It's enthroned above our needs, insecurities, and circumstances.
- It never compromises with sin, evil, or us.

INDIVIDUAL WILL. I hear my fellow Christians often saying they don't know what God's will is, and the context is individualistic—in other words, most say they don't know what He wants for THEIR life.

### **I have 2 things to say in response to that:**

- ***We must first know what God's overall will is and this is in the Bible.*** When we know this, we are led by God's Spirit and the Scriptures to zero into what He wants for us.
- ***We need to stop being obsessed with ourselves.*** We were born again to live for God and not the other way around. We're not the central figure of faith, Jesus is. His plan, His will, His desire, the way He wants to mold us should be #1. We present ourselves to Him, He doesn't present Himself to us.

2 CATEGORIES. Let's break down the will of God into 2 categories: unbelievers and believers.

7 BILLION. There are about 7 billion people in the world, and statistics seem to indicate that a little over 2 billion "practice some form of Christianity." Just for the sake of simplicity, let's say that only 1 billion are truly Saved. That still leaves 6 billion unbelievers, the majority of the population.

Here is the will of God for unbelievers:

### **2 Peter 3:8-10 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing [willing] that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.**

<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a

roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

2<sup>ND</sup> COMING. The context is the Second Coming of Jesus and Peter is telling his church that, when the Lord appears in the clouds, it will be too late for anyone to be Saved. Anyone who has rejected the Saving Grace of Christ will perish eternally as the Lord will be remaking everything to be on earth as it is in heaven.

**God's will is that all unbelievers be Saved.**

Now fine tune that down to you: *it is the will of God that your relationship with unbelievers is to get them Saved.*

- Even if we succeed in convincing unbelievers that low taxes and small government is better, they're still not Saved.
- Even if talk them out of merely living together and to get married, they still don't know Jesus.
- Even if we show them to be more kind and giving, if they haven't repented of their sins and asked Father God's forgiveness, they aren't in the Kingdom.

Following God's will isn't merely to "love them" [unbelievers]. It's not just to be a good example of Christian living.

*It's to speak the words of the Gospel—the old time word is "preach."* The Gospel is shared by preaching it to others. Faith comes by hearing God's word spoken from human lips, not by mowing someone's lawn or giving them money when they need it.

**Words are more powerful than actions.** Yes, they are. The Sword of the Spirit is the most powerful weapon ever created, and the Sword is the spoken Word of God.

- Billions of people on social media where words are primarily shared, not actions and look at the effect it has.
- People pay psychiatrists hundreds of dollars an hour to speak and hear words.
- People get together mainly to talk, even if they're performing some action at the time.
- News media is incredibly powerful as are political pulpits—all of where words are spoken and millions are manipulated.

**The greatest form of love a believer can express to an unbeliever is to verbally share the Gospel.**

**You can “do” all kinds of nice things for them for years, but if they don’t believe, they will perish eternally.**

Which would you rather have: *an unbeliever whose uncomfortable to be around you because they’re afraid you’re going to “shove your religion down their throat” or one who feels secure around you because you never bring it up?*

JUDGMENT. When you & I stand at judgment, which one will Jesus applaud?

- Not everyone has to like us, including our family members.
- If others are uncomfortable around us because we’re unafraid of saying Jesus’ Name as a blessing instead of a curse word, that’s the way it ought to be.
- If we openly talk about the Lord as He were a living and active part of our life, we’re setting a great example to others.
- If we’re calling upon people to be Saved, we’re doing God’s will.

RICH MAN VS LAZARUS. Remember the rich man who finds himself in Hell in Luke 16: once there he pleads with Abraham to send Lazarus back up to the surface (a resurrection) to tell his brothers to believe so they won’t end up in that place. If Abe had done so, Lazarus wouldn’t have gone back to be nice to them—he would urged them with words to believe. Abraham’s actual answer was “they should have believed Moses and the Prophets.” In other words, they could have had faith if they had heard God’s Word.

APOSTLES CHARITY. The Apostles and 1<sup>st</sup> century believers performed many acts of loving charity such as giving food, clothing, lands, possessions, and money to the poor...and those *poor were believers*. New converts who had already received Jesus as their Savior. The Apostles verbally shared the Gospel first, then gave of what they had to take care of physical needs.

### **1 Timothy 2:3-4 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,

<sup>4</sup> who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

**Now let’s move to believers**—what is God’s will for us? I repeat: knowing His overall will answers MANY questions believers have about what He wants for us individually.

### **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us **how you ought to walk and to please God**, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

<sup>2</sup> For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

<sup>3</sup> **For this is the will of God, your sanctification**: that you abstain from sexual immorality;

<sup>4</sup> that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor,  
<sup>5</sup> not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;  
<sup>6</sup> that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

**<sup>7</sup> For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.**

***<sup>8</sup> Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.***

SANCTIFICATION. The Greek word sanctification translates to: “holiness, purification,” and the latter word is a verb. Therefore it applies as both a state of being and action: it’s something we both pursue continually and are.

**God is far more concerned with our holiness than He is our happiness.**

***It’s the will of God that, after being Saved, we prioritize living holy lives.***

We separate ourselves from our old sins, bad habits, and ANY lifestyle that goes against God’s will. What would those things be? Paul mentions a few here: everything God, in His Bible, calls sexual immorality. Fornication, adultery, LGBT, incest, pedophilia, etc.

LEGALISM? Maybe we can stop calling this legalism? When another Christian brings things like this up and quotes the same, we can recognize they’re accurately quoting God’s Word—as they should be. If our lifestyles aren’t matching up then maybe our problem is our lack of repentance and not the other Christian being “holier than thou”?

**Look at verse 8:** if we disregard what God’s Word states, we aren’t rebelling against a legalistic pastor or a Christian with their nose stuck up in the air, we’re rebelling against God’s will for our lives.

**Luke 9:23-25 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

<sup>24</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

<sup>25</sup> For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

DENIAL OF SELF. The denial of self that Jesus is referring to is the same as what Paul just said: the passions of the flesh and temptations of the world. Against I ask: who are we presenting ourselves to? Our bodies have sexual passions no matter who you are. God programmed them in there yes, but then nature fell with the curse of Adam and corrupted our God-given desires into something that rebels against His will.

Zero this in on yourself now: ***what is God's will for romance in our lives?*** Does He want me with this person I'm currently dating or someone else? What is His will for me and this person? What if I'm single—what does God want for me?

We just heard it: ***we must avoid sexual impurity which means we aren't sleeping with them until....***

**1 Corinthians 7:1-9 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."

**<sup>2</sup> But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.**

<sup>3</sup> The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.

<sup>4</sup> For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

<sup>5</sup> Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

<sup>6</sup> Now as a concession, not a command, I say this.

<sup>7</sup> I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

<sup>8</sup> To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am.

**<sup>9</sup> But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.**

GET MARRIED. ***If you have sexual passion and seek romance then get married to someone of the opposite sex.*** Paul wishes that more could be like him: a declared celibate who totally dedicated himself to the spreading of God's Kingdom. I'm not like him, so I knew that—as a Christian—God's will for me was sexual purity. Desiring to bow to His will yet wanting to express my passion at the same time, I was FREED to do so by being married, praise God!

**Anything else is against the will of God.**

***What's morally acceptable in modern day western society directly conflicts with God's will for His Church.*** So I ask again: who will we choose to present ourselves to?

KING SOCIETY. If the current trends of society is our King, we'll commit sexual immorality and think very little of it. King Society tells us that fornicating is now far more acceptable than it was 50 years ago and that LGBT is now openly accepted, embraced, and celebrated.

***God's will on sexual purity hasn't changed since the very beginning, not even under the New Covenant, and never will.***

- Who is our King and who are we presenting our bodies—and its passions—to?
- Is society our king or it is Jesus? The question is answered in how we're living.

I repeat: knowing the overall will of God for the Church answers most “what does God want for my life?” questions that Christians ask about themselves as individuals. Our obedience to God's will would weed out a lot of bad apples and trouble in our lives.

### **Ephesians 5:1-18 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

<sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

<sup>3</sup> But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

<sup>4</sup> Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

<sup>5</sup> For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

<sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

<sup>7</sup> Therefore do not become partners with them;

<sup>8</sup> ***for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light***

<sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),

<sup>10</sup> ***and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.***

<sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

<sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.

<sup>13</sup> But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible,

<sup>14</sup> for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

<sup>15</sup> Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,

<sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

<sup>17</sup> **Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**

<sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,

**Starting with verse 17** because Paul says they must understand the will of God. What is it? He just laid it out in verses 1-16, and verse 18.

IMITATE GOD. He starts off by telling us to be imitators of God. Jesus walked in both love and holiness.

**Verse 3** he reminds us not to covet what others have.

**Verse 4:** what comes out of mouths matters and I could preach a whole sermon on that. Jesus didn't say "get your head out of you a#! and repent!" He didn't crack lewd sexual jokes to Mary Magdalene to get her Saved. When He was around thieves, prostitutes, and sinners He never spoke like they do.

## **OUR WORDS NEED TO BE SANCTIFIED.**

***God's overall will to expand His Kingdom here on earth isn't separate from His will for our individual lives—they are one and the same.***

### **Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

SET APART. The majority of the people on this planet—from 5-6 billion—are unsaved. We are to live set apart from them. Not physically like the Amish, but in our bodies and hearts. We aren't to be living and talking like they do, not living their lifestyles, nor pursuing the same things they are. The Lord has empowered us to do this.

Let's be imitators of Christ. Let's follow our Good Shepherd Who leads us in paths of righteousness.

We're sons and daughters of God our Father, citizens & heirs of His Kingdom. Let God's will be done in our lives just as it is in Heaven!



