

GOD'S WILL FOR ALL PEOPLE

“Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God... Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.” —1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-2

We would be hard pressed to find a Christian who has experienced the personal will of God and not claimed it to be the pinnacle of their lives. What is more, it is ongoing. God has a plan, unique to each of us, but we must first appropriate God's general will for all people into our lives. So the big question is: What is God's will for all people?

There are four statements in Scripture that are explicitly God's will for all people. Firstly, “It is God's will that you should be sanctified” (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Some translations use the word ‘holy’, and in this context, Paul refers to sexual immorality. We are to control our bodies in a way that is holy and honourable. We cannot engage in, much less justify, sexual immorality of any kind if we are to experience God's personal will for us.

Secondly, “Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (5:18). Giving thanks is not a matter of simply being polite, but of expressing dependency on God. “All circumstances” include hardships, however severe, in which we acknowledge Jesus is sufficient in them and give thanks for His presence. A genuine mark of people living in the will of God is that everything they do is in the name of Jesus, and in all circumstances, good and bad, they give thanks.

Thirdly, “Submit yourself for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men... for it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men” (1 Peter 2:13-15). The principle of authority is God ordained, and the will of God functions in submission to authority. There may be times we are called to obey God rather than men, but when we do, we must also be willing to take the consequences which governing authority imposes. Paul was an expert in this and never complained.

Fourthly, “Those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good” (1 Peter 4:19). Suffering is part of life and within the will of God for us. In fact, it is often in our suffering that God does His best work in our lives, and when we continue to do good in these times, the outcome is always for the advancement of God’s agenda and purpose.

Being holy, giving thanks in all circumstances, submitting to authority and in suffering continue to do good is God’s will for all of us. With this in place and being filled with the Spirit, doors will open for us and continue to open.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I can’t imagine anything greater than experiencing your personal will in my life. Thank You for letting us know how that may become a reality.

TO REFLECT UPON: In which of the four areas do I have the most difficulty in keeping God’s will for all people?