

What are you doing after church? Eating? Watching a game? Napping? Have you talked to God about it? Should you? What about the rest of your life? What are you doing with that? Have you figured it out? Have you asked God about it? Should you? Whether it's the afternoon or God's purpose for our lives, if we believe Jesus is enough, we want to live a life pleasing to him and in accordance with his will. But is that possible and, if so, what does it look like?

We are a church whose mission is *calling each other to live out our God given purpose in Christ*. Clearly, we believe God does indeed have a plan for our lives. But for some of us, we think God is so big he doesn't get involved in the details, so it's basically a guessing game. For others, we believe God is so involved in the details that he has mapped out every second of your life, so we tiptoe along, fearfully hoping we get it right. Are either of those reality, or is there an alternative? We may believe Jesus is enough. But do we have enough to live in a way pleasing to him?

This morning we continue in our series in Colossians called *Enough*. This young church was being infiltrated with false ideas about Jesus' supremacy and sufficiency, and we started last week with Paul's introduction that showed us the Jesus we know is enough, the Gospel we have believed is enough, and the change in our lives is enough. Today, Paul will show us how to live in light of those glorious truths. So, to begin, let me answer the big question.

God's will is knowable and doable. God's will includes his gracious direction for our lives, and he provides all we need (enough!), to understand it and live it out.

[Colossians 1:9-10] ⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

These false teachers in Colossae were teaching a secret spirituality that was reserved for a select few. It was based on a secret knowledge of God and was the beginnings of what we know as Gnosticism, which wreaked havoc on the church in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. It suggested that, unless you were filled with this secret knowledge, you couldn't live your life fully for God. But since God has fully revealed himself in Christ, that revelation is enough for us to know him, his will, and his purpose for our lives.

What do we mean when we say "God's will". We rightly associate it with our behavior, but it goes beyond that. God's will first includes his Kingdom program, establishing his rule and reign over all creation. It also includes our formation. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, "For this is the will of God: your sanctification." God's will is that you become more and more like Jesus. In fact, I'd say he's more concerned about who you are becoming than what you do because who you are determines how you live. Finally, it's our actions and decisions in our daily lives.

How do we get to know what God's will is? In V9, Paul prays for the Colossians to be *filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*. He's asking for a deep understanding of the will of God and the practical know-how to apply it. He's praying we take the unchanging principles of God to the ever-changing circumstances of our lives. Is it just deposited in us? Do we make a good guess? No. The key word Paul uses is "spiritual". This is a

wisdom and knowledge revealed in Christ and given to us by the Holy Spirit. He works in our heads and hearts to reveal this to us and illuminates Scripture for us to understand it and apply it to our lives. The false teachers are saying it's special revelation for a few. But Paul is saying, throughout the entire book, that we have access to the full knowledge of God, which means we have enough to live for God.

But for that to happen, two things need to be true. We must want it, and we must be in a posture to receive it. Understanding means accountability. I've known a few that believe ignorance gives us an excuse. It doesn't. God has made it available and is inviting you to get it. A lack of desire is disobedience. We also have to be in the right posture. You see that we "are filled". That is a passive verb. God is the one doing the filling. Imagine trying to fill a glass with water with the person moving around constantly. It's not until that person's hand is still that the glass can be filled. It's the same with God. We have to be still long enough for him to do it. We do that by abiding in God, practicing the spiritual disciplines of prayer, studying his Word, silence and solitude, fasting to sharpen our dependence and senses, and confession (you won't hear from God if you have unsettled business between you two). **If you want to know the will of God, you have to sit at his feet to receive it.** Too many of us say "I just want to know God's will for my life", but we don't take the time to access what God has made available.

So what does he reveal? We hear "God's will" and many of us immediately go to this idea of him mapping every step. Does God's will include that at times? Yes. Look at Scripture. Many characters receive clear, specific direction from God. Abram, Moses, Joshua, Jesus, Peter. I believe God was very explicit when he asked me to step out of the business world and into vocational ministry. We are about to have dozens of our people in Next90, asking God what he's up to these next 90 days and how we can join him in it. I know a guy who recently quit his job but did so after a long season of prayer, asking God to give him his wisdom. But if we always want a moment-by-moment revelation, that often comes from a place of fear, not faith, and it turns into bondage. That is the last place God wants us to be. So think about this...

What happens when we sit still with the Lord for him to fill us up and do his work in us? It results not just in revelation but in transformation. He changes our character, our hearts, our affections, our desires, **our will**. As we are transformed to become more like Jesus, we begin to think and desire like Jesus. I think about my marriage to Martha. We don't have to give each other a daily written list that says, "Here's my will for our marriage today." We have a desire to please one another and have known, loved, and walked together intimately for 21 years. We are probably going to do well by the other. When we choose to follow Jesus, we will go to the places he goes, walk in the steps he walks, do the things he does, *because he has remade us to do those things*. **If we stay close to the God who wills, there's a high likelihood we will be in God's will.**

That means God's will is often more about boundaries than steps. Do you realize the freedom he gives us? Does God approve of only one place for you to go eat today? No, but he does care that you steward your finances well and not use food an idol. Does God care about what lane you drive in to work? Well, actually he does. The lost 11th commandment is "Thou shalt not drive slowly in the left lane." But, he is more concerned with your attitude and courteousness when you drive.

Look, if you have any decision to make, praying to God and asking him for wisdom and guidance is always a good thing. He has given you his Counselor. Who to marry, what job to take, where to live, how to handle finances, what your God given purpose is, yes, God has insight and direction about those and he wants you to seek him in prayer. But a daily life lived intimately with him, with a desire to please him, is usually lived within his will.

So, do we pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and go do God's will. NO! God's will is knowable and doable, but for that to happen, **God's power is essential.** We can't do this alone.

[Colossians 1:11-14] 11 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Let's start at the end. The only reason we can have this conversation about a life pleasing to the Lord is because of what he has done to make that possible. Every one of us was born in the dominion of darkness, incapable of pleasing God, and dead in our sins. But through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, deliverance was made possible, and when we put our trust in him, we get credit for his life, we let him pay for our sins, and we are brought into new life, a right relationship with God, and the capacity to live a life pleasing to him. That's all possible because Jesus is enough.

If you are thinking "There's no way I can please God because I've just done too much wrong already", think again. You cannot out-sin the grace of God. There is nothing you can do that Jesus' sacrifice can't overcome. Specifically, this past Sunday was Sanctity of Life Sunday, and this week was the March for Life in Washington, DC. Here at Fellowship, we believe life begins at conception. That's not a political statement. It's a biblical one. Some of you have mistakes in your past in this area that you think are unforgivable. Let me tell you that God loves you, Jesus' work on the cross is sufficient to pay for that, and God extends you forgiveness. He does not condemn you, and neither do we. If you have that as part of your past and need help, we have resources at our Connecting Center and we have a staff who would love to talk with you about it. Don't go through this alone. We are here for you, and we are with you.

Additionally, a recent survey says that over 70% of Christian women would be afraid to talk with their pastor if they had an unplanned pregnancy. It breaks my heart. Know that I have no condemnation for you. I have grace and truth, and I want to help you. Don't keep it a secret. Don't distance from your church family. Let us walk with you in that. The life you carry is infinitely precious to God, and so are you.

No matter your story, Jesus is enough. He qualifies us to be part of his Kingdom and live life with and for God. But we need help to see it through. Paul prays for God's power to enable us to endure patiently. We have our "anti-God's will desires" called the flesh, the devil who wants to take us out, living in the domain of darkness, persecution...all of these influences will attempt to push us away from God. God's power is like fuel to a car and the GPS system that propels and

directs us. If you try to do this in your own power, and I often do, it won't go well. But God's power is enough for us to remain faithful. **You can do it because he will do it.**

Abide. The best thing you can do to fulfill God's will is to know the God who wills it. We don't live a life pleasing to God by accident. We live it because we love him and know him. If you don't know where to start, use a Bible reading plan on your phone app. Read Richard Foster's or Dallas Willard's book on spiritual disciplines. Get in a Life Group or raise your hand and ask for someone to help you with this. God made us to live out our faith in community. You're in an awesome place to do that.

Assess. It is good and right for us to check if we are living in God's will. Covenant Members received a spiritual health reflection this week and we will roll it out to the rest of the church in the months to come. God wants us to see where we are in relation to him. But, from this passage, here's a great check on how you are doing:

Evidence I am in God's will:

Agrees with the leading of the Spirit and Scripture. If you are a follower of Jesus you have his Spirit in you to guide and enable you to live a life pleasing to God. That includes convicting you of your sin. If you are outside of the bounds of God's will, he'll let you know. It will usually be a lack of peace. Listen to him. And God's will always agrees with Scripture. If you want to know his will, know his Word.

Bears spiritual fruit. If you are loving God and loving others, you're probably on the right track. If you see the evidence of the Spirit working in and through your life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control, be encouraged.

Knows God more. If all this comes from an intimate relationship with God, knowing him more and more is evidence you are living a life pleasing to him. If you are far from God, it will be hard to get to know him. If you are close to God, it will be hard not to.

We can check those things individually, but I'd really encourage you to invite others to assess with you. God gives us one another to spur us on in our walk, and sometimes their perspective is more accurate than our own. Ask someone "Do you see evidence of the Spirit's work in my life?" Then take their answer to heart. It's a gift from God. And if you find you are not walking well, God has no condemnation for you. He wants to show you what is missing to draw you back to himself and lead you in the life he has for you.

Advance. It is for freedom's sake that Christ has set you free. God wants you to live a free and abundant life. If you are walking with him and seeking to know him more intimately, go forward in faith that you are living a life pleasing to him.

God's will is an invitation, not a minefield. We don't have to be afraid of it. We should desire it. Because that's where we find him, his purpose for our lives, and the joy that only he makes possible. And so I pray *that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, in the name of the one who is enough. Amen.*