

Finding God's Will for Your Life

Sunday Morning – 14JUL13

INTRODUCTION:

- Uncertainties, fear and impatience about the future are all a normal part of teenage life. The most common decisions facing Christian teenagers are salvation, marriage and career.¹
 - Am I a Christian?
 - Do I live my parent's faith or my own?
 - Do I worship God because I want to or because I'm forced/expected to?
 - What career will I choose?
 - Where should I go to college?
 - Should I go to college?
 - Am I a loser if I *don't* go to college!?
 - Where will I work?
 - Marriage
 - When will I marry?
 - Will I ever get a girlfriend?
 - Am I going to be a nerd forever?
 - What is it like to kiss a girl?
- This is coupled with the Biblical concept that God has a plan for your life
 - **Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.**
- How do you go about answering these three big questions (above), and be faithful to what God's plan for your life is at the same time?
 - We'll look at a passage of Scripture to see the big picture of God's plan for our lives, then delve into particulars after.

1 THESSALONIANS 4

God's Universal Will

- Paul is writing to a church he dearly loves. He has absolutely nothing bad to say about these folks
 - He gives thanks for them and prays for them regularly (1 Thess 1:2)

¹ Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, *Handbook on Counseling Youth* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1996), 495.

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- He remembers how *joyfully* they received the Gospel
 - **1 Thess 1:5a For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance**
- They became Christians in the midst of persecution and afflictions, and were a faithful witness for Christ for doing so (1 Thess 1:6-7)
- Their testimony of faithfulness and love for God has gone abroad everywhere!
 - **1 Thessalonians 1:8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.**

1:9	For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;
1:10	And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

- This is the testimony that Paul gives thanks for. This is what the Christian's focus in this life should be, in a nutshell
 - *For they themselves shew of us . . .*
 - Something about their testimony is communicated to Paul that makes him very happy
 - What is it?
 - *. . . how ye turned to God from idols . . .*
 - They served God instead of something else. They were living for Him in a real, authentic way. They were on fire for God
 - This is what real salvation is – a conscious decision to turn *from sin* and *to God*.²
 - What is their motivation?
 - *. . . to wait for his Son from heaven . . .*
 - We strive to imitate God to the best of our ability, while waiting for His return for us!

² D. Michael Martin, 1, 2 *Thessalonians*, vol. 33, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 64. "Conversion is pictured here as a willful act of turning from one path and proceeding in another direction."

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- The Holy Spirit is a down payment on the promise of glorification and eternity with God!
 - **Eph 1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.**
 - **Eph 1:14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.**
- What has this God done for us in this salvation?
 - . . . *which delivered us from the wrath to come.*
 - Saved by grace
- Before we start worrying about God's will for our own individual lives, we need to make sure we're fulfilling our basic responsibility as a Christian first!
 - 1 Thess 1:9-10 is that responsibility in a nutshell.
 - Serve God faithfully while waiting for Christ's return

2:11	As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,
2:12	That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

- Paul reminded his readers that he preached a true Gospel, didn't seek his own glory and taught them about Christ with the care of a loving parent
 - **1 Thes 2:7-8: ⁷ But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: ⁸ So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.**
- He reminds them of their responsibility
 - Walk worthy of God
 - *Why?*
 - Because He has "called you unto his kingdom and glory."
- This is the most basic responsibility for every Christian, no matter where they're from, where they live or what job they do
 - This is God's universal command to all Christians

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- “The appeal to lead lives worthy of God is the highest of all for those who have tasted God’s grace in salvation.”³
- This entails submission to God in all areas of life (e.g. sexual purity, obedience to parents, Lordship of Christ in your life, your testimony before the world, etc.)
- If you don’t care to work on this, you have far larger issues
- God’s specific will for your life is contingent on His universal will⁴
 - Young lady - If you don’t care about your basic responsibility as a Christian, you’re wasting your time praying for God to choose a boyfriend or husband!
 - Young man - If you don’t care about your responsibilities as a Christian, you’re wasting your time praying about college and career!
 - “However, the young person who *is* responding obediently to God’s universal will . . . can then begin to seek God’s will that relates specifically to him or her.”⁵

God’s Specific Will

3:11	Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.
3:12	And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you
3:13	To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints

- Paul has been trying to come back to Thessalonica for a while
 - **1 Thessalonians 2:18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.**
 - **1 Thessalonians 3:1-2: ¹ Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; ² And sent Timotheus, our**

³ Thomas L. Constable, *1 Thessalonians*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 695.

⁴ Very indebted to McDowell and Hostetler, *Handbook*, 497-498 for their observations on this point.

⁵ *Ibid*, 498.

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brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

- He hasn't been *able* to get there
- He is still *trying* to get there
- He is *praying* that God may direct them there
- He *doesn't know* if God wants it to happen
- Meanwhile, he *remains busy* about his work, trusting God to work out His will for the situation
- Lessons we can draw from Paul's letter on finding God's specific will
 - God reveals one step at a time – not in a PDF instruction booklet.
 - *EX: I never would have known I'd end up where God put me today when I was 18.*
 - God's providential hand in your life will not be obvious until much later
 - Model for decision making
 - Scripture
 - Prayer
 - Counsel
 - Do what you think is best
 - Adversity is part of life – without it we wouldn't learn to trust God more (Jas 1:2-3). It doesn't mean we are out of God's will!
 - *Married young, overseas, first child, etc.*
 - Like Paul, we need to serve God faithfully day by day and make the best decisions we can about serious matters, trusting God to work out His plan along the way. He *will* do it.
 - *Marriage, career, call to the ministry, etc.*