
Living in the Perfect Will of God

By David Wilkerson

March 23, 2009 We Christians struggle so hard to find the will of God for our lives. Once we believe we've found his will for us, we labor hard to see it fulfilled in our lives.

I am convinced this struggle to find God's will — to live in it, walk in it and see its fulfillment — can become our greatest battle. And the battle intensifies whenever we find ourselves in dire circumstances.

Many Christians simply cannot accept where they are right now. Their lives are burdened down by serious problems. For some the burden is a lingering sickness. For others it is an unsaved loved one. And now for increasing numbers the battle is a financial crisis. Very few Christians accept that such burdens could possibly be a part of God's perfect will for their lives.

Recently several people have written to me asking why I preach so many messages about the troubles and afflictions of those in the body of Christ. Evidently, the writers of these letters are not among those who need a healing word from the Lord.

Yet the truth is that multitudes of God's precious children are facing difficult times. And they are bewildered because they can't comprehend why the Lord allows such awful trials to continue. Many of these saints compound their agony by convincing themselves they've done something to place themselves outside of God's will.

America and other nations are right now under the wrath of God Almighty. No one alive today can doubt we are facing hardships and perils such as have never been experienced on earth. As Christians, we believe that during such times the church of Jesus Christ rises to its finest hour. We preach that our lives are to be beacons of hope in the midst of great upheaval, proving Christ's ability to keep his people in all circumstances. And we exhort each other toward faith, hope and the laying hold of God's promises.

For my part, I have sent out message after message encouraging faith and steadfastness in the midst of trying times. And I have warned of the consequences of unbelief during such times. Many Christians have responded, writing they have been helped and encouraged in their faith.

As a preacher of the gospel, I know that all sustaining faith and hope must have a foundational truth upon which to grow. What is this foundational truth? Simply this: *I must know and believe I am in God's perfect will — right now, right where I am, in this present time and place.*

Simply put, no matter the condition I find myself in — whether I'm walking in sunshine or suffering, whether I'm rich or poor, sick or healthy, in prison or free — I am to believe I'm in the center of God's perfect will for my life. I embrace that my steps have been ordered of the Lord.

I personally identify with Paul: In whatever state I find myself, I am content. I thank God for the example of Paul. This faithful apostle knew how to abound in blessings and yet also rejoice in times of adversity. No matter his outward condition, no matter how pressing his circumstances, Paul always knew he was in the center of God's perfect will.

Paul wrote many of his epistles to the churches while locked up in a cramped prison cell, bound, despised, cut off from believers and seemingly from all ministry. Talk about painful life conditions. Yet

Paul never spoke of being a prisoner of his circumstances. Instead, he called himself “a prisoner of Christ.”

In his epistle to the Colossians, Paul stated his desire for all saints who suffer:

“That you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Colossians 1:9–11).

Amazingly, Paul wrote these words of hope and exhortation while in prison. In fact, they were a product of his longest imprisonment, probably in Caesarea. When Paul penned these words he had no hope of being released. As far as he knew, he could have been there for years, possibly the rest of his days.

It is clear Paul had made peace with his painful circumstances. Nowhere in this letter do we find Paul questioning the Lord. The apostle had entered into a full spiritual understanding of God’s will. And he had embraced his circumstances as the Lord’s will for his life at that moment. Therefore Paul wrote triumphantly to the Colossians, “Oh, that you would come into this full spiritual understanding of God’s will for you.”

Can you imagine it? Here was Paul in utter captivity, lacking freedom of any kind. Yet he spoke of “walking worthy of the Lord...all pleasing to the Lord, being fruitful in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of the Lord.”

At that time, many in the church who knew of Paul’s situation pitied him. They thought his usefulness to the Lord had come to an end. They saw Paul as being cut off in his prime, helpless to do anything to advance the kingdom of God. Yet in reality Paul was increasing in all spiritual knowledge, life and truth.

Not long ago, a wonderful young Christian unburdened his great anxiety to me. He said, “I feel a calling from the Lord to work with youth and children. But all doors to ministry just keep shutting to me. I pray for other doors to open, but God doesn’t seem to hear my cry. I feel so useless, boxed in by my circumstances.

“The only ministry I do now is once a week. I help out with an outreach in one of our slum areas. I serve as a big brother to a preacher’s son because his dad is very sick. But that’s all I’m doing. I have to believe God has more for me.”

When I heard this, I told the young man, “I want you to understand something. What you are doing right now is more precious to the Lord than if you were preaching to thousands in some stadium. Usefulness to him has nothing to do with numbers.

“You are playing a part in saving that preacher’s son. Go and be a friend to those few slum kids God has given you. Be satisfied in this time and place. And know you are living in God’s perfect will because you’re being faithful in the little things.”

Tell me, Christian: Have you made peace with your present situation? Can you trust that God is doing his perfect work in you through every circumstance? If you can’t, you will grow restless, hopeless and

eventually mad at God. You'll become bitter and hard.

Peter writes, "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator" (1 Peter 4:19). Likewise, Paul instructs, "In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Living in the perfect will of God can lead to "troubles on every side." Paul writes, "We are troubled on every side...perplexed...persecuted...cast down, yet not distressed, not in despair, not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

"Trouble on every side" — can you identify with this phrase? It may be what you are experiencing in life right now. Perhaps you're facing physical pain, marital distress, financial problems, concerns for your children. Life can be totally overwhelming at times.

The fact is it's possible to be in God's perfect will and still be cast down at times. We can walk in the very center of his will and still be perplexed, troubled and persecuted.

Some Christians have been troubled on every side for so long they think, "This cannot be of God. It's all too much to endure. My suffering and testing have gone on for too long. I feel utterly abandoned in my trials. The Lord must be chastening me for past sins. There's no other explanation."

Paul lays before us three wonderful truths he clung to that kept him from despairing:

1. "Though our outward man perishes, our inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). Hear the truth Paul is declaring to us:

"Yes, all of these many troubles and trials have worn down my outward body. My flesh is indeed slowing down. But, at the same time, something wonderful is happening in my soul. All of these things are working together for good in me. I am growing in my knowledge of the Lord and his ways."

Paul knew he was living in God's perfect will. He realized all his trials weren't happening because he was under wrath. On the contrary, Paul knew more deeply than ever he was greatly loved by the Lord.

In short, Paul had embraced his present condition. And now he was learning patience: "You have need of patience after you have done the will of God...that you might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36).

2. Paul took his eyes off what is temporal and instead focused on what is eternal. Consider Paul's words:

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Paul is telling us, "Get your eyes off your troubles. Don't focus on the things that are coming upon the earth. *They're all going to pass away.* Your problems and troubles mean nothing in light of the eternal glory awaiting the people of God. One moment into his paradise you won't remember any of it."

It is written of Christ, “He endured the cross, despising the shame...for the joy set before him” (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus himself said, “When you see these things coming, look up and rejoice! It all means your day of redemption is at hand” (Luke 21:28).

3. According to Paul, when there is “trouble on all sides” — when darkness and uncertainty are closing in — God commands a marvelous light to shine in our hearts. Paul is speaking here of a glorious manifestation of *the knowledge of the glory of Christ* that comes to us in our trials:

“For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light [revelation] of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). Paul is describing nothing less than a fresh revelation of the glory of God *in the person of Christ*.

When Paul received this revelation, he was in prison and penniless. Yet suddenly his life changed. Even though he subsisted on lowly prison food, he was made alive by the fresh revelation of the glory of Christ he received daily.

Paul did not accuse God of chastening him during this time. He never doubted God’s will. Why? Heaven had opened to him. As Paul beheld the glory of Christ, he was being changed daily by what he saw, “from glory to glory” (3:18).

What is the glory of Christ, and how can we behold it? The very thought of the glory of Christ is overwhelming. It has been described as the power and majesty of the Lord, his authority and splendor, the great I AM.

The problem is I cannot fathom any of these things. My human mind is simply incapable of grasping such greatness.

In recent weeks I have asked the Lord to anchor my heart in this time of evil tidings. I’ve sought him for a word that would give me peace amid all the unnerving bad news.

I heard the Holy Spirit whisper, “David, behold the glory of Christ. That is what will keep you anchored in peace.”

“Thank you, Lord,” I prayed. “But what is really the glory of Christ?”

To me, his glory comes down to something I need and understand: loving kindness. This is more than just Christ’s kindness. It is his *loving* kindness — then it is his *tender* loving kindness.

This may be but one facet of his glory. But it is how we need to see Christ — the exact likeness of the heavenly Father, who is caring, tender, loving and kind to his children.

Paul beheld Christ’s glory every morning. This much-afflicted servant of God woke up on many days deeply troubled. There were countless times when he was cast down and perplexed. But Paul stirred his soul to look up so he might behold the glory of Christ — meaning, the mercy and loving kindness of the person of Christ. As Paul did this, the Holy Spirit renewed him with strength to face each day.

Jeremiah wrote this prophecy: “Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight” (Jeremiah 9:24).

Note the very first item in this list of things God delights in: loving kindness. His message to us is clear: *We are called to glory in his loving kindness.*

David testified in the Psalms, “All the waves and the billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his *loving kindness* in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life” (Psalm 42:7–8, my italics).

If Jesus Christ is your Lord, he has commanded the light of his loving kindness to shine in your soul. This glory of Christ — this tender, loving kindness that shines in our hearts as we pray and search his Word — changes us, “from glory to glory,” into the likeness of Christ. And the revelation of love, compassion and caring we receive from him must shine out of us to others.

This revelation is increased daily within us “by the Spirit of the Lord.” Indeed, it is the Holy Spirit who leads us into the glory of Christ. The Spirit does the shining in us and the changing in us through every circumstance. Finally, he shows us how to shine his caring, loving kindness to others who are in need.

I ask you: What are your present circumstances doing to you and in you? Is there a sweetness of Christ shining out of you? Do you ask the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see the pains and needs of others? That is the changing that Paul says takes place in us by the Spirit of God.

Only those who are at rest in the perfect will of God can trust that “all things are working together for good” in the worst of circumstances. So, dear saint, lift up your head and testify to yourself, to heaven and to your circumstances: “I am living in the perfect will of God, come what may.” *Amen!*