

# GOD'S WILL IN MY LIFE.

## Part 2: The power and the parameter of life.

In *John 4* we read of Jesus' encounter with a woman of Samaria. Jesus had left Judea and was returning to Galilee, via Samaria, a long and tiring journey across difficult country, and the Bible indicates that on arriving at Jacob's well outside the city of Sychar, He was tired, hungry and thirsty. However, an event took place at this well that not only caused Jesus to forget His immediate needs, but supernaturally replenished His strength and energy.

The disciples left Jesus sitting by the well as they went into the city to buy food. In the meantime, along comes a Samaritan woman to draw up some water and Jesus said to her "*Will you give me a drink?*" It's clear from the narrative that Jesus' ultimate purpose in asking for a drink wasn't so much to satisfy His thirst, but to engage the woman in conversation with a view to ministering to her deep spiritual need. As the conversation progressed, Jesus began to probe the depths of her soul with revelation knowledge given to Him by the Holy Spirit. He addressed her deep hunger for spiritual reality and spoke of the living water of everlasting life which only He could give. He dealt compassionately but firmly with the immoral life she was leading, and directed her attention beyond religious externals to the one thing that really mattered, a relationship with God the Father.

Throughout the conversation the woman's attitude was gradually changing; from one of cultural hostility and defensive pride to curiosity, and then conviction, and finally faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

At this point the disciples returned and found Jesus concluding His conversation with this Samaritan woman. Realising just how hungry He must have been, they urged Him to eat some of the food they'd bought in the city. But Jesus showed no interest in the food, He wasn't hungry anymore, and He said to them "*I have food to eat that you know nothing about.*" The disciples were bewildered and said to each other, "*Could someone have brought Him food?*" Jesus responded by teaching them a foundational principle of living and ministering in the will of God:

*John 4:34-38: "My food", said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do not say, "Four months more and then the harvest" I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying "One sows and another reaps" is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour"*

Jesus declared that to do God's will, and to complete God's work was His food, His nourishment and His strength. He then went on to describe what the will and work of God was, not only for Himself, but for disciples of all generations – reaping the harvest of the earth, gathering fruit for eternal life and proclaiming the salvation of God to all people and all nations. Living and ministering in the will of God releases supernatural strength and power in our lives in all three dimensions; spirit, soul and body.

All through the Bible, living and ministering in the will of God is linked with special manifestations of God's grace; endowments of power, wisdom, strength, knowledge and ability. For example; in Acts 1:8, Jesus promised His disciples that they'd receive supernatural power when the Holy Spirit came upon them; but that power was inseparably linked to the contingent upon them being Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. As long as they walked in God's will, going everywhere and preaching the Word, the Lord worked with them in mighty power. How tragic is it

that the church descended into apostasy and lost the spiritual ability to preach the Word, so that even today the church is only just recovering from this downward spiral.

God's power is given to us for the express purpose of accomplishing His will, therefore, we'll only see the full release of His power as we learn to live and minister in His will; God's power works within the framework of God's will. Paul illustrated this truth in a much quoted, but largely misunderstood verse:

*Philippians 4:13: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength".*

Far too many believers have taken this to mean, "I can do everything I want to do through Christ"; but that's a very humanistic perversion of God's Word.

Paul was in prison; his life was at stake; he was experiencing deprivation and hardship; yet in the middle of it all he writes a letter of joy. Here he alludes to the victorious experiences he's been called upon to pass through in the course of serving Jesus,, and in verse 13 he declares "I can face any situation that comes to me in the course of God's will for my life, I can do anything God wants me to do in the service of the Lord Jesus, and the secret of my power is that Christ Himself strengthens me". Paul couldn't claim Christ's strength to do something apart from the revealed will of God. God only empowers that which He authorises! If you want to experience the flow of God's power, get into the mainstream of His will. His will is His Word.

In the Bible, life is likened to a river, be it God's eternal life or natural human life. A river has certain significant features that distinguish it from a lake or ocean; it FLOWS in a certain direction; it follows a definite COURSE; it has an identifiable BEGINNING and END; and its direction and capacity is controlled to a large extent by BANKS. Likewise, our life in Christ is intended by God to FLOW in a certain direction:

*Philippians 3:14: "I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus".*

We are called to follow a definite COURSE:

*1 Peter 2:21: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should following his steps".*

Our life in Christ also has an identifiable BEGINNING:

*Ephesians 1:13: "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit..."*

We also have a glorious END:

*1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven,, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord on the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever".*

In addition, the dimension and direction of our life in Christ is determined by divinely appointed parameters; those being the revealed will and purpose of God for our life in Christ Jesus.

A river without banks ceases to be a river, it becomes a meaningless expanse of water, going nowhere and accomplishing nothing. Likewise, a Christian without divinely appointed parameters in life and ministry is undisciplined, lawless and out of control. Such a person has no firm foundation, no fixed direction and no definite goal, they “...*have planted much, but harvested little*” (*Haggai 1:6*), they expend much energy but bear little fruit.

The will of God is both restricting and releasing. Restricting in the sense that it narrows our options and ultimately leaves us with only one choice; releasing in the sense that God’s way, and God’s way alone, will bring complete fulfilment and perfect satisfaction to your life. In fact Jesus Himself referred to both the restriction and the release that God brings to our lives:

*Matthew 7:13-14: “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it”.*

Two ways of life are contrasted here. One is wide and spacious with plenty of room for doing one’s own thing, which the Bible describes as “...*doing that which is right in his own eyes*”; a person who’s a law unto themselves who fulfils the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Jesus said that this way of life would end in nothing less than total destruction. *Isaiah 53:6* defines sin as “...*going astray, each one turning to his own way*”, and Paul in *Romans 6:23* says that “...*the wages of sin is death*”.

Regretfully, the “...*many who enter through it*” includes both those who outrightly reject the will of God and others who accept God’s will but try to accomplish it in their own strength and wisdom.

In sharp contrast, Jesus used the word narrow”, or “confined”, or “hemmed in” to describe God’s way of life; it suggests the picture of a narrow road, winding its way through a mountain range, surrounded or pressed it on both sides by towering cliffs. The will of God is restricting, but the restriction is for our own good. There’s only one way that leads to eternal life and there’s only one way that can produce righteousness, peace and joy.

The all-wise, all-loving Creator alone knows what’s best for His creatures, and true freedom and fulfilment can only be found within the confines of God’s will. Jeremiah illustrated this truth in his declaration to Judah:

*Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

I marvel at the grace of God toward us; but I must never presume upon it!

The first temptation to sin was, in essence, Satan’s challenge to man to live independently of God, but the dream of freedom and fulfilment through self-determination went horribly wrong. Man found himself eternally separated from God, in bondage to the power of sin and a prisoner of darkness. Thank God, Jesus Christ broke the curse by His death on the cross, redeemed us from sin and reconciled us to the Father; but now, having been made alive together with Christ, we must learn to walk in newness of life. Having been set free from sin, we must learn to live in absolute dependence on, and complete obedience

to, the Lord God. Perhaps the greatest challenge that confronts a born-again, Spirit-filled believer, is the discipline of living within the parameters of God's will.

Paul says that every believer needs to learn to abide; that is, to dwell contentedly, within the calling of God upon his or her life (*1 Corinthians 7:17, 24*). God's looking for men and women who are "under authority"; servants who are conscious of and committed to the will of their Master (*Matthew 8:9*). We have the liberty as sons of God, but not the licence to do as we please! May God grant us grace to abide within the calling with which we've been called, that we may live the rest of our time in the flesh not for the lusts of men, but for the will of God (*1 Peter 4:2*).