

GOD'S WILL IN MY LIFE.

Part 3: The seedbed of fruitfulness plus attitude.

Most products work best when used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. This is also very true of life, with respect to God's will and human potential. We can only realise the fullness of our God-given potential as we submit to and embrace the will of God for our own life; the maximum productivity is only possible within the framework of God's revealed will.

Jesus illustrated this principle of truth during His final talk with the disciples on the night of His betrayal. Having concluded the eating of the last supper in the upper room, He began to talk to the disciples about the ministry of the Holy Spirit and their role as witnesses of this New Covenant:

John 15:1-8: "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he trims clean so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

Jesus made it very clear that the father looks for fruitfulness in the lives of His children; indeed, that there are also various degrees of fruitfulness; "fruit", "more fruit" and "much fruit"; and this degree of fruitfulness is commensurate with the degree of our remaining in Christ. But what does it mean to "remain in Christ"? Obviously, the word "remain" speaks of a deep, living union with the Lord Jesus Christ, made possible through the miracle of the new birth and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. But it also indicates an on-going relationship, a day-to-day fellowship and an intimate communion with the Lord, in which we partake of His life and nature and thereby bear the fruit of the Spirit. The word "remain" introduces us to a life of prayer and worship, walking in the Spirit, waiting on the Lord and a dynamic sharing of His resurrection power. More than all this, however, to "remain in Christ" is to live under His Lordship; to be governed and controlled by His Word and His Spirit; to do His will and not our own; to fulfil His plan and purpose in the time given to us on earth. This becomes the seedbed of fruitfulness in life and in ministry. A good seedbed is essential for bearing fruit; it requires hard work, determination and dedication, and God's grace in abundance.

Paul was always conscious of the absolute importance of being in the will of God and of being led by the Spirit as he sought to fulfil God's calling upon his life. He recognised that the full blessing of Christ would only be manifested in his life and ministry as he moved in conjunction with the power of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with the will of God:

Romans 1:9-13: "...God whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong – that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles."

He continues this same theme of ministering in the power of the Spirit and in the will of God in:

Romans 15:29-32: "I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ. I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed."

The anointing of God upon Paul's life functioned so long as he faithfully stayed within the parameters of God's will. One of the grave dangers of exceeding the Word of the Lord and venturing into spheres and places of ministry where God hasn't called us is the potential of being deceived and inheriting a false anointing. Perhaps we'll know of people who've been in this position – maybe even ourselves! We must never presume on the grace or the gifting of God; God's with us just so long as we're with Him in the place of His appointment. God says to us, "I'll set your boundaries..." (Exodus 23:31) and "I'll appoint a place for My people...and will plant them" (2 Samuel 7:10); but if we wilfully step over our God-appointed boundaries and move outside our God-ordained sphere of ministry, we'll find ourselves "running in the flesh" without the Spirit of the Lord. If we persist in our own way, we'll find ourselves both deceiving and being deceived; such a ministry will only produce Ishmaelites; sons of the flesh, it will never please God nor accomplish His purpose

The bottom line of fruitfulness isn't "our" gifts, talents or ability, it's remaining in Christ and being in the will of God. Christians who learn to live, move and have their being in the will of God bear lasting fruit and thereby glorify the Name of the Lord in the earth.

We often think of the will of God as being circumstantial; that is, being in the right place at the right time, and this is certainly true, but, the will of God encompasses much more than just events and appointments. The Bible teaches us that the will of God is firstly an attitude. Throughout the Bible, God deals with attitude before He deals with behaviour, because in the final analysis my attitude dictates my behaviour. Moses is an Old Testament example and Peter a New Testament example.

The classic teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God often referred to as "The Beatitudes" or "The Sermon on the Mount" is a case in point. Jesus spoke about attitudes of humility, Godly sorrow, meekness, righteousness, mercy, purity, restoration and endurance, and then declared that these attitudes would cause us to

behave in such a way that we'd be as salt to the earth and as light to the world. Men would see the good works that proceeded from our Christ-like character and they'd glorify our Father in heaven (*Matthew 5:3-16*).

It's possible to have the right truth but the wrong spirit; to be doing the right thing with the wrong attitude. In seeking to discover and define the will of God for your life it's important to start where God starts; that's with the attitudes of the heart. Jesus put the emphasis where it belonged when He spoke to His disciples in:

Matthew 15:18-19: "...but the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man "unclean". For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."

Psalm 51:6 says that God desires truth in our inward parts. Both Paul and Peter indicate that God's will is that the character of Christ be formed in us (*Galatians 4:19*); that we can be partakers of His divine nature (*2 Peter 1:4*), and that the attitudes which characterised the life of Jesus may be in us to dictate our behaviour (*Philippians 2:1-16*). King David was very aware of God's dealings in his life and of his need for spiritual renewal and attitude adjustment:

Psalm 51:10: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

God's will for you and me is that we be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers (*Romans 8:29*). We're called to be like Jesus in both character and conduct. To paraphrase both Paul and John; "We're to let this attitude be in us which was also in Christ Jesus...to walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us" (*Philippians 2:5*; *Ephesians 5:2*). We're to "...follow His example and do the works He has done" (*John 13:15*; *14:2*). The church in general, and believers individually, are called to be in the world just as Jesus would be if He were here; to act and He'd act and live as He'd live. Paul clearly defines the will of God as being a Christ-like attitude:

1 Thessalonians 5:18: "...give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Thanksgiving and praise; humility and servanthood; faith and perseverance; selflessness and compassion; utter consecration to the Heavenly Father; these are the attitudes which characterised the life and ministry of Jesus, and it's these same attitudes which constitute the will of God for our lives today.

