

## **Part 5: A dedicated life and a renewed mind.**

The Bible reveals two preconditions for knowing God's will, both are found in *Romans 12:1-2*.

First, we're exhorted that in view of and on the basis of the mercies of God, we ought to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God. A wholehearted dedication of my life to God is the only appropriate response I could make to the great mercy He's extended to me through Jesus Christ. This "living sacrifice" is to be presented in the same way as the "whole burnt offering" of the Old Covenant in *Leviticus 1*. It belongs entirely to God – every part is presented to Him – and it's consumed entirely by fire, symbolising the complete sanctification of the sacrifice and its full acceptance by God.

Likewise, our lives – body, soul and spirit – are to be offered to God as spiritual sacrifices. We ought not to hold back any part, but, rather, dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly and completely to Him. Such wholehearted dedication qualifies us for the knowledge of God's will. (But can anyone honestly say that they've done this?)

The Bible tells us that God doesn't share His secrets with just anyone; He doesn't spread His knowledge anywhere and everywhere.

*Psalms 25:14: "The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them."*

*Jeremiah 29:13: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."*

*James 4:8: "Come near to God and he will come near to you."*

Jesus Himself highlights the principle of qualifying for the knowledge of God's will through dedication. He was totally identified with the Father; He was totally committed to the Father. As a result, He could say: *"My teaching isn't mine, but His who sent me...I am in the father, and the Father in me. The words that I speak to you I don't speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does the works."*

The first step in proving what is that good, pleasing and perfect will of God is to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is our spiritual and intelligent service of worship. Unless we make this commitment, we'll never get started in our quest for the knowledge of God. There are no shortcuts and no alternative routes; dedication to God is the beginning of revelation knowledge.

The second prerequisite for knowing God's will is a renewed mind. The great danger that confronts all Christians is conformity to the world through compromise. Having dedicated ourselves to God, we now find our commitment being challenged by the "pattern of this world". If we're going to know and fulfil the will of God in our lives, we'll have to pass this test and overcome the temptation to conform.

*1 John 2:15-17: "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has done – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever."*

We cannot love God and love the world. We cannot walk in both light and darkness at the same time. Purity of heart and holiness of life are prerequisites for seeing God; we can't know God from afar off. To enter into the knowledge of God we must be crucified to the world and the world to us. Separation from the world leads to intimacy with the Father.

*2 Corinthians 6:17-18 & 7:1: "Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."*

The mind is the great battlefield of life. Your behaviour is dictated by your thinking; if you can change your mind, you can change your whole life. This is why the Bible places such an emphasis upon "renewing the mind" with the truth of God's Word. Renewing the mind signifies a complete change of attitude, a whole new set of ideals, a totally new perspective and a completely different focus and pattern of thinking. The word here indicates an ongoing process of renewal which, in turn, initiates an ongoing process of transformation in my life.

God's redemptive purpose in Christ is to renew our thought patterns and attitudes so that they reflect those of His own heart and mind. However, this is a life-long process and is only as effective as our co-operation with the Holy Spirit, by whose power, Paul says, we are changed into the image of Christ from glory to glory (*2 Corinthians 3:18*).

One reason why we fail to prove what's God's will is that we approach Him and His Word with carnal, unrenewed minds. We rationalise truth, and fail to discern the voice of the Spirit because our minds are set on the things of the flesh. Such an approach will never succeed because, as Paul says in *Romans 8:6-7*, "*The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.*"

So, how do we develop a spiritual mind-set? How does the process of renewal actually work?

*Colossians 3:1-3: "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."*

The Christian is to have a mind-set that's heavenly, eternal and spiritual – centred on God and His Word.

*Joshua 1:8: "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*

The Word, as we meditate in it, judges and purifies our motives, transforms our attitudes to be like those of Jesus, filling our minds with the thoughts of God. The Holy Spirit is able to speak to our hearts and reveal secrets of eternal truth. Meditation in God's Word moves us into a position where we can prove what is that good, pleasing and perfect will of God, and in so doing, make our way prosperous and successful.

*Ephesians 6:18: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."*

As Christians, we're called not just to pray, but to pray in the Spirit. In other words, we're to pray Spirit-inspired and Spirit-energised prayers; thereby becoming vehicles for the Spirit's intercession. The Holy Spirit knows the will of God perfectly, and as we pray He guides us into the knowledge and fulfilment of that will.

*Romans 8:26-27: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."*

One aspect of Spirit-filled praying is worthy of special note; praying in other tongues. We've previously seen that speaking with tongues is the initial evidence or expression of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and down through history tongues have continued to be the outstanding feature of the Holy Spirit's outpouring. However, tongues isn't intended by God to be touted about as a badge of spiritual superiority; rather, it's a passport into the supernatural realm of the Holy Spirit. It's a tool of spiritual warfare and it's a gift for edifying the church when accompanied by interpretation, but most of all, it's a means of communication for ministering to God on thanksgiving, praise, worship and intercession.

As Paul points out, when it comes to prayer, our understanding is very limited; many times we know that we need to pray, but we just don't know how to pray or what to pray for. It's to this end that God's ordained speaking in tongues as an aid in prayer and worship. "Tongues" bridges the gap between the natural and the supernatural; it causes us to move from the realm of the flesh into the realm of the Spirit.

As we learn to wait on the Lord and minister to Him in spiritual languages, we'll find the interpretation of our prayer coming back to us from the Holy Spirit, thereby renewing our minds and enlarging our understanding of God's purpose. As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 14, we'll pray in the Spirit and with the understanding, and walk in the light of God's revealed will.