

Que Sera, Sera

When I was just a little girl,
I asked my mother, "What will I be?
Will I be pretty? Will I be rich?"

Here's what she said to me:

Que sera, sera,

Whatever will be, will be.

The future's not ours to see,

Que sera, sera,

What will be, will be.

Sounds like a strange opening for a study of doing God's will but bear with me. I think this is a question the every young boy and girl asks when they take their minds off their toys and such. "What's going to happen to me when I grow up?" A good question. This lesson is my first attempt of putting together my understanding of doing God's will. You all are the "guinea pigs" so to speak in this class - please bear with me while I develop this most important topic.

God's will for us can be divided into two categories - His Decreed Will and His Preceptive Will. It is important for us to know our role in these two categories or we will get stuck in a sort of endless loop of uncertainty and God's instructive discipline - more on His instructive discipline later.

God's Basic Will for the life of every man and woman.

John 6:28-29 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" [29] Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The very first issue we must face is the claim that God has on our lives. We are not our own - we, as sinners, have been purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ¹ - it is God's will that we come to a knowledge of Him and to believe on the Lord - believe on His redemptive work and receive Him as our Lord and Savior. That is the first basic step in doing the will of God - Receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Without our obedience to redemption's call we are sinners bound for hell and can only be the recipients of His Goodness that is designed to call us to repentance.² Jesus' answer to the Jews about doing the works of God was the equivalent to wanting to do His will - to be approved by God as His people. That translates into today as the Christian young man or woman who wants to know what God wants them to do with their life. Today's question the Christian might ask is, "How can I know God's will for my life?" Answer: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior - that's the first step - be sure of your salvation - take that step.

¹ See 1 Cor 6:19, 20.

² See Rom. 2:1 - 4.

God's Decreed Will.

Psalm 139:15-16 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, [16] your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (NIV).

The problem comes when the Christian tries to figure out *the future*. That is God's prerogative. In our passage, the psalmist is marveling at the wonder of his creation within his mother's womb and then inserts this very important bit of information - God has a dossier on us all! Think of it - every day in your life has been set in context with the Sovereign Will of God. God has decreed that certain events will come into our lives - that is His business - not ours. We are not in the future-telling business. One of the most serious offences that the Jew could commit was that of participating in the practice of fortune-telling.³ It is strictly forbidden for more than one reason. First, it is the practice of fortune-telling that brings one into contact with demon activity. Second, it simply is not our business to know God's decreed will for us. That is not to say that we shouldn't prepare for the future. We *are* to be diligent in preparing, for example, for our vocation. We are to study our abilities - prepare in education for a eventual vocation where our abilities are used to the glory of God. The problem comes when we try to circumnavigate the biblical approach and substitute a quick, easy answer to what is supposed to be a life that is dependent on obedience to the precepts of God and steps of trusting Him for direction. But I anticipate the lesson.

There is a practice within Christian circles of saying that one hears the voice of God. It goes something like this: "The Spirit of God led me to (fill in the blanks). Or, "The Lord told me to (fill in the blanks). One noted Bible teacher call this "strapping it on." That is, to lend importance to something a Christian says - he might say "I've prayed about it and I believe it's the Lord's will that we (fill in the blanks). Be careful about this - we are to make decisions after prayer - we are to take responsibility for our actions based on what we learn from God's word as we apply it in our lives - but to "strap on" it is the leading of the Spirit of God, or it is the Lord's will that - - -. There is no biblical basis for that approach. "Strapping on 'It's the Lord's will.'" is just another way of giving weight to what we say - when it's done at the expense of obeying the Lord's precepts, it's just another form of "spiritual" intimidation.

Dr. R. C. Sproul gave an incident out of his own life that might illustrate this business of "strapping it on." Quite a while back in his career he had left a teaching position and was looking for employment. He had five job opportunities - coincidentally, he had five friends who promised to pray for R. C. for God's will in choosing the right job. Well, they all came back with approximately the same comment that they had prayed a lot about R. C.'s decision and the Lord had "spoken" them that such and such a job was the Lord's will. The problem was that none of them had agreed on what was the Lord's will - *they had all named different jobs as the Lord's will for R. C.* As it turned out he chose a sixth job but it serves to illustrate that we really do not know God's decreed will and we must ultimately rely on good judgment based on proper scriptural application and a sound evaluation of our abilities as compared to our job opportunities.

Let's look at another passage:

The Preceptive Will of God.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine

³ Deut. 18:10-11 Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, [11] or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.

Isaiah 8:19 When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

own understanding. [6] In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Notice the flow of action:

1. Trust in the LORD with all your heart.
2. Do not "lean" unto your own understanding.
3. In all your ways (in the home, at school, at work) acknowledge Him.
4. **He shall direct your paths.**

To trust in the LORD covers the whole gamut hearing and obeying the Word of God. We have already covered the first act of obedience - trusting the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. This brings us into relationship with Him - the trusting does not stop there. Maybe we should read the whole context from verse one. " **My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: [2] For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.**" (Proverbs 3:1-2). Trusting means listening and obeying the commandments of God - Solomon promises from God's authority that trusting in this manner will result in a fruitful and fulfilling life. Next we come to a most important matter - the matter of whom do you trust. A word-study on the word "lean" might be in order. It literally means to shift one's weight on something so as to rely on it for support. Abraham invited the Angelic visitors to "rest" under the shade of a tree.⁴ Saul leaned on his spear.⁵ The LORD allows the wicked to rest on their apparent security but holds them accountable.⁶ Judah leaned on Egypt as a staff for security but Egypt broke and splintered, hurting Judah.⁷ Let's get to the point. If we "lean" rely on our own evaluation - our own understanding, then we do not fall under the providential oversight of the Lord as far as His decreed will. We will make mistakes in judgment. We will literally be wasting our time as far as the Lord's will is concerned.

Next comes acknowledgment of God playing a part in every area of our lives. It never ceases to marvel me that many Christians seem to leave God out of certain areas of their lives. It's as though they can compartmentalize their lives. Let me try to illustrate this from my dad's home. We used to have a room called a "glory room." Funny name for its function. That is where we put stuff when we were expecting company and wanted the rest of the house to look neat. All the junk would go into the "glory room." I suppose it would have been quite a shock if we were to open that door to our visitors and they would have seen the junk all piled up in it. We tend to do that with God. There are certain areas that we will allow God to be in, but then there is the "glory room" where God is to stay away from. No. We are to acknowledge God in every area of our lives. This looses the next important part of our passage in Proverbs - God's action. His Decreed Will for our lives.

But let's get back to our part of the passage. Our responsibility is to learn God's precepts and to obey them. Realizing the Preceptive Will of God is just that. Learning His Precepts and obeying *all* of them. One at a time. Isaiah put it this way:

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. [10] For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: [11] For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. [12] To whom he said, This is the rest

⁴ See Gen 18:4.

⁵ See 2 Sam 1:6.

⁶ See Job 24:22 - 24.

⁷ See Ezk 29:6, 7.

wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. Isaiah 28:9-12

The tragedy for Judah was that they would not accept God's way of being in the center of God's will - as a result, they fell under the discipline of God.

The Importance of Obedience - Avoiding Instructive Discipline.

We cannot pick and choose which part of God's Precepts we are to obey. Our passage in Isaiah teaches that each precept comes one at a time. When a precept is understood by God's child the responsibility is to obey that precept. We cannot forget that which we have learned for convenience sake. I have mentioned **God's Instructive Discipline**. If we do not obey His Precepts we place ourselves under His instructive discipline much as a disobedient child would fall under his father's discipline. Not as a vengeful act on the part of the father but as a form of instruction. Let's look at a passage in Hebrews:

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: [6] For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. [7] If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? [8] But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Hebrews 12:5-8

God wants to bless us - not punish us. This passage is pointing to the Lord's discipline which quotes Proverbs 13:24 but we should also read Deuteronomy 8:2, 3 in this regard. The point of God's instructive discipline is to "grow us up" so that we would know His will for our lives. God must bring us back from our self-imposed detours from His will - many times that comes in the form of discipline. See also Psalm 119: 71; 89 - 92.

Jesus' emphasis on obedience is strong. Listen to the words of Jesus: **"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. [23] Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."** John 14:21. Learning the Preceptive will of God and Obeying it is the key. We must place importance on *each precept*. Not to pick and choose those that please us.

Elizabeth Elliot has long been an inspiration and encouragement to me and places a great importance on obedience to God's precepts. She stresses the importance of obeying His commands and gave out a poem by an unknown author. The theme of the poem was for the child of God to "Do the Next thing." That may not make much sense as a title but the theme is that we are to take each command of the Lord as very important and carry it out and then do the next, and the next, and the next. This is the pathway to realizing our passage in Proverbs 3. This is how we can discover the will of God in our lives.