**PP** **Acts: To the End of the Earth**

**Part 57-Acts 21:1-16  *Discerning and Loving the Will of God*  11/12-13/2022**

**PP (Bilney Pic)** In the early 16th century, Thomas Bilney gained a copy of the newly printed Tyndale English Bible. And when he read it he realized that Christ came into this world to save sinners. He proclaimed: *“I am the greatest of sinners! But Christ saves sinners. At last I have heard of Jesus”.* His powerful preaching initiated the reformation in England and in 1527 the might of the church reared up and had him arrested. He was put in London Tower, on death row, but they craftily allowed his friends to visit, in hopes that he could be dissuaded from becoming a martyr. And they succeeded. His friends convinced him that his life was too important to die a martyr. And on December 7, 1527, Bilney signed a document denying his faith in Jesus Christ.

Our aim today is to learn from the Apostle Paul how to discern and love God’s will

Just as a disclaimer really, but the will of God is a massive subject, and we won’t today discuss

the difference between God’s secret will and His revealed will

His secret will is known to Himself and sovereignly executed on earth while His revealed in the

pages of Scripture and guides us through life

An example is: **PP** ***“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for***

***this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*  1 Thessalonians 5:16–18**

Yet much of life is shrouded in a fog, anxiously sitting at intersections making what feels like

massive decisions and what we need is God’s guidance

As an introduction to this subject, there are 3 important principles to understand:

**PP Principle 1-The Holy Spirit reveals the will of God and guides us through life**

Christian, let me encourage you, God wants you to understand His will, however, we cannot

figure it out like we might solve a math problem, God must reveal it to us

**PP *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and***

***my thoughts than your thoughts.”* Isaiah 55:9**

God doesn’t give us a Magic 8 ball, or teach us to go *Eeny Meeny Miny Moe* in life’s decisions

Nor does He download a file that you double click by faith and up on the screen of your mind

appears the will of God for your life

He streams His will to us and the bible makes no mystery of this: **PP *“Do not be conformed to***

***this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may***

***discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”* Rom. 12:2**

As God’s Word fills our minds, He enables us to understand His will

Look with me to **PP Acts 19:21, *“Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass***

***through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, ‘After I have been there,***

***I must also see Rome.’”***

***‘Resolved in the Spirit’*** means he was clear the Spirit was directing him to return to Jerusalem

and then to Rome

In **PP Acts 20:22, *‘And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit’***

Paul was ***‘resolved in the Spirit’*** and ***‘constrained by the Spirit’***,which is to be bound by Him

He was certain and settled that God’s will was for him to go to Jerusalem, **PP** ***‘not knowing what***

***will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that***

***imprisonment and afflictions await me’*  20:22-23**

The Spirit kept making it clear, and He is able to do that for each of us as we walk with Him

**PP Principle 2-Listen to counsel, but keep God’s Word the loudest of all**

When we are seeking to know God’s will in a matter, and we seek out counsel, sometimes that

counsel can be contradictory and makes us more confused

What do we do when people who care about us, seem to contradict what we believe God’s

Spirit is telling us to do?

This settled resolve and constraint was also seen in the life the reformer, Martin Luther

**PP (Luther Pic)** Luther was summoned to the Diet of Worms, a religious assembly in the city of

Worms, Germany, and Luther was going to have to defend his teachings against the

charge of heresy, punishable by death

A friend pleaded with him not to go, but he answered, **PP** *‘If there were more devils in Worms*

*than tiles on the roofs, still, I would go’* Martin Luther

The first day the pressure on Luther to recant was so intense that he requested a night to pray and

consider, and that night the Spirit of God strengthened his resolve and gave him courage

The following day, with the meeting hall packed and Charles V, the emperor of Rome present,

amidst furious debate, Luther said, **PP** **Pic** *“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of*

*the Scriptures and by clear reason…I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted. My*

*conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it*

*is neither safe nor right to go against conscience….Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise.*

*God help me. Amen.”*

Luther was resolved, constrained by the Spirit to face whatever danger would come in what

may be the most important moment in church history

Luke tells us, ***“when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to***

***Cos, and the next day to Rhode, and from there to Patara. And having found a ship***

***crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail.”* 21:1-2**

They stopped in Tyre for a week, and Paul met with the disciples there, ***“And through the Spirit***

***they were telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem.”* 21:4**

Paul however, continued on, boarding with his team that we met in chapter 20, and arrived at

Ptolemais for one day before proceeding on to Caesarea where they stayed with Philip for

a week

Recall that Paul was trying to make it to Jerusalem by Pentecost, which occurs 50 days after

Passover, so it is in late April or May of AD 57

During that week, a prophet named Agabus, the same one who in Acts 11 predicted a world-wide

famine, came to Paul and ***“took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands and said,***

***‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, “This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who***

***owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”’”* 21:11**

The church in Caesarea, along with his own team, including Luke the author of Acts, ***“urged***

***him not to go up to Jerusalem.”* 21:12**

Everyone loved Paul, sensed that he would suffer and maybe die if he went to Jerusalem, and

tried to tell him that surely this cannot be God’s will

Paul strongly protested telling they were crushing his spirit: **“*What are you doing, weeping and***

***breaking my heart?”* 21:13**

Finally, they ***“ceased and said, ‘Let the will of the Lord be done.’”* 21:14**

We are to seek counsel from godly, mature friends, but weigh their advice against the scriptures

that have been impressed upon you as you walk with God

Should I take this job offer?; Should I marry this person?: What career should I pursue?

This sermon and Paul’s example isn’t the full answer to knowing God’s will, but this final

principle is one that he lived by and one we can learn as well

**PP Principle 3-Loving God is the secret to living His will with confidence**

***“Then Paul answered, ‘What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’”* 13**

God does not give us a spiritual GPS with turn by turn directions in life

What He does give is **PP** *The want to, to do what He wants us to do*

**PP *“Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”* Ps 37:4**

The key to knowing and living God’s will, is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and

strength, which is why Augustine said, **PP** *“Love God and do what you want.”*

As you worship and walk with God, He ***‘is working in you, giving you the desire and the power***

***to do what pleases Him.”* Philippians 2:13 (NLT)**

Knowing and loving God’s will isn’t always about having the right information, it is having a

heart transformation with His desires planted deeply in you affecting your choices in life

This may seem too simple to you, yet the Bible teaches this principle by precept and example

Notice in **Acts 21:13** that Paul was ready to ***‘die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus’***

Jesus had prepared Paul for this from the moment he was saved decades earlier

He sent Ananias to the newly converted Paul, **PP *“Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine to***

***carry My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will***

***show him how much he must suffer for the sake of My name.”* Acts 9:15-16**

Later Paul would say, **PP *“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth***

***of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things***

***and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ”* Philippians 3:8**

The all consuming desire in Paul’s heart was to know Jesus and make His glory known

He loved and walked with God, studied His Word, and his heart was full of the desires of God

**PP (Bilney Pic)** As we close, let’s return to Thomas Bilney who renounced his faith. The day after he recanted was a Sunday, and they walked him through the main road from the Tower of London to St. Paul’s Cathedral. When he got there, he listened to a sermon that denounced his heresy. Just outside the cathedral doors, they had a stack of Tyndale’s Bibles and it would be his job to light them on fire. It shattered Bilney’s soul, and he made up his mind that he would preach again and give his life as a martyr for Christ. That opportunity came as he was again arrested in 1531. On August 8, he spent his last night on earth in a dark damp cell, again with friends all around him. Five of them, but these friends would hold him fast to Christ. They gave him words to fortify him. They spoke about the flames being cooled by the Spirit of God. When Bilney finished his meal, he pushed his plate away and pulled his Bible over to where they were sitting. In silence, he simply rested his elbow on the table, extended his index finger and held it over the open flame of a candle. He held it there until he burnt his finger to the bone. He then read from **Isaiah 42:2** *“When thou walkest through the fire you shalt not be burnt.”* The next day as they took him from the cell, he ran to embrace the stake. He thanked God for having a second opportunity to die for Christ. He did not cringe in fear, he fearlessly took the opportunity to die for His Lord. As the flames slowly consumed him, he persevered through the trial and held on to his confession, his confidence in Christ, to his very last breath!

Pray