

## COMPREHENDING GOD'S WILL AND PURPOSE

One of the chief ways the Lord's speaking comes to us is in our comprehension. Indeed, our comprehension of God's will and purpose is His method of speaking to us. When Hebrews 8:10 says that God imparts His laws into our mind, it reveals to us the way He speaks. That is, He speaks through comprehension. Thus, to understand and comprehend God's will and purpose is a great thing in every believer's life.

In Matthew 13:14-17 the Lord said, <sup>14</sup>“And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not *understand*, and seeing you will see and not perceive; <sup>15</sup> for the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should *understand* with their heart and turn, so that I should heal them.’ <sup>16</sup> But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; <sup>17</sup> for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

The word “understand” in the above verses is the Greek word *sunemi* / συνίημι. This word may be defined as *perceive, understand, or comprehend*. All of these definitions are acceptable in English. The point to be observed is that comprehension in divine things is not merely *our* comprehension. It is a manifestation of His voice speaking in us. Luke 24:44-45 says, <sup>44</sup>“Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ <sup>45</sup> And He

*opened their understanding*, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” The Lord is the opener of our mind to comprehend the Scriptures. All spiritual understanding comes from Him (Col. 1:9). Paul recommended that Timothy consider and think over what he had said to him, because Paul knew that in the process of considering, the Lord would come in and *give* him understanding and comprehension (2 Tim. 2:7).

Comprehension is a vehicle of the Lord's speaking. Because of this, it is important to know what it means to “comprehend” in the biblical sense. The Greek word for comprehend is a compound word that means “putting things together in a way that causes you to grasp or understand something.” For example, the disciples did not understand the Scriptures until the Lord opened their mind to comprehend them. It was when He opened up the Old Testament, book by book, and unveiled *Himself as its focus* that they were able to comprehend the Scriptures. At that point, they could put everything together. That is, they understood and comprehended the central meaning of the Scriptures.

To be able to put everything together and properly comprehend the Scriptures, we all need to know that the focus of God's speaking is Christ (Heb. 1:1-2)! Christ is the Word, the *logos* (John 1:1), God's unique utterance embodied in one Person. When we see Christ as all in all, then we truly begin to comprehend the Scriptures. Furthermore, with this comprehension we are able to know the Lord's speaking. Our comprehension of Christ as the focus of the Scriptures becomes the factor of the Lord's speaking, and this speaking automatically gives us discernment concerning all other voices and speakings which are not the Lord's.

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- God's Speaking in Our Comprehension — Pages 1-4
- *Ministry Publications* new catalog — Insert
- Web Site — Check out the updated website at [www.thechristian.org](http://www.thechristian.org)

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To comprehend God's plan in this universe is to know that God has one will and one purpose. God is uniquely one. His will is one, and His purpose is one. The Lord's speaking in our daily life is directly related to our comprehension of this one will and one purpose. This comprehension will give clarity to the Lord's voice about so many things, not only in this universe but also in our daily living. Being under the revelation of such a will and purpose spontaneously generates in us the Lord's speaking. His speaking then becomes the discernment we need as a believer. Knowing God's one will, and one purpose will cause us to know God's speaking about the meaning of our human existence and also the meaning of our Christian life.

### *God's one will*

In Ephesians 5:17 Paul says, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." The word understand in this verse simply means to comprehend. In other words, the will of the Lord is not something we cannot comprehend or something we cannot know; rather, the will of the Lord is something we can grasp and understand with our mind.

Again, in Ephesians 5:15 Paul says, "See then that you walk carefully, not as fools but as wise." In the original Greek, the word *carefully* means *accurately* (*akribos akribōs*). This means to have a walk that is accurate in its aim and goal. In other words, do not be unwise; that is, do not be a person without an accurate understanding of the will of the Lord. As believers our walk should be accurate according to God's one unique will.

Then Ephesians 5:16 says, "redeeming the time, because the days are evil." The context of this verse shows us that "redeeming the time" is not just having the right priorities and learning how to order and schedule our lives properly. A lot of people can do that without God. Here, redeeming the time is directly related to our having an understanding of what the will of the Lord is. The result of this understanding is that we interact with our daily life in such a way that it becomes one opportunity after another to live out the will of the Lord. Even the word "time," according to the Greek meaning, emphasizes time in the sense of opportunity. Redeem the opportunities — every kind of situation — because the days are evil. The tide of this age is evil, away from God, indifferent toward God's revealed will. Do not be unwise, but be wise. By walking accurately, or carefully, with an understanding of what the will of the Lord is, we can be wise and redeem all the time and opportunities in our life.

When it comes to the will of God in our lives, many of us have thought that His will is something we have

to find through a long or difficult process. It has been in the realm of something we were looking for and trying to find. Have not most seeking Christians said or prayed at some point in their life, "I want to know what the will of God is for my life"?

### *Two aspects of God's will*

It is important to distinguish between two aspects of God's will. First, there is the aspect of God's will related to personal matters in our lives. Paul expressed this aspect in Romans 1:10 when he said, "making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in *the will of God* to come to you." On this occasion Paul was referring to the will of God concerning his travel plans. This aspect of God's will is not always immediately understood by us; however, it is made known under the Lord's specific leading in our lives.

The second aspect of God's will is actually the main and primary one. It has to do with the revealed will of God that we can understand, or comprehend. It is this aspect of the will of the Lord that Paul refers to in Ephesians 5:17. Understanding this will cause our daily life to be accurate and in harmony with His goal and purpose. And not only so, we can have this will of God so fixed in our being that it becomes the controlling factor of our life.

It was by this principle of the revealed will of God that Noah, Abraham, and Moses lived. They all understood what the will of God was. God's will was an ark in Noah's day. God's will in Abraham's day was the good land and the city whose Architect and Maker is God. Abraham was controlled by this vision. God's will in Moses' day was the tabernacle. This revealed will caused him to forsake Egypt and suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Moses had revelation, and this was the factor that controlled him. He was motivated by the vision of God's will for His dwelling place, the tabernacle.

In the same way, as believers today, we need to know what God's revealed will is. Knowing and understanding the one unique will of the Lord will not only give meaning to our lives, but it will also bring the dimension of God's eternal purpose into our daily life.

### *The Lord coming to do the one will of the Father*

When the Lord Himself was on this earth, He lived and moved with a clear understanding of the one unique will of the Father. In John 6:38-40 the Lord said, <sup>38</sup> "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup> This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given

Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.<sup>40</sup> And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

These verses reveal that to the Lord Jesus the will of the Father was one unique will. It was a singular will that the Lord should come and redeem all the ones given to Him by the Father. Then following redemption, He should impart His very life and nature into them in order to indwell them, filling them up with Himself and transforming them into His image. And ultimately the final step would be realized — they would be raised up in the last day. To raise them up in the last day means that resurrection life reaches its goal of final glorification with all the redeemed ones completely conformed to the image of the Firstborn Son (Rom. 8:29-30). This was the one unique will that the Lord came down from heaven to do and accomplish.

### *The one will behind the universe*

When we touch the matter of God’s one unique will, we are touching something that is related to His good pleasure. Ephesians 1:4-5 says,<sup>4</sup> “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,<sup>5</sup> having predestined us to sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” Here the Father’s will is a revealed will, a tangible and understandable one. It is clearly defined as being sonship. This sonship begins when you and I are joined to the Son of God by receiving Him and becoming one spirit with Him. Then the process of sonship continues as we enjoy His unsearchable riches in our daily lives. By this enjoyment He saturates our being from center to circumference to make us persons who express a living like the apostle Paul’s — “For to me, *to live is Christ,*” and “*Christ is all and in all*” (Phil. 1:21; Col. 3:11).

The controlling will of the whole Bible is that we would be transformed and conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom. 8:29). From Genesis to Revelation we see that this one unique will was not only behind the creation of the universe, but it is also controlling the whole universe at this moment in time (Rev. 4:11).

Before there was an earth — before creation, before the foundation of the world — according to Ephesians 1:4, God had a will originating from His good pleasure. The very fact that Ephesians 1:4 mentions the word “foundation” indicates that God had a will with a design and a plan to execute it. When God created the universe, He laid a foundation because He wanted to build something. His desire was to build a habitation for Himself, together with His Firstborn Son and all of

us as the many brothers conformed to His Son’s image (Rom. 8:29 and Heb. 2:10-11).

What a privilege as a human being to be able to live on this earth understanding what the will of the Lord is! What dignity for our humanity — that we can live out the good pleasure of the Father’s will. This really restores and uplifts our human life. We are not living aimlessly or in vanity, without a goal or purpose; but we are persons created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28) and being transformed into that image from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). This is the one unique will that we have all been destined to understand and experience.

### *God’s one purpose*

Along with the *one will* behind the universe, there is also *one purpose* that governs God’s desire for man. In Romans 8:28-29 the apostle Paul says,<sup>28</sup> “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.<sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren.” In verse 28 everything is working together for good, because we are loving the Lord. We are just staying in His presence loving Him.

We are also those who are called according to purpose. In some of the translations the word purpose is preceded by either “His” or “the,” meaning His purpose or the purpose. And you will notice that *His* or *the* are both in italics — this means it is not in the original. Of course, when we talk about purpose here, it surely is His purpose. So “His” is a legitimate insertion into the text. However, it is best to take the Word of God as it actually is; otherwise, we may miss something. The Holy Spirit used this language in order to express the divine thoughts, and it is accurate to the Holy Spirit and to the divine economy to the utmost degree. So, the text actually says, “called according to purpose.”

### *Called according to purpose*

The words “according to” come from the Greek preposition *kata*. We are called *according to* something. “According to” lines us up with some kind of standard or measuring device. For example, if I am on a building site watching the workmen putting a roof on, I no doubt will observe how they carefully place all the pieces of plywood according to the precise measurements. Everything has to be according to the exact specifications. So, whenever we read the words “according to,” it means that some kind of standard measurement is involved.

Brothers and sisters, we have been called. That means God got our attention. God called us, saved us, and justified us. Yet even at the time of our salvation, we did not know what we were called according to. But later we discovered that we were called, saved, and regenerated “according to purpose.” Thus, there is only one purpose. In this entire universe, from the divine point of view, nothing can be considered as purpose except the one unique purpose that God has given to man.

### *“Good” is conformity to the image of His Son*

The *purpose* in Romans 8:28 is defined in verse 29, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be conformed to the image of His Son*, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren.” This is the purpose — *conformity to the image of God’s Son*. This is the one purpose of God in this universe. And you and I have the honor to be on the earth to live out this one purpose for which He created all things.

There is one will in the universe — the Father’s will of sonship. And there is one corresponding purpose — conformity to the image of His Son. This is what is “good” in Romans 8:28. Conformity to the Son is the highest good! That is good in God’s dictionary. It is a process involving our spirit, soul, and body. This process begins when we receive Christ. He was outside of us, but He comes in and now we are joined to Him. Through regeneration we become one spirit with Him. We have an inner union. We have a center, we have a source, and we have a supply — we have God Himself living in our spirit.

Now, God’s will and purpose is that the Christ, who came into our spirit, will progressively spread and saturate *His* life into our soul — into our mind, our emotions, and our will. This saturating takes place little by little, day after day, through our relationships, through our problems, through our daily living. Through all these things and behind them all is God’s goal for us to be conformed to the image of His Son. This is purpose and this is the one will of God — Christ continuously permeating our being.

Based upon this purpose, Paul says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.” But we all know in our lives that many things may happen that, humanly speaking, cannot be considered good. We may go through some kind of problem — a financial problem, a relationship problem, some situation that pulls the rug out from underneath our feet and causes us to reel. We cannot say it is good. It does not seem good to us! We do not like what we are going through. We do not like to go through these kinds of

experiences. Yet Paul says, “all things work together for *good*.” Why would he say such a radical thing? How could it be good? It is good to those loving God.

### *Experiencing “purpose” by loving God*

Romans 8:28 says that “to those who love God” all things work together for good. Loving God is an exercise of our spirit. It is contacting Him. And this exercise causes our spirit to rise and be filled up with Christ. In this way He saturates our being. For example, we may pray, “Lord, I’ve come to the end of my resources. I can’t live through this. I can’t meet this. I can’t face this. But, Lord, I sink myself into You once again. I open to You and take You as my life and supply. Lord, I’m not complaining, I’m not living with a feeling of being treated unfairly or getting a bad break in life. There is no such thing in my thought, because ‘all things’ are avenues to lead me to experience more of the riches of Christ.”

These riches of Christ include His sufferings and His crucifying life. Romans 8:36 says, “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” None of us naturally want to be slaughtered. But verse 37 says, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” Though we may be brought low, by His life we are raised up again with Jesus. Amen. We rise with more of Christ wrought into our being.

Experiencing Christ is our one unique goal. We comprehend His will and purpose of conforming us to the image of God’s Son. It is *this* comprehension that activates God’s speaking in our daily life. Thus, we see all things working together for good in our lives, because we are called according to purpose!

— Bill Freeman

## *the Christian*

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