

Romans 12: 1-2

5-6-18

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We have all seen them especially in the past few years. As we drive down the road, they're as plain as day. I am not always sure who the source is, but they are certainly there--those signs from God on the highway. You know, the pitch black background with a white message from God.: "We need to talk." --God

I got to thinking about those signs and thought to myself: I mean, wouldn't it be nice if when we were ever confused about something, all we would have to do is look at a billboard and find the answer or look up into the sky and there would be something written in the clouds? Or listen to the radio and God's voice would break in for each of us and say, "This is what I want you to do."

A lot of us would love to hear from God in such a clear way. Then again, depending upon the message and the state of our lives, some of us would not! Overall, though, most people I speak with yearn to hear God's voice in a clear way and want to know God's will for their lives.

This is one of the biggest issues I come across as a pastor. People sometimes come to me, truly wanting to know what God's will is for their lives. They say, "I have a big decision, and I need to know what God wants me to do! I am at a crossroad, and I wonder what God's will is for my life." When I ask people what they would like to hear a sermon on, a frequent response is, "Finding God's will for my life." Obviously, finding God's will is important for many of us.

Well, I have great news! God wants us to know his will even more than we want to know his will. God's will is not some secret. Discovering God's will is not some kind of Easter egg hunt where God hides it and is amused by watching us try to find it. God desires for us to know and do his will more than anything!

So, to find God's will we don't have to be super-spiritual. All we have to do is know how God speaks to us and how we hear him. It's really about learning to spot his will when we see it, and then choosing to follow it. But before we get into that, we need to have the right understanding about God's will.

Many people have a false picture of God and how God views human beings. Instead of seeing God as loving and merciful, many see God as an angry, gray-haired old man with a stick, waiting to find those who are breaking the rules so he can punish them!

Nothing could be further from the truth! Listen to what the Bible says about God: 2 Corinthians 1:3 says, "God, the Father of all mercies, and the God of all comfort." John 10:11 says, "The Good Shepherd who lays down His life for his sheep." 1 John 3:1 says, "The Sovereign God who loves us so much that he calls us his children." James 1:17 says, "The Father who gives only good gifts." The Bible is clear that we have a loving and merciful God.

However, the most convincing evidence for the good nature and will of God is God's revelation to us in Jesus Christ. God chose to reveal himself in Jesus Christ so we could understand what his nature is like. Through Jesus, God communicated to us that he forgives us, loves us, and wants what is best for us-he went all the way to the cross to prove that to us!

This is why I have lifted up Romans 12:1-2. For today's passage clearly lays out what God has in mind for us. And what God has in mind for us comes in three wonderful words in verse 2, "Good, acceptable, and perfect." God's will is good, acceptable, and perfect.

First, God's will is good. This means that God has the highest and best for us in mind. Second, God's will is acceptable. The Greek word for acceptable means "well pleasing" and "agreeable." Third, God's will is perfect, which means it meets the needs of the person.

So you can be sure that no matter what circumstance you face, you can have the peace that comes from knowing that God's will for you in that situation is good, acceptable, and perfect. God knows us better than we know ourselves, and he wants what is best for us.

By now, you may be asking, "Well, if God wants us to know his will and it's good for us, why is it so difficult to discover?" Because we have a will, too! Generally, what I find when people are struggling to find God's will is a battle of the wills-trying to decide whether or not they want to do God's will. You see, often people know what God's will is for them; they just don't want to do it. They hide behind the statement, "Well, woe is me, I can't find God's will," when in reality it is more like, "Woe is me, I don't want to do what God wants me to do." What I find in my own life is that choosing to do God's will is far more difficult than discovering God's will.

Have you ever hear the story about the agnostic who fell off a cliff? Do you know what an agnostic is? An Agnostic is a person who believed that nothing is known or can be known about the existence of God.

There was once an agnostic who fell off a cliff, and halfway down, he caught hold of a bush. As he hung high above the ground, he shouted, "Is anybody up there?" Again, he shouted, "Is anybody up there?" A voice answered, "Yes, this is the

Lord." The man yelled frantically, "Please help me!" There was a moment of silence. Then the Lord said, "Let go of the bush, and I will catch you." There was another long silence as the man looked at the ground far below. Then, he yelled, "Is anybody else up there?"

We often do the same thing. We ask God for his will. We know in our hearts what he wants us to do, but we don't want to do it. Then we just hang there foolishly.

And why do we do this? If we know God has the best for us in mind, why do we refuse to do God's will? Because of one destructive attitude: Pride. Pride is what started it all in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve thought, "We don't need God; we can be gods ourselves." And we all know the pain and misery that followed. Too much pride can get us into a lot of trouble.

I saw this illustrated right before my eyes a few years ago. I was coming out of the church office, and I watched as a toddler got away from her mother and began to run towards the parking lot. The mother was very pregnant so she could not run after her toddler. I immediately ran after the child. And I never will forget that as I ran after the child, she looked back at me laughing, determined to outrun me, not knowing she was headed for possible danger. Fortunately, I was able to catch her before she ran into the parking lot.

Pride is like that. We get so filled with it that we are totally oblivious to where it is leading us. Pride makes us stubborn to God's will. Or it selfishly attaches conditions to God's will. It is almost comical. Our pride often causes us to bargain with God: "Yes, Lord I will forgive this person as long as he apologizes."

You see, doing God's will with certain conditions is not obedience. To obey and follow God's will means to surrender everything to God. God wants everything we are and hope to be. He wants all of us. So if we are not surrendering to God, we are not obeying God.

We often talk about wanting transformation in our lives. We want our lives transformed, but transformation can be painful because it requires change and not just any kind of change. Romans 12: 2 says, "Be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God." It requires a change or renewal of our minds. The older I get the harder it becomes for me to learn new things, even new things about God and his will for me.

C.S. Lewis once said that "all genuine religious conversions are blessed defeats." If we want to be clear about God's will and live it out, we must have a surrendered spirit. This means we must change how we approach God and his will for us. Instead of deciding what we want to do and asking God to bless it, we must decide to surrender all we are to God and ask him what he wants to do with us. We must

put ourselves at the disposal of God. Then and only then, will we be clear about our Lord's will for our lives. You see, if Jesus is really Lord of our lives, then he will rule every area of our lives.

Remember, Paul says in verse 1 of chapter 12: "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

I recall as a kid wanting more than anything to please my Dad. He would show me how to throw a ball or stack some hay or mow the lawn. And as I did these activities, all I cared about was doing exactly what he told me. And each time I hit a ball or completed a task, I would ask incessantly, "How did I do? How did I do? How did I do?" And the moment would come when he would turn to me and say, "You did great! I am so proud of you." I lived for those moments. That's all I cared about, pleasing my Father.

May we have the same attitude toward our heavenly Father. May we always be at the business of wanting to please God by doing God's will. Then a day will come when we will ask, "How did I do?" And God will respond, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." Let's live for that moment.

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, give us your grace and power so that what you want for us is what we want. The answer is yes, Lord. Whatever your will is, we will do it. Amen.