

Thy Will Be Done

by: Ronald L. Dart

The disciples of Jesus came to Him one day with a request. They said, "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples." Jesus replied with a remarkably concise model prayer. From endless repetition, everyone knows it by heart. We call it the 'Lord's Prayer.'

Somehow I don't think repetition is exactly what Jesus had in mind. I don't think He meant for us to repeat it over and over again, but I think what He did was to give us an outline for prayer and left it to us to fill in the details, but in the process of thinking it through, we can see a lot of interesting things in that prayer that you can easily overlook.

For example, take this sentence, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

Every time I come to that phrase, I seem to come up with new questions. For example, I realized that we weren't praying that God would do His own will. I mean, after all, He's quite able to do that without any encouragement from me. Of course, we can also take it that when we pray for a miracle, we are acknowledging that it may not be His will to do the deed and by praying, "Thy will be done," we make it clear we are willing to accept that.

But thinking further about it, consider the wording, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven." My question, when I thought about it was, who is the doer in heaven of God's will? Well, there are 24 elders there, and an innumerable company of angels, who carry all of God's will out, up there.

Who Carries Out God's Will Here on Earth?

Who is supposed to measure up to the heavenly standard of implementation on earth? When I put the question that way, I come to a disturbing conclusion. We are the ones to carry out God's will on earth as it is in heaven, right here, right now.

The problem I hear coming back from people is, that they are rather unclear about what God's will actually is, at least in a given situation.

Let's take something really simple. Let's say we are praying for a poor family we know about that they will have enough to eat. I keep hearing that there are several thousand hungry people who go to bed every night in this country. I'm not sure who they are, but we want to pray for one family that we know about.

How would God answer that prayer? Would Mom go to the cupboard in the morning and find, low and behold, there is food here that was not here yesterday. A miracle! Probably not. Chances are, someone is going to have to take a sack of groceries by that house and give it to the family.

Then we come face-to-face with an uncomfortable question, how can I pray that God will provide food for that family, when I'm not willing to actually do anything about it?

Now this is not exactly the point I want to make today but it is a provocative question and it runs down that line.

Now we are actually supposed to do something about the things we pray about. My question though, takes a step back from what I've said so far, if we accept that we are the doers, then we are actually instruments of God to do His will on earth.

How Do We Know God's Will?

How are we supposed to know God's will, so we can do it?

Actually, it's a little complicated, but only because life is complicated. It is really not that hard to know the will of God!

Let me give you an example. In Exodus chapter 23 verse 1, here comes part of the law of Moses, the first little sentence in it is, "Do not spread false reports." Ah, is it God's will that you spread rumors? Obviously not!

Do you see what I mean when I say, "It is not hard to understand it, it is right there."

Let's try another one from the same verse, "Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness."

Now as an interesting side note on this, we should be able to discern that a man is wicked! We can't say, "I can't judge that. I mean, maybe he's all right." No, how can you tell? You can tell by his fruits, works and actions if he is a wicked man, then you must say, "That's a wicked man. I'm not going to help him!"

Don't advance his cause by slanting your testimony. Now don't we all realize it's possible to tell a statement that is true, and yet misleads the person we are giving it to? Sure we can.

Now it is God's will that we do not do things like that. I realize that's obvious. On the other hand, why is it obvious? Well because over the course of generations in reading the Bible, our parents reading the Bible, or what have you, we have come to that conclusion on our own, that we shouldn't help a wicked man in his cause, and we shouldn't bear false witness to anybody.

Read on in verse 2, "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong."

When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd. Okay, so it's God's will that I will be a person of character, that I think for myself and not allow myself to be swept along by the crowd. See there, I have discerned something about God's will, by the way I live my life.

Jury Duty

As a member of a jury of 12 people, don't just go along, stand up for what is true and what is just. My wife had the honor of serving on a jury in a traffic accident case, where a couple of ladies were suing two young girls, over the fact that the young girls were in a car behind them. A third car hit the young girls car and pushed them into their car and I guess there was whiplash injuries involved.

Now as the evidence came out in court, it was clear enough that the two girls in the car behind the two ladies were not at fault. It was the fault of a third car, but the third car disappeared. So the jury, because these two ladies were very poor, wanted to give them something. Why not, the insurance company would be paying for it, never realizing that the more the insurance companies have to pay for this stuff then the more that you have to pay for your car insurance. But that is not how people think. Anyhow, the jury wanted to find in favor of these two ladies and make the insurance company of the two young girls pay.

Well, that was not right. That was not just. In the process of doing so they had to find those two girls guilty of something wrong that they hadn't done. My wife sat there and struggled with them on that because the fact is, you don't just go along. If it's right it's right and if it's wrong, it's wrong.

We are to do God's will folks. We need to stand up for what is true and what is right.

Now verse 3 of Exodus 23 spoke directly to the situation, that my wife found herself in. "Do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit."

Why would we do that? Well because we want to give them some money from this guy who has a lot more stuff than he's got. God says, "Don't do that!"

Help The Poor But Not With Someone Else's Money

You see the problem is, that once you start playing games with the justice system, you start becoming the arbiter of what's right and wrong, instead of the law, instead of God, instead of what's really right and what's proper. Now you can't pervert justice for what you deem to be a good cause. It is God's will that we help the poor, but not with someone else's money.

Now folks, we have just stumbled on to a profound principle of God's will, right here in the book of the law. It is God's will that we help the poor, but not with someone else's money.

Respect the Property of Others

Verse four of Exodus 23, "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him."

"Ah ha, that's all right with me to see his ox wander off somewhere and him lose the animal, he deserves it, he is my enemy!" Yuh, is that God's will that you respond that way? No! If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure and take it back to him.

It is God's will that we respect the property of others, even when you don't like him, and that we do so regardless of our relationship with the person.

Now we have really learned quite a lot about the will of God here, right now.

Verse 5, if you see the donkey of someone who hates you, fallen down under its load, do not leave it there, be sure you help him with it."

Now it's obvious we should stop and help our neighbor. It may not be quite so obvious that it's God's will we do it for an enemy, but it is. We are told specifically that's what we ought to do.

Then verse six of Exodus 23, "Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits."

That's why we appoint, in this country, public defenders for poor people. If they can't afford a lawyer, the court will pay for one for them, that is why attorneys do 'pro bono work.' It's to provide the public with a lawyer to defend poor people.

So these principles actually have made their way into our conscience. I'm not altogether sure how they got there, but many of them speak to us. But how can we say we don't know God's will, when we are staring at it in this particular situation?

Don't Accept A Bribe

Now in a way when you read these laws you think, why would anyone have to be told that? For example, suppose you are a judge or maybe you are a congressman and someone comes along and offers you money or a bribe or some kind of a favor where they say "Ride in my airplane with me to the Bahamas and we will have good time down there, but I would really like for you to vote on this thing that is up for you vote on or against it as the case may be. Do we take the money and do we take the ride? Well some people do, but do you think we should? Chances are you'd say, "No. We shouldn't do that!"

Okay, how do we know that? "Well my conscience says so." Well maybe so. Then the next question is, is it God's will that I take this money because I could give it to the poor and help somebody with it? Is that God's will?

Verse eight of Exodus 23 where we were just reading says this, "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous."

No you don't, it is not God's will that you accept a bribe, no matter what you intend to do with it. It twists your judgment. You need to stick to the facts, what's true and what's right and what should to be done.

Do Not Oppress An Alien

Verse nine of Exodus 23, "Do not oppress an alien, you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt."

Okay, I conclude from that, it is God's will that we find a just way to deal with the aliens among us. Pinches a little doesn't it? I don't know what the best course is for dealing with the illegal aliens among us. Maybe it is to create more ways for people to legally come here to work. I don't know, it's not my specialty, but by now, I think you're getting my drift.

How Can We Learn God's Will?

We can learn God's will from the Bible. We learn it from the law. We learn from the prophets. We learn it from the teachings of Jesus. It isn't hard, but it doesn't just happen. We have to apply ourselves in two important ways.

Now you have a good start on this, because in our society, it is amazing to me, how much of our legal system, how much of our social structure, how much of our basic idea of civic good, is really based firmly in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the teachings of Jesus.

But if you really want to know what God's will is you have to apply yourselves in two important ways. We have to read about it and we have to think about it. You know, we are getting to the place where people don't read that much it seems. Sometimes it gets a little uncomfortable to have to think.

But when you're wondering what God's will is, the first question to ask is, "Do I already know it?" Is the problem that you don't know or that you don't want to do.

"For indeed we are supposed to be doers of his will," aren't we? That's what we pray for, "Thy will be done." By whom? By us!

The second important way to know God's will is for us to think about the law of God. Isn't it enough just to do the law of God? Well, it is more subtle than that.

The Law Is Revelatory

The law is not as much regulatory as it is revelatory. In fact, when you look at the original languages, the word 'Torah' which is usually translated 'law,' means 'instruction.' In other words, it isn't just something that is written down in black and white, and you get the handcuffs on and carried off to the slammer, if you break some of these laws.

The point is, they are moral laws as to how you're supposed to live with people. Now I want to explain to you what I mean by the fact that the law is not so much regulatory as it is revelatory.

Deuteronomy chapter 22, "If you see your brother's ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it, but be sure to take it back to him. {2} If the brother doesn't live near you or if you don't know who he is, take it home with you and keep it until he comes looking for it then give it back to him."

That means you take it home, you keep it, you feed it, you take care of it.

Well I don't worry about that. I'm not sure if anybody in all of the county I live in has an ox or a sheep. I haven't seen one and I have driven all over the county and I've never seen either one of them. Now with that said, what if I find my brother's bird dog out wandering around. The letter of the law says nothing about a dog, so I could just go right on my way and not worry about this dog at all. Well I'm not so stupid that I overlooked the principle underlying this law, which is why, when a strange dog joined our walk one day and followed us home, I didn't just keep her. I like dogs and I was dogless at the time. Now I could very easily have just kept that dog, fed her and took care of her and so forth. She was obviously a purebred pointer and a valuable dog. Well I suspended my other activities and I went to work to find the owner who turned out to be on a cruise having left the dog with a house sitter, who got a little negligent, and the dog got out. The dog had a wonderful time being out and had a wonderful time with us on our walk. It helped us hunt all over our neighborhood.

Now I conclude from this law that I must respect the property rights of others. It is not finder's keeper. Not only must I respect the property laws and rights of other people, I must actively protect them. In other words, I don't have to respect that it is not my dog. I have to take the dog home with me and keep it till somebody comes looking for it, if I don't know who the owner is.

Fortunately in my neighborhood, it's not that hard to find out because we have a networking and we talk to people and find out what is going on.

Protect the Property Rights of Your Neighbors

Verse 3 of Deuteronomy 22 of the same passage, "Do the same if you find your brother's donkey or his cloak or anything he loses. Do not ignore it."

Yes it's inconvenient. Yes, it can be annoying, but this principle lies at the root of civil society. You are supposed to, it is the will of God that you actively protect the property rights of your neighbors, your brother, or whoever it may be. You not only protect the rights to your property, you are to protect your neighbor's property rights as well. Do you realize how fundamental this is in the law of God, and mind you, it's not just merely a matter of the law, it is an education of your conscience about what's right and wrong.

What a different world it would be, if we hadn't somehow learned this stuff.

Verse 4, "If you see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it. Help him get it to its feet."

If you are wandering by and you see this donkey is down, and the guy is working like a beaver trying to get the animal back up, you're not allowed to ignore it. God says, it is His will that you don't ignore it. It is His will that you get over there and help him to get the animal on its feet.

Maybe you never thought of it, but the law of God is absolutely loaded with the will of God. It is the will of God as to how we are supposed to work.

Cross-Dressing

Verse 5 of Deuteronomy 22 in this same section is fascinating, "A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this."

Oh, now I have to conclude that this is not a small matter of God's will. It is God's will that as a man that I don't wear women's clothing. Now here's the problem. What actually constitutes women's clothing as opposed to men's clothing? Who decides this issue? Well, custom, society, whatever it is that goes on in your world that you are in. You know, you can tell the difference in a woman's pantsuit and a man's suit, can't you? They don't look the same, so we know that society has standards and there are fashions.

How do you know what God's will is? It is simple enough when you think about it for a moment. Gender differences need to be maintained and respected. How do we do that? Well are we so stupid we can't sort that out? Can't we figure out a way that we do it? I think we know! It is just a question of whether we really care what God thinks about it or not, or what His will is.

Bird's Nest

Try this one. Verse 6 of Deuteronomy 22, "If you come across a bird's nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young. {7} You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life."

My, what an idea. You do have to understand, don't you, that God doesn't really care one way or the other about eggs and birds, and yet he does have a will, as to how we handle the situation, when we come to it.

You know, we used to call this conservation. I remember hearing a lot about it when I was kid growing up, conservation this and conservation that. Nowadays it is called environmental and we add an ism to the end of the word. Ism means, it is chiefly derogatory and an unspecified system, philosophy or ideological movement as environmentalism. Environmentalism is an ideology, it resembles religion. Conservation on the other hand, is a policy with a purpose. It is to preserve the world we live in for our use. It is for you and not for the planet.

That's what God means when He says, "that your days may be a long." 'Live long and prosper' as the old saying comes from planet Vulcan.

Okay, we will find that the planet has its own way of handling things. It does it no matter what we do. The fact is, if you look out into the future far enough science tells us that sooner or later the sun is going to die and is going to expand out where the diameter of the sun reaches to the orbit of our planet, and us, we are dead meat. So you don't have worry about it, that's a long long way off in the future, but somebody sometime is going to have to deal with it. But it is not the planet we are trying to save folks, it's us.

Christ Has Made Us Free

Working behind all of this is a profound truth. All of these laws are designed and revealed to guide the conduct of free men and women. Few of the laws are even remotely enforceable. And anytime men try to enforce laws, they cause far more mischief than they ever would good.

There's a passage and Paul said this, "It is for freedom that Christ has made us free."

That's an interesting statement. I read it before and I thought, well, I don't know about that. I think the modern versions of the Bible may have messed that verse up. By the way, you'll find this in Galatians 5 verse one. However, when I began to think about it, I think they got it right. Freedom is the point. Freedom is the goal, the objective. It is not a means to an end. It is the end in its self.

Here's how Paul said it in Galatians 5 verse one. "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and don't let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

Freedom is God's will for man. There's nothing magical about it. We seem to want it to be magic but it isn't. Now this is what the Exodus from Egypt was all about, setting men free, so they could do God's will. How can you do God's will if you aren't free? If you're a slave, if

you have to work seven days a week from the time you can see to the time you can't, you are not free. If we are to be God's instruments in the world, we have to be free to act for Him.

You know it is odd how often churches encroach on that freedom, upon that liberty, and prevent their own members from being free.

Knowing God's will and doing it is much more than making an issue out of the letter of the law, even New Testament law.

How do we come to understand God's will? Well, you learn God's will by reading His words. It's almost like being texted by God. Consider them text messages from God that say, do this, don't do that.

So when we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," we are asking, one, that God would reign in our lives, and two, that we be doers of His will, day by day.

I will tell you, the fellow who wrote this Psalm 119 in your Bible, had a crystal clear understanding of the law of God and its purpose.

He starts off Psalms 119 saying, "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD."

That's all, they just make their decisions based upon what they have learned from the law. They ask themselves, "Is it God's will that I take this bribe?" Plainly NO! People who talk about the abolition of the Old Testament law have completely missed the point. What Jesus and Paul were abolishing were the rules and regulations men had built up out of their own imaginations and their preferences. They decided right from wrong on their own standards.

Paul writes and says in Romans 3 verse 31, "Do we, then, make void the law through faith? God forbid. We established the law."

There is nothing that does the job of telling you the will of God than the law, the prophets, and the words of Jesus.

You say you want to know God's will? Chances are you already know it. Now DO IT!

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