

# DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

*Verses & Notes July 11, 2007*

## *Ephesians 1:5-12*

- 5: He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ,  
    **according to the purpose of his will,**
- 6:           to the praise of his glorious grace  
              which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
- 7: In him we have redemption through his blood,  
          the forgiveness of our trespasses,  
              according to the riches of his grace
- 8:           which he lavished upon us.
- 9: For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight  
    **the mystery of his will,**  
    **according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ**
- 10:          as a plan for the fullness of time,  
              to unite all things in him,  
              things in heaven and things on earth.
- 11: In him,  
    **according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things**  
    **according to the counsel of his will,**
- 12:          we who first hoped in Christ  
              have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.

### INTRODUCTION:

- One of the most common questions I received when I was a Presbyterian pastor, and mostly from young adults, was "How do I know God's will for my life?" Whether it was concerning which college to choose, which career to pursue, which person to marry, or road to take at the fork, sincere Christians wanted to know how to direct their lives according to God's plan. But does He have a clear, stated, predestined plan for our lives? And if He does, do we have the freedom to choose? Or are our lives all laid out for us, from the beginning of time? This is part of what we will be discussing today on **Deep in Scripture**.

#### A. Welcome ...

1. We chose for today's program, in our continuing study of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, a very difficult topic: the will or plan of God...
2. In our last discussion, we looked at verses 5-10, where St. Paul explains 6 things about their new lives in Christ as a result of their baptism:
  - This new life is solely a gift of grace;
  - They are now adopted sons of God;
  - They have redemption through his blood;
  - They have forgiveness of their trespasses;
  - They have received wisdom as a gift of the Holy Spirit;
  - The reason for this is for the praise of God!
3. Before we continue on to discuss the rest of this invocation in vss. 11-13, we thought we'd spend today's program discussing a crucially important underlying aspect of St. Paul's theology, which he refers to several times in this short section and often in all his letters: the Will of God. [read and point out occurrences...]
4. Other verses in Ephesians:

*1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus **by the will of God**, To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus:*

3:7-11 "Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is **the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God** who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. **This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord...**"

5:15-17 "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but **understand what the will of the Lord is.**"

6:5-6 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ; not in the way of eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, **doing the will of God from the heart,**

## BREAK

Other scriptures ...

Mt 10: 29-31 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without **your Father's will**. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value ten many sparrows.

Mark.3 [35] Whoever **does the will of God** is my brother, and sister, and mother."

John.7 [17] if any man's will is to **do his will**, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.

John.9 [31] We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshiper of God and **does his will**, God listens to him.

Acts.22 [14] And he said, `The God of our fathers appointed you to **know his will**, to see the Just One and to hear a voice from his mouth;

Rom.8 [27-28] And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints **according to the will of God**. We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to **his purpose**.

Rom.9 [18-21] So then, he has mercy upon **whomever he wills**, and he hardens the heart of **whomever he wills**. You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, a man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me thus?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use?

Rom.12 [2] Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is **the will of God**, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Col.1 [9] And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with **the knowledge of his will** in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

1Thes.4 [3] For **this is the will of God**, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity;

1Thes.5 [18] give thanks in all circumstances; for this is **the will of God** in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Tim 2:3-4 This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, **who desires all men to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Heb.10 [36] For you have need of endurance, so that you may do **the will of God** and receive what is promised.

Heb.13 [21] equip you with everything good **that you may do his will**, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1Pet.4 [2] Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought, for whomever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer by human passions but **by the will of God**.

1John.2 [17] And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does **the will of God** abides for ever.

1John.5 [14] And this is the confidence which we have in him, that **if we ask anything according to his will** he hears us.

All of these emphasize that there is a profound mystery in understanding / explaining / discerning the will of God?

- Yet, we are called to discern it, pray for it, and live according to it.
- Two extreme interpretations:
  1. Everything happens according to God's purposeful will;
  2. Everything happens freely, though God has foreknowledge of everything.
- The truth is, **BOTH** are somehow true! The mystery of God's will.
- Example: movement of our hands...
  - a. Chose to move it to one side, open and close fist: was this God's will?
  - b. What if we chose to use hand to hurt, to rob, to commit suicide? God's will?
- The phrase "God's will" has two aspects:
  - a. What He has planned and carries out according to His providence;
  - b. What He has declared is right and true and therefore desires us to do.

#### How, therefore, to we move on from here with this issue:

1. Know that God created us;
2. That He loves us (1 John 4:10, 19, "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins....we love, because he first loved us.")
3. That he has a plan for our lives;
4. That He desires us to be saved (1 Tim 2:4);
5. That He desires us to be holy (Eph 1:4, ...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.)
6. That He never tempts us to do evil (James 1:13-14, "Let no one say what he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.")
7. That in prayer and under the guidance of the Church, we can discern His will for our lives and obtain the grace to do it. (*Catechism, 1787-8, "Man is sometimes confronted by situations that make moral judgments less assured and decision difficult. But he must always seriously seek what is right and good and discern the will of God expressed in divine law. To this purpose, man strives to interpret the data of experience and the signs of the times assisted by the virtue of prudence, by the advice of competent people, and by the help of the Holy Spirit and his gifts."*)
8. What about vocation? Proverbs 3:5-7  
Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
And do not rely on your own insight.  
In all your ways acknowledge him,  
And he will make straight your paths.  
Be not wise in your own eyes;  
Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.