

You need to believe daily; you should tell the Lord specifically, “Lord, I am useless. I accept your cross. Lord, keep me so that I make no move. Under every circumstance, Lord, You take the initiative. Lord, You are the Lord and so You live.” Let me tell you, if you thus look to the Lord and trust Him daily, you will also be able to daily testify that it is indeed no longer you who lives but Christ who lives in you.

“And that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God.” What does Christ living in me mean? It simply means that hereafter I live in the faith of the Son of God. I daily believe that the Son of God lives in me. “Lord, I believe You live for me. Lord, I believe You are my life, and I believe that You live in me.” As I thus believe and so live, I will no longer make any move no matter what happens. If one has not learned well the basic teaching of Romans 7, he is a useless person. The basic lesson there is that one should not make resolutions. In other words, its basic lesson is to see the futility of making resolutions and thus to quit making them. If resistance is useless, hereafter I will not resist. If my action is vain, henceforth I will not move. I will tell the Lord, “Lord, hereafter I will not do it a gain. I am finished.”

Learn to look up, not to do something. We are saved by faith, not by works, and our life is of faith, not of works. We are saved by looking up to the Lord, and so shall we live in the same way. Let us look up and say, “It is You, not I.” As in initial salvation it was not anything I did but what the Lord did, so today I live on earth not by myself but by the Lord. Learn to believe in the Son of God. Say to the Lord, “Lord, You are the One whom I believe. Everything depends on You. I would that You live in me.”

I do not insist that you say these words. But I do ask, do you have this foundation? Brethren, are you clear about this? Defeat is not caused by less work but by too much of the work of man. When we are working, God’s grace cannot come to us, and so our sins are not

forgiven. Likewise, in our much working, the life of the Lord cannot be manifested. This is a principle to be remembered.

The efficacy of the cross can never be manifested in those who trust in their works. If I always try to do good, I will not be saved. But when I cease trusting myself and look up to the Lord, then I am saved. It is the same today. If the cross has not worked in me, I will be working all the time. In such a condition, for me to say, “Not I, but Christ,” would be empty. I must learn to condemn myself. I am such a completely hopeless person that I neither try nor pray. I am just quiet. On this sure foundation, I raise my head and say, “Lord, I trust You to live in me. I trust You to be humble for me. I trust You to overcome for me. I trust You to manifest Your life. You are to live my whole life for me.” Let me tell you, what you say, the Lord will do for you. If your conduct contradicts your faith, you cannot expect the Lord to do anything for you. This is something you must settle thoroughly.

As soon as a person believes in the Lord, he should start to let Christ live in him. He will immediately experience Christ as his life and he will always be afraid of his own actions. What Romans 7 reveals is the activity of the dead. The man is already dead, yet he still wants to be active. Consequently, he destroys the work of God. Let us therefore learn to live before God—make no move by ourselves, but only move in obedience to the Lord. At that moment, we can really believe. Unless the foundation is right, the Christian life will always be weak. So new

believers must be helped to this proper foundation. 111

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the Importance of Knowing God's Will

What we will now consider is how a believer can know the will of God. For the lack of such knowledge causes

Before one became a Christian, he lived in the lusts of his flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind. By nature, he was a child of wrath. Because he served only himself, he tried to please his own self in all things. He would do whatever made him happy. But after he believes in the Lord, he acknowledges Jesus of Nazareth as his Lord whom he will serve. Because he is redeemed, he no longer belongs to himself. He confesses that, having been bought with a price, he is the Lord's and to Him he will render his service.

Because of this, from the day he is saved a child of God undergoes a drastic change in his life. Formerly he felt frustrated if he could not do as he wanted but happy if he could do according to his desire. Such happiness was derived from his own will. But now, his center is changed, for he has a Lord. If he still lives according to his own will, as before, he will not be satisfied; on the contrary, he will feel most uncomfortable.

After you are saved, you discover that the cause of your discomfort lies in following your own will. The more you do things according to your desire, the less happy you are. But if instead of following your own thought you learn to follow God by the new life in you, you will have peace and joy. This, indeed, is a wonderful change. To do God's will is joyful. Never for a moment think that following your own will make you happy. The way to happiness is not in following your will but in following the will of God.

TWnewThis is of great importance, great damage to His service. **h** 114 Not I But Christ

The life we have received has a primary demand: we should walk according to God's will. The more we do God's will, the happier we are. The less we walk in our own way, the straighter our path before God is. If we do not live according to our own mind, we will have a more ascendant life in God's presence. But if we follow our own will, the going will get harder. Happiness is found in obedience, not in self-will.

This is something which should be shown to new believers. When we believe in the Lord, we go through a change at the very core of our being. The first question we now ask is, "What shall I do, Lord?" Paul asked this question; we too ask. Whenever we meet a problem, we should humble ourselves under the hand of God, saying, "Not according to my will, but according to Your will."

No matter how difficult the circumstance or trial, we are to learn obedience by saying, "Lord, not my will, but Your Will." In deciding our future or in choosing our way, we must lay it before the Lord and say, "Lord, not my will, but Your will be done."

Brethren, as soon as you become a Christian, you should start to accept God's thought. His will alone should govern everything. No one should live according to his own idea. You will be saved many unnecessary wanderings if you are soft and tender before God and learn from the start to submit to His will. The reason many fail in their Christian lives is because they follow their own wills. Remember, to walk according to your own will will give you nothing but sorrow and spiritual poverty. Eventually God will still bring you around to following His will, but He will have to get your submission through special circumstances or unusual dealings. If you were not His child, He could let you go. But since you are His child, He will in His own way steer you onto the road of obedience. All your disobedience will merely cause you to wander unnecessarily. In the end, you will yet obey.

How to Know the Will of God

How can we know God's will? So often we make mistakes. It is not easy for us earth people to understand God's will. However, we have one comfort before God: it is not only that we desire to do God's will, but also God Himself wants us to do it.

We seek to understand His will, and He calls us to know it. Since He wants us to do His will, surely He will enable us to understand. Therefore, it is God's business to reveal His will to us. No child of God need worry about how can he do God's will when he has no knowledge of it. Although it is quite difficult to know God's will, to worry about it is unnecessary. Somehow, God will make His will known to us.

Let us learn to believe that since God wants us to do His will He will surely make it known to us. He will use appropriate means to show us what it is. The responsibility of the Master is to make His will known to the servants; the servants are then to obey. If our attitude and intention are that of obedience, we shall see that the Lord will be responsible to tell us His will. Were it not so, then He would be responsible if we did anything wrong. So young believers should learn to trust God to reveal His will to them.

By what means can you know the will of God? There are three things to which you must pay attention. When these three factors fit together, you can be rather sure of what the will of God is. But if these three do not line up, if one of them does not harmonize with the others, then you know you have to wait further before God.

What are these three factors? The first is environmental arrangement; the second, inner sensing of the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and the third, scriptural teaching. Of course, this does not mean that they must be in this order; it simply means that all three are necessary and that when they agree and give the same testimony, 115 116 Not I But Christ

then you know the will of God. Whenever one of the three does not agree with the others, you know you must not be hasty but should wait. The point requiring your care is to not be hasty nor try to force anything. Take action only after these three factors dovetail.

1. ENVIRONMENTAL ARRANGEMENT

Let us look at the factor of environment first. The Bible tells us, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?” (Matt. 10:29). In another place, it says, “Are not five sparrows sold for two pence?” (Lk. 12: 6). Mathematically, if one penny buys two sparrows, then two pence would buy four sparrows. But the Lord says, two pence will buy five sparrows. This shows how cheap sparrows were. One penny for two, two pence for five, the extra one being added without cost. Yet not even this fifth sparrow could fall to the ground apart from the will of God.

I do not wish to speak of the first or second sparrow, but of the fifth one. Unless it is God’s will, this fifth sparrow will not fall to the ground—though it was bought without price, simply being added to the purchase. Thus, the Bible indicates to us that all environmental arrangements, all things which happen in the environment, are expressions of the will of God. No one shall fall to the ground outside of the will of the heavenly Father. Hence, if you see a sparrow on the ground you have met with the will of God.

Let us use human hair as an illustration. Africans have at least an aggregate of eighty to ninety thousand hairs; Chinese have at most a hundred to a hundred and ten thousand; those with light hair have an aggregate of a hundred and twenty thousand hairs. The range therefore is from eighty thousand to a hundred and twenty thousand. Each day many hairs fall and many hairs grow upon our heads. Some believe that our hair changes completely every few years. Yet our Lord says, “Thou canst not make one hair white or black” (Matt. 5:36) without the Father’s will. He also says, “But the very hairs of

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your head are all numbered” (Matt. 10:30). No one knows how many hairs he has. Who has ever counted his hairs? But God has; He has numbered all of them. No person can make his hair naturally white or black; it takes the will of God to make such a change.

New believers ought to learn to know God’s will through their environment. There is nothing in our lives that is accidental. Every day’s happenings are measured by the Lord. We need to see that everything in our lives—events, families, husbands, wives, children, schoolmates, relatives—everything is arranged for us by the Lord. Things which befall us daily are all within the Father’s ordering. We must learn to know God’s will in the environment. This is the first factor.

Many new believers have not yet learned how to be led of the Holy Spirit; they may know very little of the teaching of the Bible. God, though, is still able to guide them, for they can at least see the hand of God in their environment. This is the very first step.

“Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have not understanding; whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in, else they will not come near unto thee” (Ps. 32:9). It sometimes seems as if God has to hold us with bit and bridle, or else we will go astray. We are as ignorant as the horse and the mule which need to be held by the outward restraint of bit and bridle. As new believers we may pray in this manner, “Lord, I am an ignorant mule.” Even older brothers and sisters may also pray, “Lord, I am but a horse or a mule, without understanding. I am not too clear on Your Word or on Your guidance. Please hold me with bit and bridle and do not allow me to go astray.”

Trust yourself to the Lord that He will lead you into obedience by placing you in a particular environment. He is able to do this. Have you ever seen how the duck farmer uses a long staff to drive his ducks? He uses a staff more than twenty feet long. With this staff he

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keeps the ducks on the right course. When the ducks go to one side, he beats them back. Likewise, you can commit yourself to the Lord saying, "Lord, I am a horse, I am a mule with no understanding. But I do not want to go astray. How good it would be if I knew Your will. But since I do not, will You please hold me with bit and bridle? I am so void of understanding that I will run away if You loose the bit and bridle. I ask You to encircle me, to drive me to Your will. If I want to run a way, I pray You will interfere. Though I know nothing, I do know pain. So please interfere when I do not want Your will."

Do not neglect the arrangement of environment. We need to commit ourselves to the environmental arrangement of the Lord. Although we are like a horse or a mule, with no understanding, inglorious, nevertheless, our being restrained by God is something of exceeding glory.

I do not know what your experience is, but I often feel that a very big problem with many new brothers and sisters is their constant striving against environment. They will not submit; rather, they fight to free themselves from their present circumstances. Such people cannot but be wounded. If they learned to submit to the environment, their path would be much straighter. So do learn to know that the Lord's arrangement in your environment is right. Do not resist what the Lord has done in this respect.

2. GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We have seen how the hand of God is manifested in our environment. God does not want us to be like the horse or the mule which has no understanding. He will give us guidance from within. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). Who can be led by the Spirit of God? The sons of God can, for the Holy Spirit leads us from within. God will not only guide us through environment but also will lead us by His life in our spirit. Remember, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit; we do have Him in us.

Because of this, God can make His will known to us in the deepest part of our beings.

What is the guidance of the Holy Spirit? The prophet Ezekiel tells us that when we are born anew, God gives us a new spirit. "And I will put a new spirit within you" (Ez. 11:19). He further shows us, "And I will put my Spirit within you" (Ez. 36:26-27). We need to distinguish between these two. Does God put His Spirit in us when we are born anew? No, He first gives us a new spirit, and then He gives His Spirit to us. The "new spirit" is man's spirit while "my Spirit" is God's Spirit. So at the time of new birth, God creates in us a new spirit, the human spirit, and then He puts His Spirit within us. Our spirit is like a temple, a house for the Spirit of God to dwell in.

Before we have the new spirit within us, God is unable to give us His Spirit. Were He to do so, His Spirit would not find a dwelling place. During the deluge, the earth was filled with water. God's judgment was upon the whole old creation. When the dove was set free from the ark, she could find no rest for the sole of her foot. It was not until the waters receded, the judgment passed, the old creation perished, and the new creation came in with the new olive-leaves that the dove, a gain sent forth, found a place to stay. So it is with the Spirit of God. Through the centuries, God has been most willing to give His Spirit to us. However, man's spirit is not only defiled and full of sin, but is also dead. Man's spirit longs to the old creation; its communication with God has been cut. Consequently, there is absolutely no possibility for His Spirit to dwell in man even if He wants to. For the Spirit of God to dwell in man, the man must be born anew. He needs to have a new spirit within him to provide an abode for the Spirit of God to indwell.

New believers, you have a new spirit, and the Spirit of God also dwells in you. That indwelling Spirit of God will tell you what God's will is. The witness is within you. This is a characteristic of today's believer: he not only knows through environment but also from
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within. He not only can see the Lord's arrangement in his environment but also the Lord Himself reveals within what His will is. Learn, then, to trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit within you as well as in God's arrangement of your environment. At the most appropriate moment, the time of need, the Spirit of God within you will not be dumb but will enlighten you and show you whether or not the matter is of God.

As soon as one believes in the Lord, he is able to be led by the Holy Spirit. He need not wait for some future time.

You may remember the story about "The Resident Boss." One year I was recuperating in Kuling Mountain and brother Yu was saved. Not long after he was saved, I departed. This brother drank heavily before he believed in the Lord. He especially would drink more of his homemade wine during the cold Kuling winter. Now both he and his wife were saved. He hardly knew the Chinese characters, hence he could not read the Bible very well. One day he prepared some food and warmed the wine as he had always done in the past. Before he drank, he asked the blessing. Then he asked his wife whether a Christian could drink wine. His wife answered that she did not know. He then said it was a pity that Mr. Nee had already left; otherwise he could ask him. The wife suggested that since the dishes and the wine were ready, why not drink first and afterward write a letter to ask Mr. Nee.

So he blessed the food again. Still he did not feel right. Being Christians, they felt they had to know right then if Christians could drink wine. He asked his wife to take out the Bible, for I had given him a Bible with large print after he was saved. He took a look and was frightened at the thickness of the Bible. He thought it was really a pity that he had not thought to ask Mr. Nee about drinking wine while he was still with them on the mountain.

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Later on, I met him again. I asked him what he had done that day. He said, "I did not drink the wine. You were not here, and I did not understand the Bible. But after having blessed the food three times and thought that now I could drink, the Resident Boss within me would not permit me to drink. So, I did not drink."

This story illustrates that if anyone really has the heart to know God's will, he shall know it. Only the careless believer is never clear. If a believer means to do God's will, the Resident Boss will surely tell him. You see, this is Christianity. Not only is there environmental arrangement, but also there is the teaching of the Resident Boss.

In order to know God's will, you need to know something of this inner feeling. However, you should not overemphasize it lest you fall into analysis. What you should see is simply that God's Spirit dwells in the innermost recess of man, that is, in his spirit. That is why the consciousness of the Holy Spirit cannot be shallow or external; it comes from the depth of your being. It does not sound like a voice, and yet it is like a voice. It is not exactly like a feeling, and yet it is like a feeling. The Spirit of the Lord within you will tell you what is His will and what is not His will. If you are the Lord's, when you follow the movement of this life, you have the sense of being right. But if you rebel a little or resist, you feel upset and uncomfortable within you.

Obedience is life to the believer. Do not do anything about which you do not feel peaceful in heart. Whenever you are not at peace, you know the Holy Spirit within you has been displeased. How can the Holy Spirit in you be grieved and you still be joyful? If something is of the Lord, you can undertake it with peace in your heart. If it is not of the Lord, you will not have peace within. The more you do it, the less at peace you are and the less assurance you have. That which is the Lord's leading will naturally give you peace and life. However, you should not analyze your inner feeling too much. 121 122 Not I But Christ

During the past twenty years, I have received enough letters and met enough people to certify how often Christians try to examine their inner feelings. After they are told of the separation of spirit and soul, they start to analyze themselves day in and day out. They inwardly become a laboratory where they unceasingly analyze what is right and what is not right. This is most unhealthy and is a symptom of sickness. We should not allow God's children to do that.

Because one is a child of God, he will know what the feeling in the spirit is. If he knows that something comes from the spirit, that is enough. Should he enter into analysis of his feelings, he must be led away. We hope that God's children will avoid that hardship. Do not analyze your feelings all the time. The only time you need to do that is when there is not enough light. If the light is sufficient, there is no need for analysis. You will know right away. By the Spirit of God within you, you will be clear on all things. If you will to obey God, you will know within you what His will is.

3. SCRIPTURAL TEACHING

The will of God is not only manifested in environment and by His indwelling Holy Spirit, it is also made known to us through the Bible. His will has been revealed many times in the past, and this is recorded in the Holy Scripture. God's will is one will, not two or ten or a hundred or even a thousand wills. God's will is one. He does not change today from yesterday. His will remains the same forever. For this reason, God's children must know the Bible. In it they will find the revelation of God's will.

The way which God views a thing today is the same as He viewed it in the past. What He condemned before, He condemns now. That which He delighted in before is still His delight today. The Bible is the place where God reveals His mind. God manifested His own will concerning many people and many things in the former days. All these are recorded in the Bible. Since God's will is uniform, there are

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already a number of examples written in the Bible to show us what it is. It is absolutely impossible for God to condemn something today which He has approved in the Bible. Likewise, the Holy Spirit today will never lead us to do that which God has already denounced in the Bible. The will of God is one.

The Bible reveals the will of God in a most comprehensive way. It is not a book telling only about a few lives or touching upon just two or three items. No, the Bible is most comprehensive; it covers everything. For a person to know God's will, he must look into the Bible. He must be like a judge who looks into the many court decisions of the past in order to reach the present decision. The court decision of today is based on the laws of yesterday. God's will has already been revealed in the Bible. By looking into the decisions in His Word concerning different matters, you know what God is after today. God does not change His mind now and then. In Christ it is all yea and amen. If God decides on anything, He will carry it out to the end.

Therefore, in order to know God's will, at the very least you have the most trustworthy Word of God before you. In many matters you will be able to know God's will just by reading His Word. God will never do things differently today from what He did in the Bible. There can be increase but never contradiction. God's will is one. For a new believer to know the things of God, he needs to read the Word of God much. Since he may never have read God's Word before he became a Christian, he ought to read it carefully now so that he may learn to know God and His will.

GOD'S WILL KNOWN IN THE AGREEMENT OF THESE THREE FACTORS

These three factors together manifest the will of God—environment, man's spirit, and the Bible. By the agreement of these three we learn to know the will of God. What should we do if we desire to seek God's will in a particular matter? For us to be sure, 123 124 Not I But Christ

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the methods of knowing God's will, you still will know it. God must show you His will. He must reveal His heart to you. He may even use the lightning in the sky to communicate His mind to you. No believer needs to wait for years before he comes to know God's will. We wish all believers would present their all to God from the very first day. Rather that they should offer their hearts than that the Christian standard be lowered. 129