“LORD, Thy Will Be Done” 8/06/2017

Ephesians 5:1-17

Please take your Bible with me and open to Acts 21.

There are many mysteries in life. Now, when I say “mystery,” I mean that it is something that is somewhat difficult to explain. For example, life itself is a mystery. Human emotions are a mystery. Marriage is a mystery. Birth is a mystery. Suffering is a mystery. War is a mystery. There’s even a somewhat mysterious aspect to the Person of God Himself.

Here is Forest Lawn Memorial Park cemetery in Glendale, CA. In the park there’s a life-sized statue titled “The Mystery of Life.” It was sculpted by Ernesto Gazzeri back in the 1940’s. Gazzeri wanted to convey that all the walks of life from a child to an elderly person have mystery to them. So, what does he call it? “The Mystery of Life.”

And then there are those who say that the will of God is one of those mysteries in life. And, although that may be partially true. But, if that were the case, why does the Apostle Paul pray this prayer for the Colossian Christians? Colossians 1:9 *“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;…”*

In answer to prayer, God expected that the Christians I Colosse would be “filled with the knowledge of His will.” I want to say something about God’s will today. I’ve read quite a number of books and articles on the subject. And books take on these sorts of questions. Well, what is it? How to find it? How can you know the will of God? Etc., and etc. So, yes, I agree that there is a sense of mystery regarding God’s will. But only in the sense that it hasn’t been completely revealed to you.

I’ve titled today’s message “LORD, Thy Will Be Done.” Shall we pray?

Let me begin today with a clarification. I want to make distinction for you between the sovereign will of God and the revealed will of God.

The sovereign will of God is a true mystery. It’s something known only unto God. And inside God’s sovereign will is everyone and every event. It’s sometimes referred to by theologians as the decree of God. And you could never know the decree of God until it occurs.

Here’s the Scripture on this. Ephesians 1:11 *“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of* ***him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will****: (12) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”*

God works everything in your life together for good. How? We really don’t know. But, what we do know is that it is “after the counsel of His own will.”

So, we have the sovereign will of God, which only God knows that.

But we also have His *revealed* will. And that encompasses everything thing made know to us; specifically what He’s revealed in the Bible. So, simply put, God’s will is what He’s given to us in Scripture. Everything that you learn in the Bible is God’s will. There are principles. There are commands. There are examples of how to walk so that you please Him. You have a Book He has written in order for you to learn His will. So, practically speaking, the more you know the Word, the more you know His will.

We’ve come in our study in the Book of Acts to the 21st chapter. And here in Acts 21 we find Paul, in essence, living by and, in essence, saying these same words that once came from the lips of Jesus, *“nevertheless, Thy will be done.”*

Without a doubt, Jesus knew His Father’s will. Galatians 1:2 *“Who gave Himself for our sins … according to the will of God.”*

So, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus comes to His Father in prayer, He knew what was soon to happen. He knew He’d be taken by the Scribes and Pharisees and put to death. He knew this was the Father’s reason for sending Him to us. But, He still asked if it were possible to remove that cup. And then He prays *“nevertheless, Thy will be done.”*

Now, before we read the passage, let me ask you this. Have you ever been talked out of something? Can you remember the last time you decided to do a particular thing and someone tried to dissuade you? Well, to show you just how up-to-date the Bible is, watch with me as some people attempt to dissuade Paul from doing what he intended to do.

Please follow with me in your Bible at Acts 21:1. Acts 21:1 *“And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: (2) And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.*

*(3) Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. (4) And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.”*

Just a note here from verse one. Coos and Rhodes are islands in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Turkey. Coos is one of the smallest and Rhodes is the largest in this area. You might remember reading or studying about one of the Seven Great Wonders of the World. The one on the island of Rhodes is called the Colossus of Rhodes, which stood just about as high as the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. The Colossus was an idol to which people worshipped the sun. It was destroyed in an earthquake in 226 B.C., long before the Apostle Paula and his team arrived there.

In verse one again, we see Paul arriving at Patara. Patara is another seaport on southern the coast of Turkey. In Paul’s day it had a population of some 20,000. And the most significant site at Patara in Paul’s day was the Temple of Apollo (which, by the way, has yet to be discovered). And, for just one more historical note, St. Nicholas was born here. Nicholas was a Pastor in the city of Patara; the same St. Nicholas that came to be the basis for Santa Claus.

Acts 21:1-3 presents Paul and his team traveling by ship. Now notice verse three again. Acts 21:3 “*Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.”*

Paul is at Tyre. It’s in the country of modern day Lebanon. And the modern name of Tyre is Sur. Here you see it on the map. Tyre is a man-made island off the coast of Sidon and connected to the mainland by a causeway.

Now, think with me about this. Paul has just spent ten years traveling no less than 2,000 miles both by land and by sea preaching the Gospel. And, during those ten years, Paul and his team of missionary evangelists have ministered the Gospel to no less than twenty-five cities and towns throughout the Roman Empire. And it’s been estimated that he’s reached as many as 200,000 people with the Good News of Jesus Christ. We also know that he was involved with the establishment of no less than fourteen Churches. As you can see, that’s more than one Church per year. So, Paul has arrived by ship to Tyre.

And, as I’ve read and re-read the Bible, I wonder whether anyone ever gave the Apostle Paul advice. So, what do we find in Acts twenty-one? We find not once, but twice, God’s people giving Paul advice.

Here’s Acts 21:4 *“And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.”*

Some of those on Tyre had heard the message of salvation and were now growing disciples. And what did they advise Paul? “Do not go up to Jerusalem.”

We put a lot of emphasis today upon getting good advice. But, what’s the most important thing when it comes to advice? Isn’t it the source? Isn’t it who’s giving you the advice? Are they credible? How many times have you heard this phrase “consider the source”?

Well, I’m sure of this one thing. The reason for the advice given to Paul by the disciples at Tyre is this. They thought he would be risking his life if he, a Jew, now a Jewish Believer in Christ, was seen in Jerusalem.

So, practically speaking, they were concerned for Paul’s safety. And they didn’t want him to take the risk. So, most advice is well-meaning.

But consider this. Didn’t Peter give Jesus advice when it came to going to Jerusalem?

Turn with me to Matthew chapter sixteen. Matthew 16:13 *“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? (14) And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.*

*(15) He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? (16) And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. (17) And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”*

Wow! Peter is right on. He concluded that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, the Son of the God. And Jesus commended him.

But look at what happens in the very next conversation. Matthew 16:21 *“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*

*(22) Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. (23) But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”*

Peter, in essence was giving Jesus advice, saying it was too risky. He had confidence that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and the Son of the Living God. But when it came to Jesus suffering and dying at the hands of the Jewish leaders and then rising from the dead, Peter thought he knew better than Jesus. So he gave him advice.

And Jesus made it very plain where that advice was really coming from. *“Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”*

Was Peter giving Jesus good advice? Wasn’t it right that Peter should be concerned about the LORD’s welfare? And weren’t the disciples at Tyre giving Paul good advice? Weren’t they genuinely concerned about his welfare? Yes, yes, and yes.

But, there’s something larger than good advice here. And that is the will of God.

And, the disciples at Tyre weren’t the only ones giving Paul advice. Look with me at Acts 21 again and verse eight. Acts 21:8 *“And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. (9) And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.*

*(10) And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. (11) And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.*

*(12) And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.”*

So, not only do you have Christians genuinely concerned for Paul’s safety. We also have a prophet coming to Paul, telling him that the Holy Spirit is saying that Paul would be arrested, bound, and delivered to the Gentiles.

Now, some Bible scholars say that Paul couldn’t take advice and that he shouldn’t have gone to Jerusalem, especially after hearing this prophet. But, they’re wrong.

It was clearly God’s will for Paul to suffer, to be arrested, and to be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. That was clearly what the Holy Spirit had said to him through this prophet, Agabus.

So, when the Christians then said “Don’t go up to Jerusalem,” Paul could only do one thing; do the will of God.

Advice, folks, is just that, advice. Even when the source is good, even when people are truly concerned about your welfare, it’s still advice.

But, what will really matter today and tomorrow and ten years down the road, is this “Did you do the will of God?” here’s how the Apostle John put it.

I John 2:17 *“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”*

What was God’s will for Paul? Was it that he not suffer? Acts 9:10 *“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. (11) And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,*

*(12) And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. (13) Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:*

*(14) And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. (15) But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: (16) For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.”*

And what was Paul’s goal in light of God’s will? Acts 19:21 *“After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”*

Notwithstanding suffering; notwithstanding the risk to himself; Paul had one over-arching principle he followed. He was here to do the will of God.

Folks, there is no higher principle than this; no higher concern that you need as a Christian and this. Psalm 143:10 *“Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God:”*

And how can you be sure you are doing the LORD’s will? Ask yourself what is it that delights you heart most? Psalm 40:8 *“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”*

And what prayer will you prayer each day regarding the LORD’s will? Matthew 6:10 *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”*

And what was it that the LORD Himself prayed in the Garden? Matthew 26:42 *“He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”*

What would you say the main reason for God, the Holy Spirit, writing the Bible? Isn’t it that the Bible would reveal to you just what the LORD’s will for you is?

And when you are faced with difficulties this week, don’t ask the LORD to remove those difficult things or difficult people. Instead, surrender with the prayer of your heart “I delight to do Thy will, O my God” Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou are my God.”

Someone once compared knowing God’s will to the knowledge of a pilot. *“A pilot cannot always see what is coming, particularly in bad weather. At best he can see only about a hundred miles. And yet he can fly his aircraft safely in all weather because the course is marked out for him by radar. If he deviates either to the right or to the left, the radar warns him accordingly.”* [J. M. Boice in “How To Know The Will of God” found on [www.oneplace.com](http://www.oneplace.com)].

Yes, there is a mysterious aspect of God’s will. That’s His decree and it’s known only to Him. But there is also a non-mysterious aspect to His will. And that is “What do say in your Word about this, LORD?” He cannot and will not direct you into doing anything contrary to this revealed will; contrary to these words.

Should you walk in God’s will this week? Yes. Can you walk in His will this week? Yes. So, will you walk in His will this week? Why not say yes again?

Here’s Romans 12:1 *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

God’s purposes for your life may not be fully understood until we stand with Him in glory. So, in the meantime, learn His word. Listen to the Spirit as He speaks to you through the pages of your Bible. Ask the LORD for His will and His enablement to do it. You will find that God’s will is not a mystery, but a constant calling to your heart to do what is pleasing to Him.

So, who here, will say to the LORD *“LORD, show me Your will. I am leaning on you to enable me to do one thing today, Your will.”*

In conclusion, do you remember the words of Jesus in the story about the two men who built their houses, one on the shifting sand and the other on solid rock? Here’s what He said to those listening that day. Matthew 6:24 *“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: (25) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

*(26) And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: (27) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”*

Go out this week with the LORD’s strength upon you to do one thing; the LORD’s will.

And, last, if you’ve never repented and received Jesus Christ as your Savior, today is the day you need that. Today you need to Repent and to Believe.

* To Repent = I change my mind about God, Christ, my sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe = I simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for my sins.

Salvation Prayer*. “LORD, I admit that I am a sinner and deserve judgment for my sins. I believe Jesus died in my place on the Cross to remove that judgment. Please save me today. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”*

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 705 “It Is Well With My Soul”