

July 26, 2015

## *Discovering God's Will for You*

*"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."*

Matthew 7:12

In our present series we have been talking about finding and following the will of God for our lives. In our search for God's will we turn first and foremost to Scripture. In Scripture God shows us his will primarily through direct and specific commandments and most particularly the two commandments that Jesus calls the most important. That is to *"Love the Lord you God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind..."* and to *"Love your neighbor as yourself."*

Love is a difficult concept to define and it makes obedience to these commands harder for us. Jesus, understanding this, makes it even easier for us to obey. *"So,"* he commands, *"in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you."*

Two things come out of this clarification. First, we really have no way of practically demonstrating our love to God except through our love expressed to others. And second, it is through our attitudes and behaviors to others that we demonstrate our love for God.

The standard of our love for others is set in this 'golden rule.' Every action and attitude toward others must be measured against this standard. In Luke's account of the greatest commandment question Jesus clarifies how we ought to love others even more. We call his answer the parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25-37)

Through these commands and through this parable Jesus, I think, makes his point clearly. God's will for us is that above all else we would constantly show our love to others in the most practical ways possible. Doing God's will is always for us to show our love for him and for others in demonstrable ways. In contrast then, failing to show others our love in practical ways makes us disobedient sinners.

I am convinced that all of us understand this fundamental concept, but we also find it extraordinarily difficult to live it from day to day. How can we constantly and consistently show others the practical love and respect which we would covet from them?

The secret is, I think, found in the Apostle Paul's fruit of the Spirit. He writes, *"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like...But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."* (Galatians 5:19-23)

The final fruit is, I am convinced, the secret to all the rest. The Spirit produces the changes within us by helping us to understand the power we have in self-control. I always have the power to choose my attitudes and actions. They are never dictated to me. I can choose to be kind or I can choose to be unkind. I can choose to judge others harshly or I can choose to be patient and forgiving. In every situation I can choose to be guided by the 'golden rule' or I can choose to ignore it.

Understand that Satan and his powers of darkness do not want us to access the power we have in self-control. He wants us to believe that we, in fact, have no control over our own actions and attitudes. He wants us to believe the lie that we must act toward others in harsh, critical and judgmental ways because their actions demand it.

If the measure of our condemnation becomes the standard by which we will be measured as Jesus assures us it will be, then learning to love all others unconditionally and practically is essential to our salvation. We have received grace and forgiveness. How can we deny grace and forgiveness? We have received God's overwhelming outpouring of love. How then can we deny love to others?

I have the power to choose what I think about others, how I judge others, what I say about others and what I do to them. I can choose to reflect God's love for me by choosing to love practically or I can choose to reject God's will for my life and think and act just like those who do not know Him. The choice is always mine.

