

## **Walking in the Will of God – Part 1**

### **Acts 16:6-12**

#### **Introduction:**

1. “Pastor, how can I know if this is God’s will?” “How can I know if I am walking in God’s will?” “How do I discern God’s will?” These are very common questions that come to me.
2. Many believers live very frustrated Christian lives because they mistakenly think:
  - God’s will always manifests itself in outward, tangible blessings. They reason, “If circumstances are bad, I must be out of God’s will.”
  - God’s will is based on inner, subjective feelings. If I feel unhappy or frustrated, I must be out of God’s will.
  - God’s will is based upon some fore-ordained plan. Therefore, I am always trying to **find** God’s will or fearful I missed it.
3. When we do not rightly divide God’s Word, we can easily take Scripture passages (like our text today) out of context, and make false assumptions about how God works and how God’s will is revealed to the believer today.
4. When it comes to this matter of God’s will, there are two key components:

#### **First, we must discern God’s will.**

1. In our text, notice what happens to Paul and his missionary team. vs. 6-7
  - How did the Holy Spirit forbid them from preaching in Asia? We do not know. The Scripture does not tell us, but God made it very clear to Paul.
  - How did the Holy Spirit keep them from going into Bithynia? We don’t know.
2. At Troas, notice what happened (vs. 8-9). Paul received a divine vision in the night. The gospel of Christ needed to go into Macedonia. Several questions we need to ask:
  - Is this the typical way that we see God making His will known in Scripture? This never happened during Paul’s entire first missionary journey.
  - Does this kind of thing happen often after this?
    - This is the last time in Scripture we see some sort of “supernatural” call.
  - Should we discern God’s will today by waiting on a divine vision?
    - Nowhere are we instructed as members of the body of Christ to wait on or even expect this type of leading from God.
3. God has a specific purpose in mind when “supernatural” things like this happen in biblical history. Example: Red Sea, manna from heaven, water from a rock, Lazarus, etc.
  - The Red Sea was parted once, water came from a rock twice, people were raised from the dead only a handful of times, etc. There were very specific reasons why God did these things.

4. In our text, the gospel of Christ was relatively new. It was just beginning to go out to the world, the Word of God was still being given by God, and in this Acts time period God had a very specific plan for the most expedient way of getting the gospel out.
  - This was a very unique time in history, as God's revelation and the gospel of Christ were being given to man.
5. So how does God reveal His will to us **today**? How do **we** discern God's will?
6. You do **not** discern God's will through subjective inner feelings.
  - Our feelings can lead us astray. I've asked people, "Why did you do that?" They say, "The Lord **led** me to do it." When you question them further, you discover that they simply felt an inner impression or prompting of their inner feelings.
  - A feeling is an emotional state or reaction. Feelings have no intellect, but rather are responses designed to respond to your thinking. This is why it is dangerous to run your life based on how you feel. (What if somebody **feels** like shooting you?)
  - Many people live under the tyranny of their emotions, but this is not how God created you in Christ to live, and that is why it is so frustrating to live like that.
7. The Bible speaks of being "*led of the Spirit*" and "*being filled with the Spirit,*" and "*walking in the Spirit.*" Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:16, 18, 25
  - What does this refer to? This is not speaking of some subjective decision-making process based on our feelings, inner impressions, or some supposed divine vision based on an outward circumstance.
8. Believers discern God's will as the Holy Spirit **reveals** to us God's Word (1 Corinthians 2:10, 12-13) and **reminds** us of God's Word. John 14:26
9. God's will and God's plans were progressively made known throughout history as recorded in God's Word. There is progressive revelation. God's plans for this dispensation of grace were once a mystery, hidden in God's mind. Ephesians 3:3-5
  - But now, God has fully manifested and revealed His will to man. Ephesians 1:8-9, 3:9-10
  - God revealed His plans and His truth through the apostle Paul. This divine manifestation of truth fulfilled (completed) God's holy Word. Colossians 1:25-27
10. God's will has now been fully revealed in His Word. God has a plan and purpose for members of the body of Christ, and it is described and fully revealed in His Word.
11. Once you are saved, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell you and help you understand God's Word, and also fill you with wisdom in how to apply it to the details of your life.
  - The Word of God is called "*the sword of the Spirit*" (Ephesians 6:17). The Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and renews our minds (thinking processes) so that we will live out God's revealed will in our daily lives and in the decisions that we make daily. Romans 12:2

12. Through the completed Word of God and the indwelling Holy Spirit, God has enabled the believer to make wise choices. We no longer need visions, dreams, audible voices, or any other supernatural occurrence to help us discern God's will. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
  - As the old saying goes, "It's in black and white." The Holy Spirit takes those words from God and teaches us, and then reminds us of His Word when we need it.
  - The Holy Spirit doesn't work independently of God's Word. Ephesians 6:17
13. God treats us as full-grown adults within His family (Galatians 4). He gives us the privilege and responsibility to look at life and, with the Spirit's help, apply the truth of God's Word and make wise choices and wise decisions. Galatians 4:6-7
14. God the Holy Spirit is actively involved in the believer's life, not in some feelings-based way, but through the objective working of the Word of God **in you**, that you believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13). We walk by faith in God's Word, not by sight.
  - **Example:** Who do I marry? God gives you the principles in His Word, the Holy Spirit teaches you those principles as you study, and then you are responsible to go out and apply them. 1 Corinthians 7:39 ("*to whom she will*")