

THE WILL OF GOD

(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six

Doing the Will of God in the Kingdom of God under the Government of God for the Church as the Israel of God

Scripture Reading: 1 John 2:17; Matt. 7:21; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:24; 5:6-7, 10; Gal. 6:10, 15-16

I. We need to do the will of God in the kingdom of God—Matt. 7:21; 12:50:

- A. “He who does the will of God abides forever”—1 John 2:17:
 - 1. The world is against God the Father, and the things in the world are against the will of God—vv. 15-16:
 - a. On the positive side, we have the Father and His will.
 - b. On the negative side, we have the world and the things in the world.
 - 2. We need to do the will of God habitually and continually, not just occasionally; this is indicated by the fact that the Greek verb for *does* in verse 17 denotes doing (things) habitually and continually by abiding (in the things).
- B. In order to enter into the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens in the coming age, we must do the will of our Father in this age—Matt. 7:21-23; 6:10; 12:50; Rev. 4:11; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 1:5, 9, 11; 5:17; Col. 1:9; 4:12:
 - 1. The kingdom is absolutely a matter of God’s will and completely fulfills God’s will; in fact, the kingdom is God’s will—Matt. 6:10.
 - 2. The ultimate issue of the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens is the will of the heavenly Father—7:21.
 - 3. As the kingdom people, we are on earth to do the Father’s will—v. 21; 12:50.
 - 4. In order to do the will of the Father, we need to enter in through the narrow gate and walk on the constricted way—7:13-14:
 - a. The narrow gate excludes the old man, the self, the flesh, the human concept, and the world with all its glory; only that which corresponds with God’s will can enter in.
 - b. As we walk on the constricted way, we are restricted by a mysterious, invisible, inward control, and we live under this control.
 - 5. Whoever does the will of the Father is a relative of the Lord Jesus—12:50:
 - a. Christ, the heavenly King, always submitted to the Father’s will, taking God’s will as His portion and not resisting anything—11:28-30; 26:39.
 - b. Whoever does the will of the Father is a brother who helps the Lord Jesus, a sister who sympathizes with Him, and a mother who tenderly loves Him.
 - 6. The Father’s eternal will is to build up the church upon Christ the Son as the rock—16:18; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:16.

II. In order to do the will of God in the kingdom of God, we must live the Christian life under the government of God—1 Pet. 1:17; 2:24; 5:6-7, 10:

- A. In his writings Peter combines the Christian life and God's government, revealing that the Christian life and the government of God go together as a pair—1:17; 2:21, 24; 3:15; 4:17; 5:5-8:
1. The subject of 1 Peter is the Christian life under the government of God, showing us the government of God especially in His dealings with His chosen people—1:2.
 2. The subject of 2 Peter is the divine provision and the divine government, showing us that as God is governing us, He supplies us with whatever we need—1:1-4; 3:13.
 3. God governs by judging; this judgment of God is for the carrying out of His government—1 Pet. 1:17; 4:17.
 4. The judgment in 1 Peter 1:17, which is carried out by the Father, is the present, daily judgment of God's governmental dealings with His children.
 5. God judges everything that does not match His government; therefore, in this age we, the children of God, are under the daily judgment of God—v. 17.
- B. As believers in Christ and children of God, we should live a Christian life under the government of God—John 3:15; 1:12-13; 1 Pet. 4:13-19; 5:6-7:
1. The Epistles of Peter reveal the Christ who enables us to take God's governmental dealings administered through sufferings—1 Pet. 1:6-8; 2:3-4, 19, 21-25; 3:18, 22; 4:1, 15-16; 5:8-9.
 2. In the death of Christ we have died to sins so that in the resurrection of Christ we might live to righteousness under God's government—2:24:
 - a. To live to righteousness is to fulfill God's governmental requirements—v. 24.
 - b. In our Christian life we should live in a way that matches the righteous requirements of His government—Psa. 89:14; Matt. 5:6, 10.
 3. We should be humbled under the mighty hand of God, which carries out the government of God—1 Pet. 5:6:
 - a. In verse 6 *the mighty hand of God* refers to God's administrating hand seen especially in His judgment—1:17; 4:17.
 - b. To be humbled under God's mighty hand is to be made humble by God; however, we must cooperate with God's operation and be willing to be made humble, lowly, under His mighty hand—5:6.
 4. We should cast all our anxiety on God because it matters to Him concerning us—v. 7.
 5. We should commit our souls to the faithful Creator—4:19:
 - a. God can preserve our soul, and His loving and faithful care accompanies His justice in His governmental administration.
 - b. While God judges us in His government, He cares for us faithfully in His love; as we are suffering His disciplinary judgment, we should commit our souls to the faithful care of our Creator—Matt. 10:28-30; 11:28-29.
 6. As we live under the government of God, the God of all grace will Himself perfect, establish, strengthen, and ground us—1 Pet. 5:10.

III. Doing the will of God in the kingdom of God under the government of God issues in the church as the Israel of God—Gal. 6:10, 15-16:

- A. God's New Testament economy is not only to make us sons of God but also to make us the Israel of God; the real Israel, the spiritual Israel, is the church—Eph. 1:5; Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:14, 19; Gal. 3:26; 4:6-7; 6:16; Matt. 16:18.
- B. We need to become such an Israel, a prince, to execute God's government on earth—6:9-10.
- C. The apostle Paul considered the many believers in Christ—who are the household of the faith, the new creation—collectively the Israel of God—Gal. 6:10, 15-16; 3:7, 29.
- D. In God's New Testament economy we have been made both the sons of God and the Israel of God—v. 26; 6:16:
 - 1. We are sons of God, members of God's family, for His expression—v. 10.
 - 2. We are kings-to-be, those destined to be kings; kingship is related to the Israel of God—Rev. 5:10.
 - 3. Our destiny is to be sons of God expressing God and also kings reigning in the kingdom of God—21:7; 22:5b; 12:5a.
- E. As the Israel of God, we represent God, exercise His authority, and carry out His administration on earth for the fulfillment of His purpose—Gen. 1:26, 28; Luke 10:19; Rev. 12:5, 7-11:
 - 1. God wants His creature *man* to deal with His creature *Satan* in order to bring the earth back to God—Psa. 149:7-9.
 - 2. God needs man to do the work of God—to reign over His creation, to proclaim His triumph, and to cause Satan to suffer loss—Gen. 1:26.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE MEANING OF DOING GOD'S WILL

Accomplishing the Will of God

“I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 5:30).

Doing the will of God means to not seek, follow, or accomplish our own will but to only seek, follow, and accomplish God's will. People often say that they have prayed and that they are clear that the will of God is for them to go to a certain place or for them to do a certain thing. Some say that it is God's will for them to run a business. Some say that it is God's will for them to get married. But is this reliable? Is the one who thinks that he is acting according to God's will consecrated to God, and is he living for God? Is he truly not seeking, following, or accomplishing his own will but seeking, following, and accomplishing God's will? This is not a small matter. Many who claim to be acting according to the will of God are not truly practicing the will of God, because they have not consecrated themselves to Him to live for His will. They still hold on to themselves, keep things in their own hands, and live according to their own will.

A person who truly does the will of God does not seek his own will. He only seeks the will of God. This was the Lord Jesus' pattern when He was on earth as a man. In all human history, only Jesus the Nazarene sought only the will of God and not His own will. Although He was one with God and equal to God, He willingly came to earth and stood in the position of one who was sent to do the will of God. In all things He only sought the will of Him who sent Him; He did not seek His own will. This is the meaning of doing the will of God.

“Behold, I have come (in the roll of the book it is written concerning Me) to do Your will, O God” (Heb. 10:7).

When He came to earth, the Lord spoke the words in this verse to God. This shows that the Lord did the will of God according to what was written in the Scriptures. Consequently, we should realize that any practice of the will of God must be according to the Word of God, the Bible. The Bible reveals the entire will of God in all its aspects. Whatever He wants to complete in us, whatever He wants us to do, and how He wants us to do it are revealed, in principle, in the Bible. If we truly want to do the will of God, if we truly want to seek His will, we must know the Bible and consider what the Word of God says concerning every matter. We must find God's will, in principle, concerning every matter from the Bible. Those who want to do the will of God and act according to God's will cannot be sloppy with the Bible but must spend a considerable amount of time to read it carefully.

If we want to do the will of God, we cannot simply do what we think is the will of God. We cannot simply pray a few times and say with certainty that this or that is the will of God. Such a way is not reliable and is quite dangerous. We often are easily deceived by our own opinions and captured by our own thoughts and views. We must bring our opinions, thoughts, and views before the Bible and let them be judged by the Word of God. Whoever is not willing to let his "in my opinion," "I think," and "to my point of view" be conquered by the Word of God cannot do the will of God. We must put our own things aside in everything and see what the Word of God says and commands. In some things God tells us His will in detail; in others He reveals it only in principle. For example, the Word of God contains a great principle that believers should not be dissimilarly yoked with unbelievers. Consequently, we can know the will of God in many things related to this principle. In marriage, we know that a believing brother should not marry an unbelieving woman, and a believing sister should not be given in marriage to an unbelieving man. If we practice according to God's Word, we will be able to practice the will of God.

"Not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord prayed these words as He was about to be betrayed and killed. He prayed that He would accomplish God's will, not His own will. The Lord's prayer tells us what it means to do the will of God. To do the will of God is to do God's will, not our own will. After the Lord prayed this three times, He clearly knew that God's will was for Him to die on the cross. Therefore, He willingly obeyed. Whether or not we suffer, die for the Lord, or are even martyred, it should be according to the will of God, not our own preference or enthusiasm. Enthusiastically volunteering to suffer and to be martyred for the Lord cannot replace the will of God, nor is it necessarily God's will. Anything that is according to the predisposition and pleasure of the self cannot be regarded as the will of God. When the Lord clearly knew that God's will included His death, He was willing to drink the cup that the Father gave Him.

"The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).

The cup of the Father in this verse refers to the Lord's death on the cross, including all its suffering. Since God had given a cup to Him, the Lord said that He could not refuse to drink it. This tells us that the Lord's death was not according to His preference, although He willingly accepted it. The cup given to Him by God was the portion God measured to Him. By accepting the cup, He accomplished the will of God and did the will of God. The Lord's death is the highest example of doing the will of God. It shows that the criterion for doing the will of God is not doing good things but accepting what God has measured to us. God has not necessarily measured many good things for us to do; consequently, good things should not be considered as the will of God. Even preaching the gospel, casting out demons, and works of power should not be counted as the will of God if God has not measured them to us. We should not think that good or even spiritual things are automatically the will of God. These

things cannot replace the will of God. While the will of God is good and spiritual, good or spiritual things are not necessarily the will of God. The will of God can only be what God has particularly measured to us. Anything that is good and spiritual must be measured to us to do; it must be assigned to us by God in order for it to be God's will for us. Even our love for the brothers should be according to God's assignment and God's measure; otherwise, it may be excessive. Only God's measure and appointment for us are the will of God. When we do what He has measured and appointed, we are doing the will of God.

One who follows the Lord certainly must deal with sin and do away with all lawlessness and unrighteousness. However, doing lawful, righteous acts is not necessarily doing the will of God. We must do what God wants us to do and what He measures for us to do in order for it to be considered as doing the will of God. When we first begin to follow the Lord and desire to please Him, our standard is typically what we consider to be good, but slowly the Lord shows us that we need to take God as our standard. The Lord wants us to be His slaves, receiving His direction and not deciding anything according to our opinion or others' perceptions. As long as something is according to the Lord's desire, we should do it even if we as well as others may think that it is wrong. This is doing the will of God. On Mount Sinai, God ordered the Levites to kill their brothers. From the human viewpoint, this seems wrong, but God wanted them to do it. When they did as God directed, they were doing the will of God, and they pleased God. In doing God's will, God is the only standard, and His intention is the only rule. Neither goodness nor morality is the criterion. Neither our own preference nor our human view is the deciding factor. We should not live under man's evaluation or be influenced by man but live under God's enlightenment and governance.

“Setting your mind on the things of God...Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me” (Matt. 16:23-24).

To follow the Lord is to set our mind on the things of God. According to what the Lord said in these verses, the requirements for setting our mind on the things of God are to deny our self and take up our cross. Verse 25 shows that denying our self and losing our soul-life are absolutely related to one another. The self is the soul, or soul-life. The important components of our soul are the mind, the will, and the emotion. The soul has the functions of thinking, willing, and feeling. Therefore, to deny the self is to deny the things of the soul. This is to deny our own thoughts, that is, our own views; to deny our own will, that is, our own decisions; and to deny our own emotion, that is, our own likes and dislikes. We must deny and reject whatever is of our own thought, view, will, decision, predisposition, and likes in order to set our mind on the things of God and to follow the Lord and do the will of God.

The Lord spoke this word after He told the disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to die. After hearing the Lord's word, Peter exhorted Him, saying, “God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!” (v. 22). Then the Lord said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men” (v. 23). Peter's human concern and love for the Lord had an element of Satan in them. Satan can cause people to love the Lord from their self, which keeps them from setting their mind on the things of God. Instead, he causes them to set their mind on the things of man. Satan does not cause people to do the will of God; he causes them to do their own will. Satan uses good things to influence and enter into people's opinions, and then he stirs up the self to cause the self to be active to hinder the will of God. This is the reason that the Lord spoke of denying our self, giving up our self, and denying our own will, especially in good matters. Good things are opposed to the will of God. They serve only as a means for a display of our self and our will. Satan uses good things to ruin God's will. Therefore, if we want to do the will of God, we must guard against our self, that is, our views and our intention to do good.

Many think that taking up the cross means to suffer or to suffer for the Lord. However, to suffer—even to suffer for the Lord—is not necessarily to set our mind on the things of God or to do the will of God. Suffering—especially suffering for the Lord—can sometimes be according to our own will, preference, or choice and thus is not the will of God. If it is not what God has ordained for us or what God has measured to us, it comes from our self. To truly take up the cross is to set our mind on the things of God and to do the will of God. The will of God always kills our self-life. Therefore, taking up the cross is not about suffering but about denying the self. It is not about causing the self to suffer but about putting the self in the position of death, because the goal of the cross is death, not suffering. When the Lord was crucified, we were crucified with Him on the cross. Now we need to not only confess this death but to remain in the death of the cross. Through the death of the cross, we can stand in the position of death to deny everything of the self, including our will, view, preference, and choice. This is the taking up of our cross. When we take up the cross, we follow the Lord, set our mind on the things of God, and do the will of God...

Proving the Will of God

“That you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect” (Rom. 12:2).

Understanding the will of God involves proving. To prove is to search for the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God in everything. In order to prove the will of God, we need to stand in a position of consecration, to not follow the age of the world, to be renewed in our mind according to the Word of God, the Bible, and to understand the sense in our spirit and the condition of our environment. Searching out God’s will in everything involves discerning the motive, goal, and nature of things. Therefore, we must stand on God’s side in the reality of our consecration, be absolutely outside this age, and see God’s view according to a mind that has been renewed and taught by God. We must always use the clear teachings, principles, and examples of the Bible to measure and prove the will of God and to see whether or not our ways are one with the will of God. We must use the sense in our spirit to test and judge what is according to the will of God. We also should consider whether or not the environment confirms what we have realized. If we are willing to prove the will of God in this manner, it will not be difficult for us to understand the will of God.

Having a Heart to Do the Will of God

“If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know” (John 7:17).

If anyone resolves—has a heart—to do God’s will, he will know God’s will. If we want to understand the will of God, we must not only have a heart to understand but also a heart to do His will. God is not willing to reveal His will to those who do not have the heart to understand, nor does He want to reveal His will to those who have the heart to understand but not a heart to do it. Only those who have the heart to both understand and do the will of God can gain a revelation of God’s will from Him. Therefore, we must resolve to do God’s will if we want to understand the will of God. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1932–1949*, vol. 3, “Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Volume 2,” pp. 442-447, 450-451)