

The Only Way to Know His Will - 2

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Gotthold Beck

みこころを知る道 2

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Romans

8:12 Consequently, brothers, we are not—with respect to human nature, that is—under an obligation to live according to human nature.

8:13 For if you live according to human nature, you are going to die, but if by the Spirit you continually put to death the activities of the body, you will live.

8:14 For all who are led by God's Spirit are God's children.

8:15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery that leads you into fear again. Instead, you have received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

8:16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

8:17 Now if we are children, we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with the Messiah—if, in fact, we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

[International Standard Version]

8:26 In the same way, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, since we do not know how to pray as we should. But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words,

8:27 and the one who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to God's will.

8:28 And we know that for those who love God, that is, for those who are called according to his purpose, all things are working together for good.

8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Nobody is free from worries and we can't help but keep asking why. Even the saved people feel that way. Then, what is the way to understand the Lord's will?

Last week, we began to talk about how we can understand the intention of the Lord. I would like to continue the discussion today. To come right to the point, the intention of our Lord can be understood through nobody but the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit.

In simpler words, it is through the Bible. If someone

tells you, "I heard the voice of God from my very own ears," would you believe that? I won't. How can you tell whether it was the voice of God or the voice of the devil? After all, the words from the Bible are the only ones we should believe.

We can find a way to understand the Lord's will through nothing but the words from the Bible. As I mentioned last week, it is a blessing for us to be ready to listen to his words.

We should model ourselves after a man called Samuel. He might have been as young as 12 or 13 years old. He was a very young man anyway. Possibly, he might have been a little older than that, but I am not quite sure. He still received a great blessing from God. Why was that? "Speak, Lord, because your servant is listening." He not only felt from the heart, but also shouted out his feelings.

This kind of prayer will absolutely be heard. David was a man who pleased God. It was not because he was perfect. He actually committed a horrible sin. However, his prayer was truly wonderful.

Psalms

143:10 Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

When people have this attitude, they will come to believe that the Lord is superior, the Lord is patient and he is the one who deserves to be worshiped forever. David pleased the Lord because he prayed and sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He repeatedly asked, "Please teach me, please lead me." Is this prayer of David our prayer too?

David fulfilled the intention of the Lord. Why was that? It was because he prayed that way (as in the above verse). He admitted that he knew nothing and begged for teachings. "Please teach me." David took this attitude to the Lord. Those who beg for teachings in front of the Lord would absolutely receive the abundant blessing of the Lord. David was given the promise of the Holy Spirit to lead him.

Psalms

32:8 I will instruct you and teach you concerning the path you should walk; I will direct you with my eye.

It is a wonderful call of the Lord, isn't it?

Romans

8:26 In the same way, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, since we do not know how to pray as we should. But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words,

8:27 and the one who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, for the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to God's will.

The Holy Spirit is there to guide our prayers. After all, true prayer has to be the prayer of the Holy Spirit that is expressed through us. The important thing is that the Holy Spirit speaks to our spirits. We need to understand the intention of the Lord and stand firm in being convinced of it.

It is nobody but the Holy Spirit who can lead us. There is no conflict between the Holy Spirit and the words in the Bible; rather, they complement each other. The Holy Spirit uses the words from the Bible as he talks to us. When we face problems, the Holy Spirit picks up some words from the Bible, gives them a life and casts them into our hearts.

The in-dwelling Holy Spirit gives life to the words in the Bible and talks to us with them. Only the Holy Spirit can lead us. It is explained in Romans 8:16:

Romans

8:16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

This guidance of the in-dwelling Spirit is not given only to specific Christians, but is a privilege granted to all those who have been saved by the Lord. Now let us discuss briefly together an important point; when we face some problems, how will we know where the guidance of the Holy Spirit is?

When we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we first need to understand that all things are done for the Glory of the Lord.

1 Corinthians

10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.

Do everything for the glory of God. Those who keep these words deep in mind are ready to throw their intentions and desires away. What kind of people are true devotees of the Lord? True devotees are those who totally surrender their own will to the Lord and renew that surrender every day.

Only those who surrender their will to the Lord will be allowed to serve the Holy Spirit and can be led by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was the one who was totally led by the Holy Spirit. The reason for this can be found in this Psalm;

Psalms

40:8 I delight to do your will, my God. Your Law is part of my inner being."

This mental attitude of the Lord was what was necessary to be constantly led by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, Jesus made this confession;

John

8:29 Moreover, the one who sent me is with me. He has never left me alone because I always do what pleases him."

Jesus could confess this way. Sometimes, to be led by the Holy Spirit means to throw your thinking away and obey the Lord's will alone. This is never easy to do. Even Jesus, who has never committed a single sin, found it difficult. Jesus prayed knowing that he was going to be crucified. He prayed with these words in Gethsemane;

Matthew

26:38 Then he told them, "I'm so deeply grieved that I feel I'm about to die. Wait here and stay awake with me."

26:39 Going on a little farther, he fell on his face and prayed, "O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not what I want but what you want."

Jesus prayed this anguished prayer to fulfill his Father's will. Mary took the same attitude when she gave birth to Jesus.

Luke

1:38 Then Mary said, "Truly I am the Lord's servant. Let everything you have said happen to me."

Mary surrendered her will to the Lord.

1:31 Listen! You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus.

1:34 Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen, since I have not had relations with a man?"

1:35 The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come over you, and the power of the Most High will surround you. Therefore, the child will be holy and will be called the Son of God.

1:38 Then Mary said, "Truly I am the Lord's servant. Let everything you have said happen to me." Then the angel left her.

Mary prepared herself to become the mother of Jesus. Those who became pregnant before marriage had to be stoned to death according to the laws of those days. She did not care about that danger and in fact,

surrendered herself to the Lord for his will to be accomplished.

1:38 Then Mary said, "Truly I am the Lord's servant. Let everything you have said happen to me." Then the angel left her.

The glory of the Lord has to occupy the first position in your life. The blessings given to those who take an attitude like this will be extremely abundant. We will be truly blessed too if we sincerely devote ourselves to God just like Jesus and Mary and if we confess like Paul. These words of Paul are so important.

Ephesians

6:6 Do not do this only while you're being watched in order to please them, but be like slaves of the Messiah, who are determined to obey God's will.

6:7 Serve willingly, as if you were serving the Lord and not merely people,

This was exactly what Paul wished. It was his heartfelt confession too. Those who are ready to obey the Lord and abandon themselves are qualified to be led by the Holy Spirit. When young brothers and sisters are not sure about their marriage partners, they need to entrust everything to the Lord and have an attitude like this, "Lord, I love this brother, or that sister, but please tell me whether it is your intention; otherwise, please put an end to my feelings."

If the glory of the Lord is placed at the first position of our hearts, the Lord will richly lead us. If we place the highest importance on the glory of the Lord, the Lord will absolutely bless us. When we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we first need to understand that all things exist for nothing but the glory of the Lord.

Secondly, the guidance of the Lord is always based on the Bible, which consists of the words of God. The Holy Spirit leads us according to the words of God recorded in the Bible. For this reason, we need to reaffirm the importance of knowledge of the Scripture. Needless to say, it is necessary for our salvation, for our growth, for us to be led and to be used by the Lord. The Lord once said;

Hosea

4:6 My people are destroyed because they lack knowledge of me.

This Lord was grieved.

Proverbs

19:2 Furthermore, it isn't good to be ignorant, and whoever rushes into things misses the mark.

Jesus rebuked the Bible scholars, religious leaders and Pharisees of his time.

Matthew

12:3 But he told them, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?"

19:4 He answered them, "Haven't you read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female'?"

19:5 and said, 'That is why a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?"

It is meaningless for those who do not read the Bible to expect the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They will be led to nowhere but chaos. Jesus also said to the Pharisees;

22:29 Jesus answered them, "You are mistaken because you don't know the Scriptures or God's power,

It is no wonder that those who oppose the words of God do not receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It goes without saying. If you refuse to obey even a single word, knowing that it is a commandment of God, you will never receive guidance no matter how hard you pray. When you oppose the words in the Bible, you are acting against the Holy Spirit of the Lord. Precious guidance will not be given to such people. The Lord is urging us to study and rely on the words from the Bible. He has been writing the same thing repeatedly since the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy

17:19 It is to remain with him the rest of his life so he may learn to fear the Lord his God and observe all the words of this Law and these statutes, in order to fulfill them.

Isaiah

34:16 Study and read from the book of the Lord: And not one will be missing, each will not long for its mate. For it is the mouth of the Lord that has issued the order, and it is his Spirit that has gathered them.

John

5:39 You examine the Scriptures carefully because you suppose that in them you have eternal life. Yet they testify about me.

The words of the Bible are of unimaginable importance and are wonderful treasures.

Acts

17:11 These people were more receptive than those in Thessalonica. They were very willing to receive the message, and every day they carefully examined the Scriptures to see if those things were so.

“It will be great if what Paul is telling us is true, but I am not sure. So, I will check it myself. Why don't we examine it ourselves?” Paul was so pleased when people came to feel this way. It is not a simple matter for us to express the importance of the words in the Bible. However, David did it well when he wrote this long Psalm. I suggest that you read the whole Psalm although I wouldn't advise you to do it all in one breath.

Psalms

119:72 Instruction that comes from you is better for me than thousands of gold and silver coins.

119:97 How I love your instruction! Every day it is my meditation.

119:140 Your word is very pure, and your servant loves it.

It was because David took this attitude that he was recognized as the one who pleased the Lord. Just reading it is not enough. You have to grab it in your hands just like Jeremiah did. He confessed this way, after he was misunderstood by others and was deeply anguished;

Jeremiah

15:16 Your words were found, and I consumed them.

It was not that he understood the words of God. Neither was it true that he studied them. Instead, he grabbed the words and consumed them.

15:16Your words were joy and my hearts delight.

Our lives of faith grow according to the amount of the words we consume and how often we do so. We need to consume the bread of life, who is the Lord Jesus himself. Actually, it is what Jesus desperately desires. He wants to enter deep into our hearts.

How can we understand Jesus and his intention better? It can be done through nothing but the words in the Bible. The Bible, which consists of the words of the Lord, was not written to explain any religious principles or doctrines. This book consists of inspiration from Jesus. We ought to read the Bible, not to follow the stories, not to study, but in order to understand the

Lord himself better. The Lord reveals himself through his words in the Bible.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, “You examine the Scriptures carefully, but you do not desire to consume the words of God and you do not want to receive life.” Reading the Bible and receiving life are the same things and they can't be separated from each other. The Lord reveals himself through the words from the Bible.

The word of the Lord has to be our bread of life. The Bible is not given to us to explain any religious principles or theory about the truth, but it is the bread of life itself. How do we see the word from the Bible? Is it something lifeless just like withered bread? Has it become a heavy burden to you?

Or, has it become your life? If the living word of God enters our hearts, we will inevitably receive the true life. The life will not come as a consequence of logical consideration.

If the Bible is merely the law to follow or the doctrine to understand, it will be nothing but a heavy burden which deprives us of our freedom. Contrarily, if it is true life, it will bring us liberty and joy. How do we recognize the guidance of the Holy Spirit? As I just mentioned, when we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we first need to understand that everything exists for the glory of the Lord.

Secondly, the Lord always works according to the word of the Bible. His actions are always based on the Bible.

As the third answer, we need to keep in mind that the guidance of the Holy Spirit is related to our conscience and rationality. Our conscience was given by Jesus. If, on some specific problem, your conscience judges something as unrighteous, you need to wait for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Suppose that you are standing at a fork in the road and don't know which way to go. If you feel no peace in one of the ways, you do not need to seek further guidance, do you?

The rationality we have along with our conscience was given by the Lord. So many Christians are lost in their lives and their faith is messed up. It is because they have their own intention confused with the Lord's will. They place their own rationality above the Lord and forget to ask for his guidance. Abraham, who was called the father of faith, once decided to flee to fertile Egypt for fear of being starved.

He committed a sin there. I guess that through this story of Abraham, the Bible is telling us the danger of acting based on our rationality. Some people believe

that rationality is totally useless and it is associated with the flesh. But that is wrong.

If rationality occupies the position of a servant inside believers, it will be extremely helpful. Contrarily, when rationality begins to act as a ruler inside believers, it will lead them in the wrong direction. We learn to act rationally and we learn the Bible, we imbibe the truth about god and learn the words from the Bible by heart. However, while we do, our rationality has to be governed by the in-dwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit should be the only one who leads us.

Rationality is a sort of instrument that transforms the guidance of the Holy Spirit into reality. When you hit a serious problem, you need to contemplate on it from all angles based on your rationality. We need to think about two questions I mentioned earlier with you rationally; that is to say, how the glory of the Lord can be revealed and whether there are some words in the Bible that respond to this problem.

Sometimes, without rationality, the Holy Spirit directly speaks into your heart, "Pray now, write to this person now, come to see these brothers and sisters now." It was what happened to Philip. When he proclaimed the words of the Lord in many places in Samaria, he was wonderfully blessed. One day, the Holy Spirit led Philip to travel to the wilderness. This guidance must have been rationally unacceptable to Philip.

He must have wondered, "In spite of so many people who are in need of salvation in here, why do I have to travel to the empty wilderness?" However, when he obeyed the voice of the Holy Spirit and traveled to the wilderness, he met the Ethiopian eunuch, who was led to the salvation by him and could see the glory of the Lord. Nothing is more important than listening to and obeying to the voice.

1 Samuel

15:22 Samuel said, "Does the Lord delight as much in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the Lord? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay attention is better than the fat of rams."

Similar words can be found in the Acts of the Apostles.

Acts

5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."

In these words, they were telling us to obey the Lord rather than the rationality of men. According to the Bible, when Paul encountered the indication from Jesus, he obeyed the inspiration from heaven instead of consulting his blood and flesh; that is to say, instead

of following the rationality of men.

Galatians

1:16 to reveal his Son to me so that I might proclaim him among the gentiles, I did not confer with another human being at any time,
1:17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me. Instead, I went away to Arabia and then came back to Damascus.

Acts

26:19 And so, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

When we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it could also be helpful to ask for the advice of your brothers and sisters. It is for this reason that we are encouraged to gather at the meetings regularly. We need to be careful about our attitude when we come to the assembly. There is absolutely no meaning in gathering without deep hunger and thirst for the word of the Lord and his guidance.

Amos

8:11 "Look! The days are coming," declares the Lord God, "when I will send a famine throughout the land— not a famine of food or a thirst for water— but rather a famine of hearing the words of the Lord."

Isaiah

66:2 ...declares the Lord. "But this is the one to whom I will look favorably: to the one who is humble and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at my message."

Those who fear and listen to the word of the Lord will receive his abundant guidance.

Let me summarize again how we recognize the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Firstly, when we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we should consider that everything exists for the glory of the Lord. Secondly, the guidance of the Lord is always in conformity to the Bible. It is always based on the word from the Bible. Thirdly, we need to keep in mind that the guidance of the Holy Spirit is related to our conscience and rationality.

End