

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **How to Know the Will of God**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1217

Tonight we're going to be studying a particular topic that is of great interest, and that is how to know the will of God. I suppose that of all of the subjects that there are, this one perhaps carries with it the most questions. It's inevitable that whenever you get into a spiritual discussion of any kind with anybody, sooner or later you get around to discussing about the subject of what God wants in any given situation. There's all kinds of material available on God's will. I would guess myself that I've read at least ten books or articles on how to know God's will for your life. And I can honestly say that for many years I read this material and I don't really know that I was very satisfied. I'm sure each writer had felt in his own life that he had really discovered the principles that gave him a grip on the will of God and perhaps he had. But there was something missing in my mind. I heard the topics regarding the will of God having to do with circumstances and all kinds of external things and I heard one fellow who said, "Put all one column and all in another column and whichever column's the heaviest, that's the way to go." And it was all good up till the point where I felt that there was the missing ingredient of the absolute character of Scripture. And so, some years ago, I began to do some study on my own to try to determine from the Bible what the will of God is in any given situation. And I just want to share with you what I discovered as the will of God for the life of every believer and I think that once you get a grip on these principles, it can revolutionize your whole approach to your life.

To begin with, you'd have to admit that regarding God's will, there's a tremendous amount of confusion. There are many people who say, "Well, I do this because it's God's will," and somebody else says, "Well, I didn't do that because it wasn't God's will" and I really think that God's will gets blamed for an awful lot of stuff. For some people, they think that God's will is lost. You hear people say, "Well, I'm searching for God's will." If anybody said that to me, I say, "Oh, is it lost?" You know that, the idea that God is sort of a universal Easter bunny, and He runs the universe and stashes it in some supernatural bush and we run through our life and God's in heaven saying, "You're getting warmer" and it's sort of a game He plays. And for other people, the will of God is sort of like a trauma. You know, you expect to be running down the street, slip on a banana peel and land on a map of South America. And that's God saying, "Go to South America." OK, God. Or maybe you expect to be hit in the head with a hammer in the middle of the night and awakened to hear the voice of the angels singing in your room a song about India. And that's God's call. For other people, the will of God is a very, very serious thing. They're afraid of it. They look at God as if He were a sort of a cosmic killjoy who wants to take everybody and stick a pith helmet on their head and stuff them in the monkey tribe in Africa and make them a missionary to Bula Bula Land, you know - no matter

whether you want to do it or not - that's the will of God. And that God's will wants to cross-grain you. Of course, if you were to read the average insurance policy, you might get that idea. Pick up your insurance policy and look at the section entitled "Act of God: hurricane, tornado, flood." You know, all God is up there for is to wipe anything out. And anything that comes on the negative level is God in action.

I'll never forget the athlete who came to me and he said, "I don't want to give my life to Christ. I'm afraid of the will of God." The typical athlete who thinks that God wants to break both his legs and make him play a flute. So there are some people who are afraid of the will of God. They're afraid that God wants to cross-grain them and make them do something that they don't want to do. And so there are many interesting views about the will of God. There are some people who are just really not that concerned. To them, the will of God is like a brass ring you just have on the merry-go-round, you know. If you get the brass ring, it's nice; if you don't get the brass ring, you still get a ride. So if you get the will of God for your life, that's great; if you don't, you're still going to go to heaven, it's no big deal anyway, you'll be perfect when you get there. And so they sort of minimize the will of God and they're not really that committed to it.

Well, what is God's will? Can we actually know God's will? You hear so much talk about this. Can we really pin down the will of God? Does God have a will for our lives? Well, first of all, I believe God has a will for our lives. Do you believe that? Of course He does. Now why? This is the thing that sent me into this study to begin with. I sat down one day and I said, "God has a will for the life of John MacArthur. I know he does." All right, then I say, "If God has a will for my life, it seems to me He wouldn't hide it anywhere. Because when God wants me to know something, He usually reveals that." So if God has a will, He'll reveal it. If God reveals it, where is the most obvious place in which He would reveal it? In the Bible. So I immediately said to myself, I'm going to go to my Bible and I'm going to study every passage that shows me God's will and I began to do that. And I began to do that. And you know I discovered? I discovered there are five things that are the will of God. Basic things. Now there are more than this. These are just some basic things.

Number one: we're going to several Scriptures, but number one in the will of God is that men be saved. 2 Peter 3:9. Now this is where the will of God begins for us or for any man. Now in 2 Peter, you know the whole book is about false prophets. He calls them wells without water, he calls them dogs that go back and lick up their own vomit; some very vivid terms. And he's talking about false prophets and he says that false prophets deny the return of Christ in the third chapter of 2 Peter. False prophets deny the return of Christ. And they're saying, "Oh, He doesn't come, He doesn't come, all you Christians, all you orthodox, all you fundamentalists are always turning around saying 'Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming.' Where is He? Where is He?" And Peter answers and says this, verse 9: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men are." In other words, He hasn't come because He's slack in promise, but He is long-suffering. In other words, He hasn't come not because He can't come but because He waits in mercy. And the reason He waits is that "He is not

willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance." The will of God is not that men perish. The will of God is not that men perish. The will of God is that men be saved. Now there is another very important passage that we need to consider that covers the same ground in 1 Timothy 2:3. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior." Now verse 4, 2 Timothy 2:4: "Listen, God our Savior who will have all man to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Now the design of God in expressing His will is that men be saved. That is the will of God. So God's will then for your life, for the life of any man, begins with salvation.

And I'll tell you this - if you have never come to Jesus Christ for salvation - you will never even begin to know the will of God; you're not even plugged into God. The will of God begins by salvation. Now Jesus made this very clear in Mark chapter 3. Now I want to just share this passage with you briefly, Mark 3:31. Now in this particular portion, Jesus was teaching in some kind of a building and a big crowd of course jammed in there and they were all scrunched up to his feet, you know, and He was teaching away and all of a sudden, there came then, verse 31, His brother and His mother and standing outside said unto Him, calling Him. Now here comes Jesus' mother and His brothers. He had earthly brothers, half-brothers. Of course Mary was a virgin, so Jesus was only born of God and Mary, and so they were only half-brothers that were born of Joseph and Mary. So anyway, His brothers and His mother standing outside said unto him, "Call him!" His mother sent the message, just like a mother. He's right in the middle of teaching and His mother wants him. Verse 32: "And the multitude sat about Him and they said unto Him, 'Behold, thy mother and thy brother outside seek for thee,' so the crowd tells Him His mother and His brothers want Him. Now what? He answered them saying, it's amazing, "Who is my mother or my brethren?" You could just see them going, "Huh? He really doesn't know who his mother and his brother..." And then to make it worse, He said this. He looked around on all the people who sat at His feet and said, "Behold, my mother and my brothers." And you can imagine they were going, "Who, me?" See? "What's he saying?" And then clarifies in verse 35: "For whosoever should do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and mother." And what He's saying is this: "The will of God is being related to me through faith, not through human relation." And you know that Mary and all of His brothers had to be saved, you know that. Jesus says, the will of God is a relationship with God; a saving relationship with me. This is the will of God. And so Jesus expresses salvation in terms of the will of God. He could have as easily said, for whosoever shall be saved, the same is my brother and my sister and my mother. But he chose to say, who does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother, equating the statement. So to be saved is to do the will of God. That is His will. That is God's will.

Now there's one other passage that very straightforwardly emphasizes this, and it's in 1 John 2:17; listen to this: "And the world passes away, and the lust of it, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." Forever life or eternal life then is equated to doing the will of God. So in those two passages, salvation and the will of God are equated. God's will is that you be saved, said Paul to Timothy. God's will is that you not perish, said Peter. So to begin with then, the will of God is that men be saved. Now when God sets about to express His will, He goes to the ends that are

necessary to make the expression of that will possible. God wanted men saved. So much did he want men saved that He expressed His will in the most amazing way, recorded for us at least in one instance in Ephesians 2:4. And it says this: "But God," Ephesians 2:4, "who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive together with Christ." Now you see what God did? God went to the extremities of sending His own Son to die to make His will possible. Can you imagine what a ridiculous thing it would have been for God to sit up in heaven and say, "I'm not willing that any should perish and I will that all be saved" and never never make it possible. And so in response to His own will, He sent that which made it possible. He Himself came in bodily form, died on the cross and rose again. And He did it for His great love with which He loved us. Now when you want to do something, there are all degrees as to how much you want to do it. You can say, "Boy, I want to do that." But what you do following that statement will determine how much you want to do that. If you say, I want to do that, and you begin to move everything that stands in the way until you get it done, then you're talking about the kind of want that is the want and will of God. God says, "I want men saved" and God did what needed to be done to make it possible. He sent Jesus Christ. God's will is that you be saved. So much so that He went to the absolute limits of even the most wild imagination and became sin for us who knew no sin in order to make it possible. That's God's will.

You know it's telling people in this world that God's will is that they be saved isn't always real popular. Because when you tell them that, you've got to tell them about sin. I always remember the time that I was at UCLA and Campus Crusades was doing a big blitz of the UCLA campus and we were all going to go out and evangelize and everybody was all over everywhere at UCLA, witnessing like crazy everywhere and they got all upset on the campus and the Daily Bruin came out with a big article and the picture on the front cover had a Bruin mascot on the ground and it had a guy with his heel on his neck that had CCC on him, like Campus Crusades for Christ, only it was done in the format in the format of KKK, Ku Klux Klan thing. And the heel was in the neck, like Christians were stomping on the...and there was an article from the dean, and it said, it was interesting, it quoted from the Constitution of UCLA. He said if this didn't stop, there would be disciplinary action, and then he quotes from the charter which says the campus is not to be used for religious conversion. Isn't that interesting? You can go to UCLA and you can come out anything you wanted to, Communist, atheist. You know you can come out of there a dope addict; you could come out of there a basket case, psychologically, mentally. But just try to get saved, you can't do that, it's against the rules. You've got to go across the street. You say, "Why is it so unpopular?" Because it deals with sin. God's will is that men be saved but there's a barrier there because men do not want to respond to the message of sin. Now beloved, I only point this out because this is only where the will of God begins. Until you know Jesus Christ personally, you've never done step one in the will of God. Don't ever expect God to run your life if you're not in on that one step, right? And there are a lot of people who talk rather glibly about what God wants in their life, but they don't even know God. He isn't even running their life. God's will is that you be saved. That's where it all starts. You commit your life to Jesus Christ. That's basic.

Now the second thing. God's will secondly is that you be Spirit-filled. Spirit-filled. Turn to Ephesians 5:17. Ephesians 5:17 says this: "Wherefore, be ye not unwise." Now, can you think of another word for unwise? It starts with "S." Good, class. Stupid. Wherefore be ye not stupid. Now watch this one: "but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Now if you don't know God's will, what are you? It's hard to say that, to say, "I'm searching." Now wait a minute, it isn't searching, it's stupid. I'm trying, though it isn't trying, it's stupid. You say, "well, how can you say that, John? I wanna..." Well, it says right there, "don't be stupid, but understanding what the will of the Lord is..." You say, "well what is he saying, what is the will of the Lord?" Well, you'd know if you read the next verse. Here it is: "And be not drunk with wine in which is excess but be filled with the Spirit." You say, are those the only two options? No, no. But there is there a contrast. You know, when somebody gets drunk with wine, they submit themselves to the control of an agent that's in them. I used to have a friend who was an alcoholic and he was from the time he was seventeen. And I don't think he was sober until he was 22 more than two weeks at a time. In desperation, he would call me and I would go over to his apartment, you know and one night I went over there...He was a quiet and mild and meek individual who said little or nothing; you couldn't get nothing out of him, except when he was really tanked. I mean, he turned into a totally different person. I went over there one night and he was a raving maniac. He called me and said, "Come over," he was dribbling on the phone, and I got over the phone. And he took a quart of Jack Daniel's and that comes pretty high you know, and he sailed that thing across the room at me and I ducked and it splattered all over the wall. And I said, "Well, I think my ministry is over here. See ya." And I came back later. But he turned into a wild individual. He was uninhibited. He was wild. He was reckless. He was abandoned, why? Because he wasn't controlling himself. He had yielded his control to an inside agent. Now Paul is saying the same thing. He's saying as Christian, you need to yield control of your life to an inside agent, only not something like alcohol but the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you. See? And when you're really Spirit-filled, you have no more self-control over yourself than when you do when you're really crocked with alcohol. A Spirit-filled Christian is one who has thrown out self. Now I've used this pattern to illustrate.

Let me give you an idea of what I mean. In most of our lives, we kind of maintain a scale of equilibrium. And it says that you are to be kept filled with the Spirit. In other words, the word 'filled' means totally dominated and controlled. The word is used in the Gospels when it says so-and-so was filled anger or so-and-so was filled with rage or so-and-so was filled with wrath or filled with madness. It means that it totally controls you. We go through life like this, you know, and let's say on this side we have mad and on this side we have cool, calm and collected. And we go through life and we get a little angry and we balance that back with cool and we kind of swing a little bit like this. Then something happens that really just makes us mad and we go whammo on the mad side. And all of a sudden we have thrown everything off the other side of the scale and we're filled with anger. And that's being filled with anger. We go through life, we make this the joy side and the sorrow side. We get real happy about something, whoo! See? We get real sad and it goes... The spiritual life is the same thing. You go along usually if you're a Christian, and self is over here and the Spirit's over

here. And you're going along a little bit from the Spirit and a little bit from me and you just kind of, you know, you play it pretty cool. You don't get real Spirit-filled, just a little bit. Then all of a sudden, something happens in your life that is a full expression of self and whooom! You're just filled with self. On the other hand, there comes a time when you yield to the Holy Spirit and you're filled with Holy Spirit and you know what happens to self? It's gone. It is the total yield to the Holy Spirit, that is what Paul is saying. That it is God's will that you be totally given over to the control of the Holy Spirit. And it's an amazing thing about being under the control of the Spirit. You don't even have to ask questions; you just operate.

Now let me give you a kind of a mini-theology on the Spirit-filled life so that you'll understand what I'm saying. To begin with, every Christian possesses the Holy Spirit, right? If you're a Christian, He lives within you. What? Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which you have of God. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says we're all baptized by one Spirit; we all receive the same Spirit. So every Christian has the Spirit in him. We have that agency there to control us. And you know there are always people...I remember sitting in prayer meeting when I was a little kid and my dad was a pastor and I'd sit in prayer meeting and some dear brother would stand up and he'd say, "Oh God," and he was sincere, "Oh God, send your Spirit." And I'd say to myself, "what does he got to say that for? Spirit's already here." I remember one deacon who prayed that every time he prayed. "Oh God, send your Spirit upon us." And I used to say to myself, "But he's already in us. What is he praying for? He's asking God to do something He's not going to need to do." But have you ever analyzed your prayer life? We do a lot of that, don't we? I heard one brother who prayed, God, give me more of your Spirit. That is ridiculous. Do you think the Spirit comes in sections? Or doses? He giveth not the Spirit by measure. The Spirit is a person. He is either there or not there. That's like you hear so much in the charismatic movement today, "I want more of the Spirit" - there isn't any more of less. If I were to be invited to your house and I walked in and sat down and you said, "Oh, it's nice to have you, but I want more John MacArthur." I would say, "Well, get the dinner out, we'll see what we can do about it." But the point is, the Spirit is a total entity. The Spirit doesn't come in pieces. The Spirit is all resonant in the believer. Romans 8:9: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he's none of his." You possess the ...it is in you. It discourages me when Christians ask for what they already have. You know, we ask God for strength and we already have strength that Christ has given us. We can do all things through Christ whose strength it is. We ask Him for power and the Spirit's there with all the power we need. We ask Him for grace and He says, "My grace is sufficient." We ask Him for love and he says, "The love of Christ is shed abroad in your heart," you know. We ask Him to guide us, He says, "I'm trying, why don't you follow?" We always ask for these things that we already have and we have the Spirit.

Now, well you say, "If I have the Spirit, John, dwelling in me and I am complete in Him and as Peter says, 2 Peter 1: 'I have all things pertaining to life in godliness' and that has to be Spirit - He's the only one that can make godliness out of me. If I have all of this and I have the Spirit, then what's the problem?" Well watch. It's one thing to have the Spirit, but it's something else to be being kept filled

with the Spirit. And the illustration I'll use is this. You all know what a fizzy is? You know what those are? Those little putrid-flavored Alka-Seltzers? They are terrible. You can buy them in a store. I hope nobody's dad makes fuzzies here. But anyway, I suppose some people like them, you buy this pill and you get them in little, kind of tin foil packages. You bring it home and you take out your little fizzy - they come in all nice little flavors - and here's how it works: Take a glass of water and you drop your fizzy in the water. Well what happens? Well, it goes to the bottom and just sits there for a long time and that's right. Then, after awhile, one of the miracles of modern science. Little bubbles start coming off of this little pill and they begin to just kind of permeate this water. And you just stand there and watch the little thing going on. Pretty soon, the pill has released all its energy to permeate the water. And what is amazing is that the water takes on the same characteristics as that little fizzy. In other words, if you've got a grape fizzy, you're going to get a glass of grape fizzy juice. Whatever you call it. Whatever that fizzy is, that water becomes. Now what? That's a really simple, humble illustration but maybe it will help. You're a glass of water as a Christian and the Spirit is like that fizzy. The Spirit of God is in your life. The question is not, "Is He there?" The question is, "Does He ever release that power to permeate my life and to turn me into what He is characteristic?"

You say, "Well John, your illustration breaks down because you can't stop a fizzy, but you can stop the Holy Spirit." Oh you can stop the fizzy if you had a special-made fizzy lid that you could put in there and just clump over the thing. You could put a little thing over the fizzy and it wouldn't go anywhere. As a Christian, you could do that; the Spirit's in your life, but you can put a little lid right on the Spirit. That little lid spells S-I-N. Or, you could spell it S-E-L-F. What happens? The Spirit is there. All the energy is there, ready to be released to transform you into the very image of Christ, right? 2 Corinthians 3:18. And you've got sin on the top of it and it can't be released. And so the Bible is really saying, confess your sin, yield to the Spirit, He will release His energy and you'll taste like He does. And then when you wander through the world, people will mistake you for God, or Jesus Christ. They'll see godliness in you. That's the Spirit-filled life. You know, once you're Spirit-filled, then you just begin to go in the will of God; it's fantastic!

If I had a glove lying here, and I said, "Glove, go play in tune on the piano" what's the glove going to do? It's not going to do anything! Gloves cannot play the piano. They have five fingers, fairly flexible, you can even take the glove and just go like this on the piano and it won't do a whole lot. Why? It needs a hand. If I take the glove and put my hand in the glove and play the piano, what happens? Chaos. The point is if I put my hand in the glove, the glove just fills, the glove doesn't get pious and say, "Oh fingers, I'll be obedient to whatever your command." The glove doesn't get pious, it just goes, see? And the same thing is true in the Christian life. When you're under the control of the Spirit, you're not hunting and searching around, you're just operating, see? And the Christian, you're a glove. And I'll tell you, a lot of gloves are lying around, grunting and groaning, trying to figure out why they're not going anywhere and it's because they've never been filled with the Holy Spirit so they function in response to His direction. Now the Spirit-filled life then is just that: it is a yieldedness to the Holy Spirit. Now, I only give you all that just to kind of give you a definition of the Spirit-filled life.

You know, let me give you a couple more thoughts. As simply as I can illustrate it, I usually illustrate it with the life of Peter. And we all love Peter, you know he's the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth and we can all identify with him. Peter had some interesting characteristics. Let me just give you a thought or two about Peter. Peter wanted to be where Jesus was, right? I mean, you know, remember when Jesus showed up on the shore of the Sea of Galilee of John 21 and Peter was out on the boat and he saw Jesus on the shore? What did he do? He dove in and just started swimming like crazy to get to the shore; he just couldn't wait. The rest of the guys stayed in the boat till the boat got there. Not Peter. He dives in and swims, you know, to Jesus. Well, Peter wanted to be where Jesus was and I'll show you why. First of all, when Peter was where Jesus was, he could do the miraculous. You remember the night they were out on the Sea of Galilee? They were trying to get over to the other side and the storm came up in Matthew 14 and it pushed them out further into the middle of that little sea, you know, and sometimes the winds can swirl in that little canyon and really get that thing churned up. And then couldn't get there and they were rowing like crazy and they couldn't get there. Kept drifting, drifting, drifting. And they were scared. And all of a sudden, one of them looks up in the distance and says in effect, "I don't want to shake you guys up, but somebody's walking on the water." And they look out there, and silhouetted against the moon or whatever in the Galilean sky is somebody walking across the whitecaps and his robe is flowing in the breeze and some pretty shaky thing and of course the reaction is, "It's a ghost!" and so the figure proceeds further and further towards the boat. Finally, Peter is bold and he says, "Lord, is it you?" And he was pretty smart; there weren't a lot of options. "Lord, is it you?" And he found out that it was, and you know what, Peter, he didn't even think what he was doing. He just said Jesus is there, I'm here, that's no good. Peter wanted to be where Jesus was. I have imagined that most of the day, Jesus walked around and when he stopped, Peter ran into the back of him. That he followed and trailed him everywhere. One time Jesus said, "Will you go away?" he said, "Where will I go? You have the words of eternal life." He couldn't get rid of him. And so here, Jesus is over here, just imagine, he's only a little ways from the boat and he's standing on the Sea of Galilee. Now Peter had been raised on the Sea of Galilee. He stepped near that water every day and he had a total history of failure to walk on water. He had never done it and he'd been around the sea and yet he absolutely looks at Christ and he jumps out of the boat and he knows in his mind that big fishermen just don't walk on water. It's just not done. And he starts out across the way. And he is actually walking on the water. And I don't know what the exact attitude is but I imagine he got out there and got the feel of his oars a little bit, and looking around, and maybe he got scared and thought, "What is this?" you know? Started to sink and the Lord reached down, picked him up and they walked back to the boat. Knowing Peter, you can just see what was on his face as they came back to the boat. "Hi guys." But he comes back to the boat and they get in the boat and then you say to yourself, "Why did Peter want to be where Jesus was?" I'll tell you why. For one thing, he could do the miraculous. He could walk on water, no wonder he wanted to be near Jesus.



There's a second thing that comes to mind in Matthew 16, where Jesus is talking to His disciples and He says, "Who do the men say that I am?" remember that passage? Whom do men say that I am? "Some say that you're Elijah, some say you're Jeremiah, some say you're one of the prophets." And then He says, "But whom say you that I am?" And all of a sudden Peter says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And I imagine he went "Hmmpf," you know. "Where did that come from?" Because he couldn't have said that on his own. And Jesus looked at him and said, "Peter, your flesh and blood didn't tell you that, my Father in heaven did." And He explained to him that He had given divine revelation through Peter as a vehicle. Just to keep Peter in the human perspective, the next person to speak through him was Satan. And Satan said, "No, don't go on the cross, don't go on the cross." And Jesus said to Peter's face, "get thee behind me" - what? - "Satan." So Peter was an available vehicle, unfortunately, too available. But isn't it interesting? When he was near Jesus, he said the miraculous. So he did the miraculous and said the miraculous.

The third thing in our little illustration is this, the third thing: he had miraculous courage. One of my favorite scenes in all of Scripture: John 18. And in John 18, Jesus is in the garden and the soldiers' coming to take Jesus and the whole gang from Fort Antonius there and I don't know how many, could have been as many as 500, and they're marching in there and the priests and the servants and the high priests and they're all this big thing is coming in there to take Jesus. And Jesus in effect wants to protect His disciples, so He says, "Who are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." And he asked them a second time, "Who are you looking for?" "Jesus of Nazareth." He had them repeat their orders twice so that He could say to them, "Know that you have no right to take them, only me." He was protecting the disciples. But in the midst of this, Peter is starting to feel his oats a little bit. He's thinking about the times he's walked on water and the times he's said the miraculous and he's standing next to Jesus and all of this starts happening and he's thinking in his mind, nobody's taking Jesus from me. That's the one thing that he feared most. And so immediately, he reacts and I'm sure in his mind he's thinking, if I get into trouble, the Lord's going to go zing and everyone's going to fall over anyway. They've done that once tonight, remember? The first time they confronted Jesus, the whole army fell down. So Peter was really feeling invincible. So the next thing he does is he grabs his sword and he just starts swinging. The Bible very delicately says it was a servant of the high priest named Malchus and Peter smote off his ear. But you know that Peter didn't go up to him and go, "Got your ear." What was going on was Peter was going for the whole head; just because that guy was first in line the guy had a pretty good reaction, that's all. Peter was going to fight the whole Roman army and I'm sure felt invincible with Christ beside him. The Lord said, "Put away your sword" and just reached over and gave the guy an ear. Now you see when Peter was near Jesus, he did the miraculous, said the miraculous, had miraculous courage.

Next time we see Peter, Jesus is taken to be tried. Peter's outside warming his hands by a fire and just hanging around, following but far off, the Bible says. And on three occasions, what did he do? He denies Jesus. Isn't that unbelievable? Absolutely astounding that he would do that? You see here's the guy who walks on the water, says the miraculous, has a sword in his hand, he's going to

fight the whole Roman army and he denies Jesus in front of a few people? You say, "What happened to him?" I'll say what happened to him. On those other three occasions, he was standing next to Jesus. At the time where he denied him, he was separated from Him. Now do you know why he wanted to be where Jesus was? That's where his power was. I'm telling you, he was an up and down guy. You say, "How could he turn into such a coward? How could it be?" It reminds you of Elijah, remember Elijah at Mount Carmel? He was up there and he took the priests of Baal and Ashtherah to task, remember that? He said, "you go on, call on your god. Maybe he's asleep, maybe he's on vacation." He was ripping them all. And then you know what happened? Their god of course did not respond and God said, "Take them and slay all of them." Hundreds of them. Can you imagine? The courage that he had to have to go and slay every one of those guys? And he did it. Courage. You know what he's doing the next time you see him in the Old Testament? He's running. I've never met old prophets to run like he was running. And he was beating a path down that road, it was unreal. And he stops and he sits down and he says, "God, kill me, kill me, I can't take it" and you say, "What's the matter? Is an army after you? What happens? You just handled all those people. You slew them all. Who's after you?" And he says, "Jezebel." Jezebel? One woman? Maybe some of us can understand that. But you know that depends on the woman. But that's the kind of up and down thing that happens and that's exactly what happens in the Christian life, isn't it? And here's Peter and one minute in a fight with the Roman army, and next time he's denying Jesus before a handful of people, including a doorman. Well, let me tell you something.

The next time we see Peter in our little analogy we'll skip some things. Jesus has ascended into heaven. You say, "Oh no. If he's a coward at 100 feet, we might as well bury him. I mean if Jesus is in heaven, the guy is hopeless." You know what happens? This is something else, listen. First thing he does is stand up and say the miraculous, again. He gets to the day of Pentecost and he says, "Ye men of Israel, all ye that dwell of Jerusalem, be this known unto you and hearken to my words." And he says this is that which is spoken by the prophet Joel and he whips into this fantastic sermon and he says you have killed the Prince of Life and desired a murderer to be released unto you and you've executed the Holy One, the Just One, et cetera, et cetera and you are the sons of the covenant and he just blasts that whole populace with the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Spirit's speaking through him again. And he gets done and 3000 people get saved and there he is speaking the miraculous.

The next thing you know, he and John are palling around and he's doing the talking, John's doing the praying and they arrive at the gate called Beautiful. And there's a guy there that's a lame man and Peter walks by and Peter does the miraculous. He says to the man, "Silver and gold I have none, but such as I have, I give unto thee in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And the guy leaps up and he goes dancing through the temple in the midst of the afternoon prayers and is the only true worship that's going on because the veil's already been rent. He actually healed the guy. He said the miraculous, he did the miraculous.

Then he's taken into the Sanhedrin. He becomes a prisoner for his message. You know what he does? He gets in front of the Sanhedrin and he preaches Jesus Christ and he says, "Listen people, neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby you must be saved." And they get mad. And they say, "We don't allow you to preach. You will never preach again." And he says, "You judge whether I ought to obey God or man. We will preach." And he has miraculous boldness. Now you watch this. He had the same ability to say the miraculous, do the miraculous and had miraculous courage when Jesus was in heaven that he had when he was standing next to Jesus. You say but how? But how? Watch. Here's the key. Before he ever did those three things in the book of Acts, Chapter 2 verse 4 says this: "And they were all filled with" - what? - "the Holy Spirit." Now watch the conclusion. Here it comes. Peter had the same resources, he had the same power when he was filled with the Spirit than he had when he was standing where, next to Jesus Christ.

Now let me give you a practical handle. Do you know what the Spirit-filled life is? It's living every single moment in the conscious presence of whom? Jesus Christ. People get so lost in what the spiritual life is. It's just living Christ-conscious, that's all. It's just living every day in the consciousness that Jesus Christ is present, is he? Yes he is. Yes he is. And that's all the Spirit-filled is, it's Christ-consciousness. And you say, "Well I mean, you can't just go around saying I know you're there, I know you're there, I know you're there, see." You'd be like the bruised and bleeding Pharisees. You know how they got their name? They thought it was a sin to look at women and every time a woman came along, they closed their eyes and they kept running into walls. So we don't want you to be the bruised and bleeding Spirit-filled people, but we don't want you to go mumbling, "Jesus!" but I'll tell you one thing: the Spirit-filled life will come down to a simple truth. It comes down to Christ-consciousness. You ready for that? In Ephesians 5, what does it say? When you're Spirit-filled, you'll speak to yourselves in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. You'll sing, you'll make melody, you'll give thanks, you'll submit. Wives, husbands, children, fathers, clear down through chapter 6, it says what you'll do: children will obey, fathers will not provoke, servants will be obedient, employers will give fair care to their employees. He goes all the way down and he says this will be the result of the Spirit-filled life. Now watch. In Colossians 3, you have the very same identical list. In Colossians 3:16, what? Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing, submitting; wives, husbands love your wives; children obey your parents, verse 20; fathers provoke not; servants obey in all things your masters; and goes on and on. Every one of those is the same exactly as the result of the Spirit-filled life, but here, watch! Here, they are the results of verse 16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Now watch.

The Spirit-filled life is nothing more than saturation with the person of Christ. You get that? Everybody wants a quickie. Everybody wants three easy steps to instant spirituality. Instant maturity. It can't happen. I never in my own life had the faintest idea what the walk in the Spirit meant until I committed myself to the saturation of the presence of Jesus Christ. You say, well how do you saturate yourself with His presence? Simply by studying the Word, right? The more I focus on Him

and the Word, and the more the thoughts of God saturate my mind, the more the word of Christ controls me, the more yielded I am to Him.

You know I used to enjoy sin a lot. The pleasures of sin, right? And we all enjoy a little of it here and there. Some of us more than others. I used to enjoy it; I'd get into a nice sin and really enjoy it. Whatever it was. Then I began to study the Bible and you know, I can't even get into a good sin without thinking of 14 Bible verses. I just get going and I hear, "thou shalt not..." Well, don't you see that's the genius of the study of Scripture? David says, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not" - what? - "sin against thee." The Spirit-filled life is synonymous with letting the word of Christ saturate you - so that you're overwhelmed with His presence. I have found that as I have grown in the study of the Word that the more conscious I am of the presence of Christ, the more directly related that is to my walk in the Spirit. To sense His presence.

You say, "Well John, I'd like to be able to sense His presence, how do I do it?" Well, you've got to study the Word and I give a little formula on how to study the word of God that really made a difference in my life. It's simply this. I started with 1 John. I don't know if you have trouble studying the Bible with any effect, but I learned repetitiously and that's what Isaiah said. Line upon line, line upon line. So I decided I'd try repetition. So I took the Epistle of 1 John and I sat down and read it straight through. Now that's good because some people don't read the Bible that way, they pick out verses. "There's a nice verse, oh there's a lovely verse. Oh there's a terrific verse over here." And you slap it all together and you don't know whether you get the truth or not. You can take everything out of context. And I always think of the classic illustration in an article I read about the fact that women shouldn't have their hair on top of their heads, they should let it long; flow down. The text was "top knot come down." And I thought, top knot come down? Where's that? And I looked it up in Matthew and it said, "Let those on the housetop not come down." So, you certainly have to take the Scripture in its context. You get the message. The point is, study the Bible in its flow. So I sat down and read 1 John straight through. What a blessing to read it straight through, you know. God is saying something in continuity, I think we know that here, don't we? And I did the second day the same thing. The third day, the same thing. The fourth day, the same thing. The fifth day, the same thing. For thirty days, I did it. Thirty days I read straight through 1 John. You know what happens at the end of 30 days? You know what's in 1 John. You really do. Somebody says to you, "What does it say in the Bible if we confess our sins?" Oh that's 1 John. Chapter 1, left hand page, right hand column, halfway down. See? Why? Because you saturated your mind with that. And then I went to the Gospel of John and did the same thing. I divided it into sections of seven chapters. Three sections. Read seven for thirty, seven for thirty, seven for thirty and at the end of that time, I pretty well knew what was in 1 John. And the Gospel of John. And I could begin to compare the two. You say, "It'll take you forever." Two and half years and you've done the whole New Testament. Now don't read the Old Testament that way, you can just read it as narrative, but the New Testament you can saturate yourself with those concepts, by repetition. And then you really begin to learn. Well when that happens, the Spirit of God then has the material in your mind by which he can exercise

control. That's why the Spirit-filled life is synonymous with letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, you see? There's no handle for the Spirit to control unless the Word is there. Spurgeon said, "You ought to study the Bible until your blood is bibbling." He's right. You ought to see the world through chapter and verse eyes. Have you ever been able to do that? You can evaluate your spiritual maturity when you start to interpret everything by chapter and verse.

So God's will is that you be saved and Spirit-filled. Now I know a lot of people who wonder, "Oh, does God want me to marry Susie over here?" "Does God want me to go to this school?" "Does God want me to change jobs? Does God want me to get that new car? Does God want me to do... What about this new deal I've got? What does God wanna wanna? Oh God!" And they're praying like crazy for God to show them and they've never yielded their control to the Spirit. And so what are you doing? You're asking God to reveal a will that is not revealed and you're failing to obey a will that is revealed. You see? Why should God reveal anything else? You don't even obey what you've already got. God's will is saved for the Spirit-filled.

Third thing: God's will is that you be sanctified. 1 Thessalonians 4. Now this gets very practical. 1 Thessalonians 4. Here's a verse that's not too tough to understand, verse 3. 1 Thessalonians 4:3: for this is the will of God, that's not difficult is it? This is the will of God. What? Your sanctification. Stop right there. God wants you to be set apart and the word sanctification means holy. Let's use the word pure, because that I think illustrates it. God wants you to be pure. That's his will. Sanctified. Saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified. You say, "Well John, when you talk about being pure, what do you mean?" Okay, well let me know show you. Here are four principles of purity. You ready for these? Four principles of purity.

Number 1: verse 3: that you should abstain from fornication. Now the word fornication means sexual sin. He says you should stay away from sex-sin. That's principle one. Stay away from sex-sin. That's principle one in purity. Well you say, "Well, what do you mean, stay away from sex-sin? Well, are you saying that sex is evil?" No, sex is wonderful. Sex is good. God invented sex. There's nothing wrong with it. It's a beautiful, glorious human relationship inside marriage. But the term fornication expresses sexual sin. The outside of marriage thing, the perversion. And it can mean anything, listen, anything from consenting bisexual to homosexual to bestiality to anything else that is a perversion. It can mean the gamut of sexual activity outside God's perfect design in marriage. Stay away from sex sin. Now somebody always says, "How far away?" That's a practical question. Grant you. Far enough away to be what? 99.4% pure? Far enough away to be what? Pure. Pure. Now that gets practical, especially for young people, you know because you go through those temptations. "Are you saying I can't hold hands with my girlfriend?" I didn't say that. "Good." If you want to hold hands with your girlfriend, I mean the Bible doesn't cover that area. And I've had people say to me in fact, even last week, someone said to me, "Does that mean that I can't kiss my girlfriend, the one I love?" I didn't say that. "Good." In fact, in fact, the Bible says, all things are lawful. "Where is that, where?" The Bible says, "All things are lawful, but all things are not" - what? - "expedient." "All things

are lawful but I will not be brought under the power of any." It's one thing for you to physically express your love in an honest and pure and holy, loving relationship. And it's something else for you to be controlled by what you're doing. You know, the kiss of love, which says honestly and purely and wholesomely and in a godly fashion, this is the tenderness that expresses to you my love, is one thing. That wrestling match that takes you over is something else. Right? And that's the difference. One of those is the expression of love, the other one controls you. Let's face it. There's no big deal about a little bit of skin touching some other skin and that isn't any big deal. It's only a big deal if that creates within you the inability of the Holy Spirit to hold the control. So, stay away from sex-sin. Far enough away to maintain absolute purity. And believe me, you say, "Well, I don't know where that is." Don't tell me that. You know where it is. As soon as you start wondering where it is, that's the time that you've gone past where it is. And incidentally, remember too, Ann Landers said a lemon that's been squeezed too many times is garbage anyway.

Verse 4, principle number two: that every one of you, no exceptions, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor. Now vessel could mean wife or body and I take it to mean body in the context here, and so I would I say that he's likely saying, every one of you should know how to possess his body in purity and honor to God. Do you realize that God has given you your body to honor Him? Now we say about staying away from sex-sin. That's the first point. You know, I might also add, there are some people who don't do it, they just entertain themselves by watching other people do it. You know I heard the other day about some students at a certain Christian college that decided it'd be neat to all go out and watch a movie called Deep Throat which you've all heard about, so they thought that was real neat. I mean they would never do that. My friend, you go out to watch it and you may as well have done it. And I'm sure there are some people who say, "Well I certainly agree with God's moral standards, but I certainly enjoy reading Playboy magazine." Don't tell me that. You don't agree with God's moral standards or you wouldn't touch it. It's one thing to do it and it's something else to be entertained by it. No, it's the same thing. So stay away from it. Away from doing it, away from being entertained by it. Being interested in it or enticed by it.

Now he says, your body should be possessed and the idea there is that you should control your body. Principle number two is control your body to honor God. You know, that old body will run away. That body just takes off. Satan uses the lust of the flesh to set things aflame. And there's all kinds of lust of the flesh incidentally, it's not just sexual. It can be the way you dress. Some people dress to draw attention to their bodies. And you know our whole civilization is so preoccupied with the body, it's unbelievable. Absolutely unbelievable. The television just continuously confronts you with body after body after body, you know. And all being glorified and magnified and very often, you know, we can act very spiritual and yet we can do things to our body that attracts attention in a lustful manner. Your body ought to be that which honors God. You know I think this especially applies to women, though men as well, when Peter says that women ought to be careful to be modest. Very important. But, use your body so that it honors God. Don't let your body run away in dishonor to God. That's a very

important point. Handle your body so that it honors God. Whatever you do with it, the way you move it, the way you dress it, whatever activities it enters into, should bring glory to God. That's what your body is designed to do. Romans 12: "Present your" - what? - "your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy!" You say, "God's got my heart, does He have to have my body, too?" Yes. Yes.

Principle number three: maybe you didn't like one and two. There might be one here you like. I don't know. Verse 5, principle number three: not in the lust of evil desire as the heathen who know not God. Now principle three is, "Don't act like a godless heathen." I'll give you a very personal illustration. I'm going to bare my soul. You know, the godless heathen is guided by lust, by passion. And we've all been through this. You know, I've often thought, I go into my garage almost every day and trip over a tricycle. There's either a red one, or a blue one or a green one right by the door. And I've often looked at those tricycles and I'll be very honest - I don't ride any of them. No I don't. True confession. I've thought about it, but it'd be silly. There goes the pastor again on his tricycle. I avoid it. No really, I haven't the slightest interest in riding a tricycle. Why? I'm long past that. Now you give me a motorcycle and that'll interest me. Why? Because I've been through that thing and I demand progressive thrills. I'll give you a personal illustration. When I was a kid, I remember...and uh, I was in high school and everyone gets to date girls, so I thought, I'll get into the thing and date girls. And so I took this girl out and boy, I liked her a lot. I thought she is a terrific girl. So I thought to myself, and I just was a...I'd never even held a girl's hand or anything. I was little old Johnny from out of the woods, I didn't know anything. So, I decided I'd like to hold her hand. So all night I'm trying to drum enough courage to hold her hand, right? We've all had that first little deal with that first little girl that made our heart flutter and so after about an hour, I'm sweating and she keeps saying, "Is something wrong?" Little drops on my forehead. Finally, I got up all my courage and I grabbed her hand, almost broke her fingers, I'm sure, and I held her hand for awhile and I thought, "Boy if this is all there is to life, this is a big disappointment, this sweaty palm." So I thought, "There's got to be more," and I remember I had the opportunity a little later and I just got up all my courage and put my arm around her, you know and whoo! And all of a sudden there's always that thing in your mind, "Well, there's got to be more to life than this." And you get caught in that thing and pretty soon, I'll never forget, I took her home and boy, I thought, "Gee the thing to do is a good night kiss. That is the thing to do." And boy if you don't think that was hard. That was hard to get your courage up. And I just kept thinking and thinking and I just barely got my courage up and her father turns on the porch light. I almost fell in the oleanders. But anyway, I finally got up my courage and I leaned over and gave her a kiss. And you know what happened? Immediately I knew that there was no end to this, because something inside of me just said, "Hmmm." And I heard this little word, "More." See? And I learned right then, that there is built into this whole design of God, a progression in sex that he has beautifully designed to culminate in that beautiful relationship between a man and a woman married and sanctified by God. And that when I got into that process, I was violating...I was in territory that I didn't belong in and I was going to get sucked into the whole thing if I wasn't careful and it would all be out of God's will. But you see, the heathen don't know God, so they're into the thing up to their ears. I'll never forget a little girl came to me at Hume Lake, tears running down her face, just crying and crying

and she said, "Mr. MacArthur," she said, and this is the word she used exactly, she said, "I have shackled up with so many boys since I was thirteen, that I've decided I can't live. I want to kill myself. I haven't been able to look at myself in a mirror in I don't know how long. Can God save me?" She was sixteen. Took her to a prayer room in the back, we got on our knees and she gave her heart to Jesus and she looked up and she had tears in her eyes only they were tears of joy. She said, "Mr. MacArthur, I feel forgiven." I said, "You are forgiven." And she burst out in laughter of joy and she grabbed her girlfriend and they hugged and she went on her way. You know, lust is a cruel master. You know Oscar Wilde, the great and brilliant playwright wound up a homosexual and in those days, they put homosexuals in prison. And he wrote, and he said, you know, "I forgot." He said I forgot that what a man does in private he will some day cry aloud from the housetops. He said desire is a cruel master. Don't operate on the desire basis like the heathen who know not God. This is purity.

Principle number four, verse 6: no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter. Because the Lord is avenger of all such as we also are forewarned and testify. What is that saying? Don't take advantage of other people. Don't take advantage of other people. You know it's so easy to use other people to get what you want. Even physically. I can remember so many locker room conversations after a football game or after practice and the guys would all say, "Hey, have you heard about this new girl, boy, you can do anything you want, this, this and this." And everybody would want her phone number. Just taking advantage, just using people. So you think, how in the world does Paul think we're going to do all this stuff, does he think this is our only problem? No, but he sure knows where he live. He knows it's a \_\_\_\_\_. God's will is that you be saved, Spirit-filled and sanctified. Listen, people. If you're running around trying to find God's will for some specific in your life and you're not living a pure life, what reason is there that God should show you his will unrevealed when you haven't obeyed His will revealed? You got that?

Let me give you a fourth one. God's will is that you be submissive. 1 Peter 2. And we're just going to look at this briefly. 1 Peter 2. God's will is that you be saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified and submissive. 1 Peter 2:13. It says this: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man." Isn't that interesting? Not ordinances of God, but ordinances of man... "for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him, that is by God, for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well. For so is" - what? - "the will of God." Did you know that it is the will of God that you submit to the government? God's will is that you submit to the government. Submission. You say, "You mean, I've got to obey the laws?" "You mean, if the President makes some new kind of rule, I've got to obey that? You mean, if the Congress comes off with some kind of new policy, I've got to obey that? What if I don't agree?" Doesn't say anything about that, it just says obey it. You say, "Well, I'm going to start a riot. Because God told me that I don't like that law and I don't have to obey it." Wait, wait, wait. Verse 16: "Yes, you are free, but don't you use your spiritual liberty for a cloak of maliciousness. You honor all men, you love the brotherhood, you fear God and then you honor the king." You say, "But boy, if you worked for my boss, you'd never obey that guy. You'd never submit." All right, verse 18 is for you: "Servants, you



be subject to your masters with all fear." You say, "Well, you don't know that guy that I work for." Oh, not only to the good and gentle but also to the perverse. You got a perverse one? Obey him. Submit. Now watch this. Beloved, this is so important. Why all this? Verse 15: "that you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." You know that people want to criticize Christianity? You know they do, don't you? How best can they do it? What is Christianity's poorest testimony? Christians. Did I tell you about the guy I met in the prison up there? Had all the stripes and the numbers and he comes up to me and says, "Oh, out of sight message. Terrific." I said, "Are you a Christian?" "Yeah, I'm a Christian. I'm in the ministry." I said, "You're in the ministry? What are you doing with that number?" He said, "It's a long story, man." I said, "well, tell me a little of it" and he told me that he'd been in there because he didn't pay 30 traffic fines and all that and I said, "Do me a favor. Don't tell anybody you're a Christian. You're really lousy advertising." It's true, it's true. If you're going to be a Christian, submission is part of it.

Listen, beloved, we live in an ungodly system and we need to be exemplary people, don't we? We need to be exemplary people in every way. Dr. Pickett told an interesting story at a conference where we were speaking and I couldn't help but think how apropos this is. You know, we are so belligerent so often even as Christians. There was this guy driving on the street and he had a...some guy pulled up behind him and the guy behind him just started pounding on his horn. This guy apparently wasn't going fast and so he's beep, beep, beep, beep and this Christian guy was just fuming. Beep, beep, beep, beep. And he couldn't go anywhere, couldn't go any faster. And he finally got so mad that he opens the door and he jumps out of the car and he runs over and he says, "Why don't you quit that or I'll..." and the guy says, "Well, I saw your bumper sticker 'Honk if you love Jesus' so you know, I was just..." Somewhere along the line, the pattern of our life ought to match the message, right? It is important that a believer be submissive to the State, to all of the rules, to his employer, oh this is important because you see, this shows the world the true character of a believer. God's will is that you be submissive. Listen to me. If you're trying to find God's will for some specific in your life and you're not the kind of a citizen you ought to be, and you're not the kind of an employee you ought to be, and you're not the kind of person in terms of human relations you ought to be, start there, will you, and worry about the next step? Because that is revealed as God's will.

Lastly, God's will is that you suffer. You say, "Oop, I finally qualify. Boy, do I suffer. Man, I suffer like crazy." Let me show you what Peter says. In 1 Peter 4:19: "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator." Peter says you're going to suffer according to the will of God and you say "Oh, I suffer, oh, I carry such a cross. My wife is my cross." Somebody says, "My husband is my cross." Some husband says, "My mother-in-law is my cross." And some pastor says, "Oh, those deacons are my cross" and some deacons say, "oh that pastor is our cross." That's not what he's talking about. It's not talking about that. It's talking about something much more important than those kind of things which are all in another area. In 1 Peter, just backing up to chapter 3, verse 17, look what he's talking about: "It is better if the will of God be so, and it is so, that you suffer for" - what kind of doing? - "well-doing rather

than evil-doing." Listen, if you can't get along with your wife, that's not the suffering he's talking about. That's another problem. You're suffering there because of evil-doing. You're probably not the kind of husband you ought to be. Or vice versa. What he's talking about here is when you suffer for well-doing. What does he mean? When you live a godly life in an ungodly society, you're going to get some flak, right? That's what he's talking about. Chapter 4, verse 13 or 1 Peter, just to pick up some other thoughts. He says, "But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings." In other words, He suffered for His goodness. He suffered for the truth and that's what he's talking about. When you go out and really confront the world and are bold for Christ and you suffer, that's the will of God. We really need to suffer as a Christian. Look at verse 16: "yet, if any man suffer as a Christian." Do we really suffer as Christians? Do we really face the world and take what they give?

I don't know much about suffering. A little bit. I can think back not too many months ago when I spoke at Valley College campus and I'll never forget, I was asked to speak on the subject of Christianity and culture. You know, I don't know anything about Christianity and culture. I have to read Francis Schaeffer three times to understand it. So I thought, I know what I'll do, I'll speak on why Jesus is the Messiah. That'll be apropos since it's a great Jewish campus and so I talked on culture for awhile and I got around to Jesus being the Messiah and I was so excited because the Spirit controlled the meeting. Some of you were there. And you could just sense that the Spirit of God was controlling...all kind of antagonistic people were there, you know it was thrown open to the whole campus. And so I got all down and I had just stuck my neck out there and I just said, "God, give me the strength and the power. I'm just going to say it right down the line and let fly what flies." Man, it was exciting. Next thing we knew, we got letters to the office that we're going to bomb the church. We got phone calls during the day that we're going to blow up the church on a Sunday service. We didn't tell all of you because not all of you are ready to suffer. And then in the middle of the night at my home, there came obscene phone calls. And my wife would answer the phone in the middle of the night and they would spew out obscenities and threats against us and you know, at first, you're kind of shaky, and then you begin to realize that what you've done...and I thought to myself, "John MacArthur, for the second time that I can think of in my life, I have made waves in the system." How exciting to be able to suffer! We did have our phone number changed however. Practical things. But for the second time that I could really think of in my life, I had made waves in the world. And I'll never forget that out of that thing, some people got saved and especially one who is part of our fellowship here and I mention him in the book, Dan. And Dan came up to me after that thing and he said, "What you said makes sense to me. I'd like to talk to you. Can I make an appointment?" He came to the office and had the opportunity to lead him to Jesus Christ and already, his life is so fruitful and I look back and I think I was expendable for his sake, right? If I died and he got saved, that's fine, right? I'm willing to put my life out there. Whatever happens, happens. To count the cost and name Christ. I'll tell you, this is what God's will is: that you be willing to take a stand.

I had a great time yesterday. Just to give you a personal little thing. I was down at the football game between UCLA and SC and had the opportunity to be down with the team on the sidelines during the

game, and you know, we've got young men who come here from both teams. That's what's known as dilemma, you know. I had a great time down there, sharing. And after the game was over, I was going down the tunnel and I was leaving and Al Oliver, who is a great big 6'7" 275-pound right tackle for UCLA walked up beside me, and he comes to our church and he said, "John, I've got to talk to you" and they just lost a heartbreaking game. If you know anything about football and you know what the buildup is like, you can know what the letdown is like. It's unbelievable. You can only experience it, you can't pass it on, you know. And Al put his heart into the thing and they came up on the short end and he said to me, "I really got to talk to you. I'm concerned." And he expressed the concern to me. He says, "You know, a certain guy on the team doesn't know Jesus Christ and I'm really burdened for him. And I've talked with him and we've got to get together with him." I thought to myself, here's a guy who just has gone through a game like that and all he's got on his mind going down the tunnel is the salvation of some guy on the team. He's got his head in the right place, right? So he went on to the SC locker room. We were in there talking and everybody was celebrating and they had passed out little roses and everybody was having a great time. And the Christian guys that I know and we share together a lot said, "Let's go over to the UCLA locker room" and we went over next door and we went inside the UCLA locker room and it was just really quiet. They hadn't let the press in or anything so we went in and Al came over and the other Christian guys from UCLA and they said, "Let's have prayer." And right in the middle of the locker room, this whole big milling locker room with coaches and players, they just stood. I mean, when we were standing in the middle, I was in there like this, you know. I was towered over. They had pads on and everybody just put their arms around each other and they stood right in the middle of that locker room and they just prayed in a circle and it was their way of giving testimony to Jesus Christ. I'll remember...the testimony was loud and clear, believe me. I'll remember the testimony of Al, who just simply prayed, "thank you for letting us lose because we accept that it is your perfect will." And then Ray Washmera who plays at SC prays next to me and he says, "God, thank you that in Jesus Christ, we're all winners." And they prayed all the way around the circle. What a testimony. You see, that's the kind of testimony that Christians need to make in the face of the world, right? A willingness to stand up and be counted for Christ. And every guy in that place knew who those Christians were. We stood at the door and as guys came out, sometimes the team guys would come over and say, "Thank you for praying for us." They know who those guys are. And this is the thing that God wants out of us. Sure, there are some guys who criticize them, there are some guys who laugh at them, this is always the way it is. And in the world, there are always going to be critics and there are always going to be mockers and there are always going to be persecutors but it is God's will that you make the Gospel an issue, right? 2 Timothy 3:12: All that live godly in this present age will suffer persecution.

Now listen, I'm going to close. Saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive, suffering. That's the will of God. You say, "John, but you didn't tell me whether I ought to go to that school. You didn't tell me about my new job. You gave that same old Bible stuff you always give. Give me that practical stuff." All right, you ready for this? I've got another principle, you're going to eat it up. You're going to love this so much, you might not even be able to stay seated? You ready? You want to know the next

thing is in the will of God if you're saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submissive and suffering? You know what God's will for you is? Whatever you want. I knew you'd like it. Whatever you want. You say, "What do you mean, whatever you want?" Listen, if you have taken care of all of those things, who do you think is running your wants? God is. The psalmist said, "Delight in the Lord and He will give you" -- what? -- "the desire of your heart." He didn't say He'll fulfill the desire. He said He'll put it there. Somebody asked me one time, "John, you had a good ministry at the seminary and you were traveling around preaching. Why did you go to Grace Church?" And I said, "Oh, I wanted to." And he said, "Oh! Self-will! You wanted to?" I said, "Yeah, I wanted to. 'I want to go there, Lord. I think I'm going to go there.'" And you know something? You know where I got that want? I believe I'm in God's will. And you know where I got that want? God gave it to me. I believe that the Christian who follows those five things can believe that God's going to give him the desire and that he can follow that desire. Now God may move you a little bit along the way, but follow that desire.

A friend came to me, "I just graduated from Biola, I don't know where to go. I want to give my life to the Lord and I don't know where to go." Said, "I want to be a missionary." I said, "Well, where would you like to go?" "Oh me, just me?" he said. "Just plain old me?" I said, "just plain old you. Where would you like to go?" He said, "well, personally, you mean? Well, if I had own way, I would like to go to France because I'm Jewish and I speak French and the second highest population of Jews is in Paris and I want to go to Paris as a missionary to the Jews." I said, "Marty, you saved?" "Yeah." "You living a Spirit-filled life?" and he really was and he said, "I believe before God that I walk in the Spirit. Living a pure life." And he had a wonderful little family and he was a tremendous guy and he said, "Yes." And we went through the whole thing and as best he could in his own heart, he had really done what those things called for. I remember, in terms of suffering, how he had confronted rabbis in the Southern California area with the claims of Christ. I was with him one time and the guy threw us out of the place. I mean, he was bold. He went right down the line. I said, "Marty, you say you'd like to go to France? Have a nice trip." He said, "But I haven't written any letters! You know what you have to do? You have to put out a fleece, and then you have to close a door, open a door, and pray and write 14 mission boards and line up columns..." and I said, "Wait, wait, wait." I said, "Why don't you just accept that God gave the desire and go?" I'll never forget what he did. He signed up with the Bible Christian Union which is a faith mission and he signed up for France and we put a plaque up in the church where I was then, my dad's church, and it said "Marty Wolf goes to France." And today, he's serving Christ in Canada. You say, what happened, what happened? I'll tell you what happened. He's in the city of Montreal working with French-speaking Jews. He had the right idea, got into a different town. You know what happens? Once God gives you a desire, just starting moving. If He wants to move you, he'll move you. You take what you know as God's will and do what you want. Because God will give you the want. Then He'll fulfill it in the right place. David said, Psalm 143:10, "Lord, teach me to do thy will." Doesn't say, teach me thy will, it's obvious. He said, teach me to what? Do it.

Let's pray. Father, what a joy it's been tonight to just go over this subject. And we would ask dear God, that this might be a night when we do your will, each and every one of us. Speak to us as individuals. While your heads are bowed for just a minute, I just feel like maybe we could close with just a little time of introspection.

Let me ask you this. Are you here tonight and you're not saved? You've never come and put your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? You haven't even taken step one. Right where you sit right now, why don't you say, Lord Jesus Christ, I want you to be my Savior, I want to step into God's will. And some of you are saved but you've never gotten to the place where you've yielded to the Spirit and you're not living a Spirit-filled life. Why don't you just tell the Lord that and say, Lord, tonight, I want to begin to walk in the Spirit. I want to saturate myself with the presence of Jesus Christ. And some of you would have to say I'm not living a pure life. Maybe you want to pray and say, Lord, I want that purity. Not only of deed but of thought. And some of you haven't been the kind of citizens you ought to be and you haven't been salt and light in the world. And maybe you're saying, God, help me to be the right kind of citizen, the right kind of employee, showing the submission that is godliness. And some of you don't know much about suffering because you haven't really confronted the world with Jesus, so you've never gotten any of the flak that comes to those that do. But tonight, you want to say, God, help me to make Christianity an issue even if it costs me my life. Beloved, if you'll take those steps tonight, I'll promise you God will reveal His will to you so clearly, you'll be unable to avoid it. And like the hand in the glove, you won't even have to ask, you'll just be doing it.

Father I pray that you'll bring those to the prayer room those that really need to come. That you'll speak to their hearts, even to my heart. That Lord, the prayer of our lives might be, teach us to do your will. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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