

HOW TO SEEK AFTER GOD'S WILL

Watchman Nee:

The one question that troubles Christians the most is how to seek after God's will. We know that all works which are done apart from God are vanity and futile labor; they do not count before God. We are not here to do a great work, but to do God's work. Many works are great, wonderful, and beneficial, but they may not be God's work for us. We should not think that whatever is good is of God's will. If our work is apart from the will of God, the Lord whom we serve will not be happy. Although we may be busy from morning till evening, we may not reap much benefit in the spiritual realm nor receive God's praise and reward as a result of this work. We must seek after God's will in each step of our life and work. We should not work senselessly, loosely, and foolishly. Many times, in our studying of the Bible, in our prayer, and even in our preaching of the gospel, we forget to seek after the Lord's will. We may preach to others for some time without realizing why we are preaching. We have not sought after the Lord's will, yet the whole time we continue preaching! This kind of work is of little value in the eyes of God; it is worthless. Hence, it is a great matter to know how to seek after God's will. It is something all Christians must know.

The first step in seeking after God's will is to cast aside our own opinions. Our prejudices often hinder God from revealing His will to us. Once a man has some prejudice, even if God were to show him His will, he probably would not be able to hear it or even be aware of it. Furthermore, even if he were to be aware of God's will, he would probably not do it.

In my own experience, every time I do not understand God's will, it is because I already have my own will. Sometimes my own intention is hidden in the deepest part of my heart. If I do not remove my own self-will, there will be many difficulties in seeking after the Lord's will. As soon as our self-will is removed, God will show us His will.

I cannot overemphasize the fact that self-will must be removed before God's will can be known. This point is most crucial and deserves our full attention.

Our heart is very wicked. Sometimes we seek after God's will superficially, but within we are full of self-will and prejudice. Our one great goal is to please ourselves. Sometimes when we kneel down, we say with our mouth, "Lord, show me Your will. I am willing to obey Your will." But in our heart we are not willing and would not agree. Sometimes we pray with our mouth, "Father, Your will be done. I want only to seek after Your will." Apparently the heart sympathizes with the mouth and is willing to do God's will, but in the deepest part of our heart there is another intent which seeks for our own will. If this is the case, I am afraid that we cannot find God's will. This is a false seeking; it will not find. The promise of "seek and you shall find" is not given to those who are not honest. If we are not genuine in seeking after God's will, we will not receive the revelation of God's will. We may console ourselves by saying, "I have obtained God's will," but what we have probably obtained is a product of our mind and a counterfeit of His will!

If due to some desire in our heart we have already made up our mind concerning a certain matter, it would be vain for us to seek after the Lord's will. When one already has his own will and his own desire, his prayers will be in vain. Even if he prays and begs every day, it will be of no use. Hence, every time we want to seek after the Lord's will, we must ask ourselves in the Lord if there is self-will or prejudice or any hidden desire in the deepest part of our being. We must seek after the Lord's will with a clean and undefiled heart. Otherwise, what we do will have no effect.

For this reason, when two or more ways are placed before you, and you prefer one over the other, you should ask yourself if you are willing to take the way that you do not prefer, should the Lord so choose. If you are not willing to take the way that you do not prefer, what is the use for you to seek after the Lord's will?

Whenever you come to a crossroads, the best way is to have a heart free of preference. This is to have an unbiased heart, neither preferring one way nor being afraid of another way but considering either way to be the same. Then, whichever way the Lord may point to, you will be able to take that way. If there is no preference in our heart, the Lord can easily show us His will. Inward preferences and our unwillingness to obey are the main hindrances to the Lord's will.

To have no preference in one's heart does not mean that one is passive. To be without preference means that one exercises his own judgment, resolving to do God's will. To be free from preference does not mean that one no longer has "wants" or "don't wants." It means that before one is clear concerning God's will, though the heart may not prefer any way, he is determined to do God's will and is willing to carry it out once he is clear

about it. We should not have the choice between "I want" and "I don't want" when it comes to our own will deciding the way we are to take. However, when it comes to deciding between God's will and our will, we must choose between the "I want" and "I don't want," which is, we should "want" to do God's will and should "not want" to do our own will. We should choose God's will and reject our own will. It is not that we do not have a will or a choice. We do, but our will and our choice is to do God's will and take His choice. We are not void of choice. We have our choice. However, we choose to want what God wants.

Simply put, the first step in seeking after the Lord's will is to have no inclination or rejection in our heart toward the ways ahead of us, assuming that we do not know which one is God's will. Yet at the same time, our heart should hold to the attitude that we want to do God's will. We should be willing to submit our will to the Lord's will. The reason that we do not know God's will is because we fail in this one point. The Lord is happy to reveal His will to those who are willing to do His will. For those who are not willing to do God's will, their seeking after His will is false. Hence, it cannot be found by them. Therefore, if there is prejudice in the heart, it is better not even to talk about seeking after God's will. One should first trust in the Lord's power to deal thoroughly with the inclinations in the heart before he can expect the Lord to reveal His will to him. Otherwise, even if he knows all means and exhausts all means, they will be useless to him.

What we have said so far concerns our side. If we have fulfilled God's requirements, how will He then show us His will? He will show us His will by the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and the environment. When the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and the environment all line up together, we can affirm that such is indeed the will of God.

We should seek after the Lord's will in this way in everything that comes upon us in our daily life. In the many small things in our daily life we act carelessly, according to our own will. It is not until the big things come that we try to seek after the Lord's will, but then He seems to be far away from us. This seems to be the Lord's will, and that also seems to be the Lord's will. Every way seems to be the right way. We may spend a lot of time seeking for the Lord's will without finding it. Therefore, we should seek after the Lord's will in small things as well as big things. If we are in the habit of seeking after the Lord's will in our daily life, it will not be difficult to know His will when special events happen. We should be experienced in seeking after the Lord's will and have a habit of seeking after His will. If we do, then whenever something happens we will know what the will of the Lord is.

Sometimes God does not reveal His will to us immediately. The Father is never wrong. If He sees that it is more profitable to reveal His will to us at a later time, He will do so. At such times we should hold the attitude that as long as we do not know, we will not act. The danger lies in our desire to move. We want to move before we know the Lord's will. The Lord wants us to wait for Him, to move on slowly together with Him, and to take our steps only when we are certain of His will. Unfortunately, we are often hurried by the circumstances; we love to act quickly. As a result, we often move away from the track of the Lord's will. I can say one thing for sure: eight out of ten things done in a hurry are not of the Lord's will. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, we do not see Him do one thing in a hurry. We should learn of Him. We should not act rashly, that is, before we are certain of the Lord's will. We should make up our mind not to initiate anything until we have found out what the will of the Lord is. It is not too slow to walk with the Lord. The quickest way to go on is to go forward on our knees with the Lord. May the Lord give us much strength to be quiet before Him and to wait for and seek after His will. May the Lord deliver us from times when we have to confess before Him the sin of acting too quickly. From this time forth, may we stop our self, leave our self, and solely seek after the Lord's will.