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# **Almost... in Conclusion**

**#1119-A**

**Series: The Will of God**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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## Almost...in Conclusion

It has probably become apparent to you by now. There are two ways to judge the length of a sermon or Sunday school lesson or a PTA speech. One is to have a disappearing pulpit that lowers the hapless orator into the basement at a prescribed time, or a space ship that comes at the appointed hour, turning loose tiny Martians who grab the unsuspecting long-winded hero and whisk him away into the ozone. That way you know by your clock alone when the end is in sight. The other way is to listen carefully (that's what you were avoiding, right?) until you hear the words, "and in conclusion..."

At graduation ceremonies and political conventions, it's even more apparent. Those words..." and in conclusion..." usually mean he or she is just about (halfway) finished. Why so early in the program? Well, speakers know that as long as the end is in sight, at least some of their listeners, through sheer guilt if nothing else, will try to hear the finish, the way some people read the last chapter of a book just so they can say they read it. So upon the careful insertion of "and in conclusion..." at least some of the drifting crowd awakens from their peaceful slumber, stir their sleeping limbs, and begin to think seriously about life after church or life after speech or whatever. The speaker's fourth point, which inevitably will be followed by a poem, is tolerable, you see, when visions of a hamburger steak, onions, carrots, and tossed salad are no longer such a distant dream.

Now that I've lost you completely to thoughts of your next meal, I will tell you that the title of today's lesson is "Almost...in Conclusion." It is the *next to last lesson* on the subject of the will of God. What that means is two things:

- 1) If you can hold on just a little longer, it will be over.
- 2) Knowing we're near the end, you can perk up and pay attention.

We will be, in these last two lessons, drawing some final conclusions, giving some practical suggestions, and reviewing some basic principles upon which I pray that some of us can build future decisions. Our outline will be like this:

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I- Absolutely Engraved

II- Both Sides of the Coin

III- The Bottom Line

### I- ABSOLUTELY ENGRAVED

Okay, ready? Good. “And in conclusion...” I would like us to look today at three basic issues concerning the will of God that are perhaps some of the more important things to remember when we go to make it all work. The first has to do with the raw materials you give God to use. We have already determined that it all hangs on understanding the *absolutes of Scripture*. We have also determined that each absolute demonstrates a different aspect of God’s nature, and that each absolute spawns dozens of principles which we in turn can use, as Proverbs promised, “to make the right decision every time.”

The problem, I have found, lies in the practical implementation of the Truth. When decision time comes around or a crisis stares us in the face, we usually go blank when we try to think of absolutes that might apply. So we scurry for a concordance or a Topical Bible or some kind of reference material, but what do we look for? Let’s say we’re going to make a decision about buying that new house. Mary wants it; the kids hate it; the bank will finance it; our budget won’t. So the family gets together in the living room, gets out the family Bible, blows off the dust, and begins to look in the concordance for “real estate.” They can find “real” and they can find “estate”, but neither seem to apply. “If only we had *someplace to start*,” Dad moans. “If only there were a string we could pull that would lead us through the Bible systematically when a certain kind of decision is imminent.”

There is, but it requires something of us. Therefore, most of us will probably dismiss it as a “non-workable” idea. “Non-workable”, you know, means to many of us that it won’t work unless we do, so forget it. The idea I want to lay before you today is called simply “The Thread”. A “thread” is a series of Scriptures that you lay on your heart by memorizing them in a certain sequence. Each passage or verse has either a word or a thought in it that automatically triggers in your mind something about the verse to follow. Each builds on the one before it, until you possess a Scriptural package that surfaces the will of God about a given subject. So when a crisis comes, and you need to know God’s mind, a key word in one of the verses will come to your mind, and your heart will begin to flow with an *entire*

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*ocean* of God's Word pertaining to a given subject. Let's assume that you seem to be undergoing a lot of testing, and you want to know God's heart about how to respond. Here's a "thread" called "Testing and Resting":

### Testing and Resting: The Thread #1

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1- "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?

(Jeremiah 12:5 NKJV)

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2- When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

(Isaiah 43:2,3b NKJV)

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3- Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

(Matthew 11:28,29 NKJV)

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4- There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

(Hebrews 4:9 NKJV)

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So...

5- Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!

(Psalm 27:14 NKJV)

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6- But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

(Isaiah 40:31 NKJV)

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7- Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself;

(John 8:28 NKJV)

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8- "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.  
(John 15:5 NKJV)

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But..Paul answers,

9- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.  
(Philippians 4:13)

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Therefore...

10- He must increase, but I must decrease. [He must grow more prominent; I must grow less so.]  
(John 3:30 Amplified Bible)

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Our thread, then, begins with the question: "Are you weary?" from Jeremiah 12:5. God answers from Isaiah 43:2: "You're not alone. I AM is with you, even through the floods and fires." Jesus beckons... "so come unto me and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. There is, you know, a rest for God's own: Hebrews 4:9. Here's what you do: Psalm 27:14. Here's what will happen: (Isaiah 40:31. Here's why: John 8:28. All of which leads us, amidst our trials to our source: John 15:5, our strength: Philippians 4:13, and our calling: John 3:30 Amplified Bible.

The absolute in this thread is, "When you pass through trials you are never alone." You may not feel it, or see it, but God not only *watches you go through it*, God *goes through it with you*. Immediately, your confidence begins to soar. *That is an absolute*. God cannot change His mind. He is with us *through the storm*. And He is calling to us. Listen, I can hear Him. He is calling us... not to fight the battle, but to rest in the arms of the Captain. The flesh answers back, "I can do it." God answers back, "No, even Jesus couldn't do it without the Father, and He reminded us we can't without the Son." So do we give up? No, Paul comes back to recall that *in Him*, anything is possible. Then what's the answer? He must become Lord. We must let Him increase, gain more control. We must quietly stop fighting and let God be God. That's where that particular thread leads you. And any verse God brings to mind in that thread will automatically trigger the pattern of the ten passages and give the Holy Spirit a voice with which to speak peace to your heart.

You can take *each of the absolutes we've studied*, or find any of

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your own, and search out God's character therein, and begin to put the verses together to lay on your heart. In this case, that aspect of God's character is His omnipresence.

The Thread. It is one way to systematically, for the rest of your life lay the Word of God on your heart *by absolutes*, tying in the principles that teach us what to do to obey that absolute, and threading them together in a pattern that meets your individual needs. Then, when you need an answer, it need only come from God's Word. And it can come anytime; for God's Word will be absolutely engraved in a thread upon your heart. Try it. It might help you more *naturally* discern the will of God.

We'll be looking at more about "threads" in future lessons, and perhaps share one or two for starters that tie in with the particular lessons we are studying.

### II- BOTH SIDES OF THE COIN

Which brings us to the second subject in our almost...wrap up. It would, I suppose, be appropriate to begin: "And in conclusion..." let's talk about both sides of the coin and the will of God. Let me explain. You probably were saying, "I hoped you would." (Or maybe, "I hoped you wouldn't.") At any rate, about both sides of the coin.

It may be apparent to you by now that in most of this series we have been discussing Christian decision-making and how to find God's will in situations where *we have been given a choice*. Choices such as changing jobs, getting married, going into business, buying a house, joining a church, committing to a ministry, etc. These questions have surfaced, and we have looked at how to examine those choices in the light of God's absolutes, and absolute...ly make a Scriptural decision.

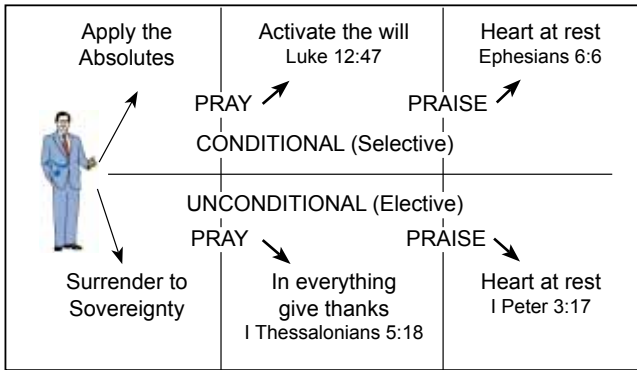
But in our last lesson, we looked at prayer and the will of God. We began seeing God's plan in the light of His sovereignty and thought together about how to surrender to that plan, so God can have His way. So we began seeing emerge, then, that aspect of God's will that is not determined *by our decisions*, but rather by our response to our *circumstances*. Such was the case with Jesus in the Garden, as He faced the cross. Joseph, of course, is a good example. The will of God for him, was to end up in Egypt as a ruler. Now there was no way for him to make choices to do that. He had no idea what was in the mind of God. So God in His sovereignty *carefully arranged circumstances that were the last thing Joseph would have*

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*contrived*. Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, betrayed by his master’s wife, and subjected to alternating scenarios that made him a prisoner, a hero, a prisoner again, and finally a hero again. It was the beautiful unfolding of the will of God. But in this case, it wasn’t because Joseph *made right choices*. All Joseph could do was *respond properly to the choices God made*.

That may be where you are today. Maybe the issue in your life is not so much whether or not God wants you to take that job, but how God wants you to respond to *losing that job*. The setting is different, but the answers are the same. The absolutes of Scripture give you the answers. But we must be able to discern the difference between the two sides to the coin of the will of God. We might call them the “selected” will of God, and the “elected” will of God. Or, in case that word “elected” scares you, the “conditional” versus the “unconditional” will of God. In chart form, it might resemble something like this:

THE TWO-FOLD PICTURE OF THE WILL OF GOD



So to *really* discern the will of God for your life, then, you have to have a kind of two-tiered vision of His plan. The first is an overall understanding of His sovereignty, and how the all things of life work together for good. The second is an understanding of the principles of decision-making, and the responsibility we have to make every decision *according to the absolutes of Scripture*. If you can ever come to a healthy balance between what God has planned for you, and the part you play in that plan, you will have come to understand the will of God.

Let’s liken our pilgrimage to a well-planned trip across the country of life. God has prepared for you a map, showing you

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which roads to take, and which ones to stay off of. He has pointed you in a general direction, and given certain places to stop in, and others that are definitely off-limits. In some areas, He has given you alternate routes, and left it to you to choose one. In other cases, the lines are clearly drawn, and only one choice is yours... obey or not. So, within the confines of what He has mapped out, you choose and you drive. Your choices basically are *whether or not to read the map*, and secondly, *whether or not to follow it*. If you don't read it, you can't blame God for the dead ends. And if you read it but don't like the scenery and you go the other way, you surely can't blame God, either. But, even following the plan, *there will occasionally be some roadblocks*. You will come upon a totally unexpected detour, not shown on the map, and you will, if you are not careful, begin to rant and rave with anger at the One who gave you the map for not showing it.

The truth is if that detour were shown on the map, you'd have refused to go that way. You like the super-freeways of life, not the muddy ruts and dirty paths of the side roads. But it may be the very thing you need the most: maybe your ministry, maybe your opportunity to grow, maybe God's opportunity to get your attention rests on that detour. So God has been leading you *according to His plan*, but His plan includes some side trips you'd rather not take.

Losing your job wasn't in your plan book. It was in His. That child's sickness or rebellion wasn't on your map. He knew in advance about it, and allowed it so you could pass through Transformation Gulch on your way to Victory City. So finding and doing the will of God involves two totally different, but perfectly integrated activities. The first is the ability to respond to the choices of life using the absolutes of Scripture. The second is the ability to respond to the uncontrollable incidents of life without getting bitter.

As the chart shows, in the case of your choices, the will of God will be revealed as we apply the absolutes, (hopefully after having engraved the absolutes first upon our hearts), then falling at the feet of a sovereign God in prayer, staying there until *we know* His perfect will, all the while, *casting all our cares upon Him, for He careth for us*. When we do that, neither anxiety nor fear have a place in our hearts as we wait.

In the case of life's seemingly uncontrollable incidents, however, we must realize that a holy, sovereign, omniscient God has, in eternity past, designed a plan for our lives in harmony with His



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desire that “His Kingdom come, His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” To accomplish that, sometimes even as we are choosing, things happen over which we have no control. They may be the result of sowing and reaping, or they may be the result of absolutely nothing we have done. But in either case, the Grand Architect has drawn on the backdrop of eternity our own life story so that the life message He has created for us can best be told. We may not be sold into slavery, or placed in a well, or cast into a dungeon. But we might. We may not have to rest by drying brooks, or exist in a widow’s upper room, but we might. The key is our response to those unexpected, uncontrollable “setbacks” of life that God is allowing behind the scenes. We are to immediately stop, surrender to His sovereignty, even as Jesus did in the Garden, and then implement I Thessalonians 5:18. There we are told to “In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” And the minute we do, our heart is at rest, and whatever course the circumstances take, we can quietly rest in the arms of Jesus who is calling to us to, “Come unto Me, so I can give you rest.”

So the thread we included in today’s lesson is to memorize and utilize when the second aspect of the will of God surfaces in our lives. But in either case, the absolutes of Scripture are our authority. The surrender of our will to God in prayer is our great priority, and the quiet resting of our hearts in God’s hands is the inevitable outcome. Thus the will of God, be it our decision-making, or our responding to God’s quiet moving of circumstances, becomes an exciting, comforting, encouraging, transforming experience. Never is it anything to fear. Never is it anything to worry about. Never is it anything to flee. Always it should lead to praise, and always it should lead to a heart at rest.

### III- THE BOTTOM LINE

Which brings us to the “bottom line”, or should I say, “in conclusion...” for this really is the third of three points in today’s study. Whether or not the third point will be followed by another preposterously poor poem, you still do not know, but you do know this is the final “in conclusion” of this lesson. So please listen.

The “bottom line” in any study of the will of God is not coming to grips with how to discern it, but with *how to do it*. You and I are a part of a sea of Christians walking this earth who, if we would only do a fraction of what we already know to be His will, would turn the world upside down. Finding the will of God is only the reading

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of the map. If we never pack up and get on the road, we'll have to live with imaginary pictures of what might have been, rather than resting in the excitement of the day-to-day journey through God's perfect plan.

There appears to be in Scripture, a three-fold progression to the will of God: the finding of it, the doing of it, and the doing of it joyfully. The bulk of this study has concerned itself with the first of those three stages. But more information without application is not the need of the hour. Should we simply learn more about discerning God's will, and still remain unmoved in our responses, we will only have become more accountable and less obedient.

The Scriptures make it plain that once we know God's will in a given area, *we have no excuses*. The high hurdle is past. Now it is simply a matter of saying, "Yes," to what God has called us to do, *regardless of the consequences* from man's point of view. That may be where you are today. If so, the "conclusion" of this lesson is for you. We must learn to pray with the Psalmist in Psalm 143:10:

Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God...

We must learn to respond with Jesus in John 4:34 where He said:

"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."

Jesus only had one reason for living...to glorify the Father. So He came for only one reason...to do the Father's will. Unless we are more interested in glorifying God than we are in pleasing ourselves, we will always struggle with the will of God. His will is good; it is acceptable; it is perfect...but it is so much higher than the ways of man and thus so contrary to the ways of man, that finding it and doing it will always result in spiritual warfare...always. In fact, *that is what spiritual warfare is*...it is Satan and God battling for the souls of men, who are determining whether or not to do the will of God. God says, "Find it and do it. The rest is up to Me." Satan says, "There are alternatives," or "Did God really say that?" or "God didn't say that." He used all three options in the Garden, and his tactics are ever the same.

You may be saying, "I know now what God wants with my life, but it isn't what *I want for my life*. How do I reconcile that? Do I wait until I feel right about it?" How often do you "feel" like going to work in the morning? Then why do you go? I see. 1- You made a commitment. 2- It's the right thing to do. 3- It's the only way

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to accomplish such objectives as paying your bills, feeding your family, etc. Now leap into the realm of the Spirit. You don't wait until you "feel" right about it to do the will of God, either.

You made a commitment to a Holy God to *do His perfect will*. Once you know it, do it. Secondly, it's the *right thing to do*. It's why you were born. And finally, it's the *only way to accomplish your spiritual objectives*, which ought to be a) to grow into the likeness of Christ, b) to minister to those God has assigned to you, and c) to please the heart of God. There are thousands of commands in Scripture about doing the will of God. In fact, the whole of Scripture is simply that one message written thousands of ways. Most of those commands do not carry with them promises of enjoyment, only promises of joy. There is a big difference. Enjoyment is something that brings *you* pleasure. Joy is a fruit of God's Spirit that rests in you *when you have brought God pleasure*.

The more you do the will of God, Beloved, the more His joy will abound in you. That's what John 15:10,11 is all about. It says:

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." (NKJV)

If you have been struggling with the known will of God in your life, may I urge you this moment to come to grips with the reality of what you are doing. If you know in your heart that God is calling you to that ministry, or to make that move, or to take that job, or to reconcile with that person, but you keep on fighting it, hoping if you wait long enough He will change His mind, Beloved, you are missing the greatest joy the Christian life has to offer, the joy of doing His will. I beg you, in the name of the Living King, to surrender this hour to what you already know to do, and purpose that before another sun sets in the pilgrimage of your life, you will begin the process of doing what you already know is His will for your life. Please search your heart for those clear instructions you have refused to follow.

Studying about the will of God is not the answer. It is the beginning. Finding the will of God is not the answer. It is the first step. Doing the will of God, Beloved, is the answer; doing it by faith, if need be, for you may not know what lies beyond that decision, any more than Abraham did when God called him to a country he

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knew not of. You can be an Abraham, or you can be a Jonah.

Jonah knew the will of God. It was for him to go to Ninevah and do the work of an evangelist. But Jonah didn't want to go to Ninevah, and he didn't want to do the work of an evangelist. So he made alternate plans, and a "whale of a spiritual battle" ensued. Why did God go to such lengths to get his man to do His will? Love, that's why. He loved Jonah, and He loved the lost people of Ninevah. So He revealed His will to Jonah, and waited for him to go, and when his reluctant witness went the wrong way, God lovingly brought him back to his senses and gave him another chance. But the Scriptures are filled with stories of people who kept refusing to do what they knew God wanted, until a grieved and patient God simply turned and used another vessel for His purposes. What a dark hour that is in a person's life.

So we can be Abrahams, or we can be Jonahs. The power to obey must come from Him, but the choice to obey is ours. I leave you with one final thought. When you are waiting for God to reveal His will, give Him all the time He needs. He's never late. But once you know the will of God, don't offend God by pretending it doesn't matter if or when you do it. James 4:17 says it all (and with this we close),

Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin. (NASB)

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