

The Will of God

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Table of Contents

1. How To Know The Will of God
2. Being Led In The Will of God
3. Being Led Into Unexpected Conduct
4. Being Misled By Circumstances
5. Discovering the Leading of God
6. How Can I Know The Will of God?

How To Know The Will of God

Today I want to bring up this problem. How would you know the will of God in a particular matter? For instance, how would a group of Christians know what God wanted them to do in the matter of making some specific decision or choice? Now throughout the Old Testament there was a common practice referred to as "casting lots." You and I probably would not use that term today, but I am sure we do something very similar to it. So far as I can tell, this matter of "casting lots" was very similar to what we have today when someone tosses a coin. It is a question of letting the decision depend upon the chance happening of something. For instance such as flipping a coin. It only has two sides to it. We call them heads or tails, and when that coin is flipped, and when it comes down, it only can rest on one side. The side that is up can be the decision. Now they had some custom that they called "casting lots." This was the procedure that was used in selecting the man who was to take the place of Judas, the twelfth apostle.

We read about this in the first chapter of the Book of Acts. The story goes that Peter had gotten up and had told the gathered disciples that they needed to have twelve apostles. They only had eleven. So they were to decide which of the group would be the man chosen to be the twelfth apostle. Now the way the story is recorded you will find that there were certain preliminaries that they went through. They were going to pick the man who would take the place of Judas. They evidently had agreed that there were certain characteristics that were necessary. Now there were not many people to choose from, but it would have to be someone who had been in the company from the time that the Lord Jesus was baptized by John in the river Jordan until the time He was raised from the dead. They eliminated everyone else from the group and finally they found two. So in verse 23 we read: "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabab, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias." Now the question was, which one of these two? This is the type of situation that we are now considering. How would you know the will of God about that? How did they go about it? Now we read as follows: "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

As we look at this and break it down, we have it clear in our minds that the group as a whole exercised their judgment as far as possible. Suppose a group of you were trying to decide what is the will of God for us to do? Whom shall we choose, whom shall we appoint? The first thing to have in mind is that there will be some judgment that you can exercise on the basis of obvious known qualifications or characteristics. The group exercised judgment as far as they possibly could. Now I want to notice that this is not the kind of thing that was decided by flipping coins. They did not just line the men up and flip coins to see which one would be chosen. That is not the way it was done. The first thing they did was to exercise their judgment as far as they possibly could. I want you to notice too that this group believed that God knew both men. Remember how that reads? "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men." They knew that God knew both of these men that were before them, one of them Barsabas; one of them Matthias; and that God would know and God would have in mind which one of these two should be an apostle. Also they had in mind that God had already chosen him. Look at verse 24: "And

they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen." So really they were just wondering what the will of God was, as the will of God would already be made up. Actually, so far as you and I are concerned, we might have a little difficulty with that. Some of us would have this kind of feeling, "Well, if God had already made up His mind, why was it necessary for them to make a choice?" Apparently it is to be understood in this context; that God had already in His own mind chosen which one of the two He wanted to have as an apostle, but on the other hand, such a person would have to be designated and they would be the ones that were to exercise their choice. Some part of it was in their hands.

The next thing I want you to notice about this is that this group prayed. This procedure and the use of the casting of lots was not a mechanical matter. They did not do this just without thought. They prayed about it. They wanted God to take over and in this particular situation, they acknowledged God as God. I think that that would indicate something like this. When they prayed about this and in this whole situation, they had committed themselves to take whatever the choice was. I think it is necessary to have that in mind, because the situation is set up in such a way that if God would favor them with some action on His part by showing them the one He would choose by the way in which He would control the chance falling of lots, His will would be done. In any case, I have the feeling, personally, that they had committed themselves to accept whatever the decision would be. So the group gave forth their lot. I have already told you that this is somewhat obscure. I do not know of anybody who has ever been able to describe absolutely just how this was done. I think it is very similar to what we call "rolling dice." There is a chance, of course, with the dice that any one of six sides may come up, and you agree with yourself and everybody else that if a certain one comes up, certain results will follow. Or I have thought for myself, it is more like flipping a coin. The thing about a coin is it has only two sides, and when you flip it, either one or the other is certainly going to come up. This, as I have said, is an old well known custom. It was used by Moses on certain occasions, when he cast lots to make certain decisions and used by Joshua at Ai when he was trying to find out who had caused the trouble because of the defeat at Ai. We use such kind of procedures, as you know, to this day. Any number of times people will say, "Well, we will decide this by the flip of a coin." Now this sort of procedure has many variations. But it always has in it this kind of situation. We visualize two different situations, as a choice between alternatives. Now I want you to notice either one of these men would have been all right. You remember that. They would have been willing to accept the occurrence, whichever way it would turn.

Now having made all this talk about it, perhaps I ought to tell you at once, that so far as the New Testament is concerned, this is the last time that this method was used. I only wanted to bring to your mind that these apostles were not the kind of people who would go by some mechanical, automatic chance. Now this is not to say that they did not pick men after this. They did. In Acts 13 we see an entirely different way in which a man was chosen.

In Acts 13, beginning with the first verse we read: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers." One of them was called Barnabas and then there are a list of men the last of which is called Saul. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." You see how that selection was made. The Holy Spirit made the selection. The Holy Spirit guided them in the decision that they were to make. Now that situation is different than that in the first chapter. I do not think that the people in the church at Antioch were necessarily any more sincere than the apostles were in the first chapter of the Book of Acts, but there was a difference. The incident that happened in the first chapter of the Book of Acts, with the casting of lots, occurred before the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and they

could not have the help of the Holy Spirit in their hearts to the extent that came afterwards. Much of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a Christian is still to be learned by many of us. Perhaps the great truth of it will not ever be fully spelled out in so many words. One or another of us will learn more or less of this great truth. But one thing is sure: after the time of Pentecost, they never again used such a mechanical system as the casting of lots. But they did do such things as having prayer, and in prayer, waiting before the Lord, they felt inwardly guided by the Holy Spirit. "This is the way, walk ye in it." Here was a case where actually two men were definitely specified. "Separate me, Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

Now we may observe this: this calls for communion with the Lord. It says "they ministered unto the Lord" and I think that would mean that they worshipped Him. They were praying and fasting. These were people spiritually attuned to God; wanting to know what they should do. This emphasizes their fellowship with God and with one another. In such a setting the Holy Spirit guided them. So, we would say as to how a group could be led, if they were truly Christian people, they would be led in prayer, waiting upon the Lord and seeing how they were led in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Back of it all is the fact that God does have in mind what should be done. He does know what He wants done and He can show it to His people and reveal it to them.

Being Led In The Will Of God

Today I want to discuss with you the general problem as to whether or not there is such a thing as being led to do exactly what God wants you to do. As a Christian person goes along and has to make decisions in the course of his daily living, could he expect that the Lord God would guide him in what he is doing? If you had the desire in your heart, in a given situation, to do exactly what God wanted you to do, could you expect that He would lead you? How would He lead you?

I am not sure in the study that I have in mind for today that I can give you all the answers for this, but I do want to direct your attention to an incident in the New Testament. We have the record of a case where a man was definitely led by the Lord as to what he ought to do. I am going to turn in the Book of Acts to the 8th chapter and take up the incident of the way Philip was led to speak to the Ethiopian. If you will turn to chapter 8, verse 26, you will see how this all begins. Remember what we are now considering, what we want to discuss, and what we want to think over for ourselves again in this sort of a situation. If I were a Christian, a person who believed in God, in the living Lord, could I expect that the living Lord would guide me specifically in a particular situation as to what He would want me to do? Do we have any evidence of anything like that?

Beginning in Acts 8:26 this is what we read: "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south." Now we pause for a moment. This phrase, "the angel of the Lord", remains obscure so far as we are concerned. We do not know for sure what sort of creature this was. We know that angels are creatures of God, but just exactly what kind of person this was, we do not know. Was this a present form; something like the form of a man, like those angels that sat at the open tomb? Was it such a person as the disciples had speaking to them on the day of the Ascension when two men robed in white spoke to them? It does not tell us. The word "angel" means "messenger". It does not mean necessarily that this angel had a body. This is conceivable that the angel of the Lord would have been one who communicated this message to Philip in the Spirit. When it says "the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip", the word "spake" does not necessarily mean audible words. It may have been audible words, but it does not necessarily mean that kind of thing. The communication could have been made through the Spirit. In other words, Philip could have felt in his heart this was what was being said to him. I will talk more about that as we go along. Again someone could say, "Maybe it was a vision." Well, it might have been, but it does not say that it was. All it tells us is that the angel of the Lord, a messenger of the Lord, communicated unto Philip. Maybe it was a voice. I do not know. I do not think so. I do not think it was a voice, and I do not think it was a vision, because on other occasions when voices were heard, it was named. When visions were seen, these things were described. Perhaps it was in his consciousness. I am going to suggest to you I think it probably came to him while he was praying. The reason I am dwelling upon this is that this is the start of the whole business. He felt inwardly led, as if he had been definitely, told what to do. "Arise, go toward the south." That is what he did. He got up and went. He had a definite intimation given to him that this is what he should do.

In verse 29 you read: "Then the Spirit said unto Philip." This brings us directly to the Holy Spirit. "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Now while you are thinking about that, you might well keep in mind that it is a function of the Holy Spirit to take the things of Christ and show them unto us. It is not straining the matter at all to intimate to you that when the Spirit conveyed its guidance to Philip, He

could have been taking the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and conveying it to Philip. Because the Spirit bringing this to Philip's mind is not any different than the living Lord Jesus Christ guiding him. In any case, "the Spirit said unto Philip". Here again the "saying" is not necessarily audible words, the kind of thing other people could have heard. It does not mean a voice came from heaven. It could well be in his consciousness. "Go near and join thyself to this chariot." Now that was specific. That was a clear specific command. There was another chariot there on the highway and Philip felt in his heart, in some way the idea was gotten across to him, that he was definitely commissioned to go there.

Now let me suggest something to you about this whole thing. It is quite possible that Philip was looking for an opportunity to serve. You should not rule that out. Philip was an evangelist. He was actually busily engaged in the matter of teaching and preaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. Philip was already looking for people. So it is quite possible that while Philip was travelling along this highway, he was actually thinking in terms of this. And when the direction was "Go near, join thyself to this chariot", you can have in mind this is the kind of man who is already looking for a chariot to go to, or someone that he could talk to. It is possible that, as he travelled, he was in prayer, and that this came to him while he was in the atmosphere of prayer. It is also possible that he was asking for guidance. He may well in his heart and spirit have been thinking all the way along, "What will thou have me to do Lord?" This kind of thing. The reason I am bringing this out again is because if you and I are going to make use of this, we should have in mind that the guidance that we are reading about came to a man like Philip, who was already committed to the Lord, already serving the Lord, and would be looking for this kind of thing.

I want also to draw your attention to the prompt response. In verse 30 you read: "And Philip ran thither to him." This is the case of a man who was eager. The case of a man who "wanted to". There is no indication in what we have read in these several verses that Philip was acting automatically or mechanically. His further procedure from here on shows intelligent action. We read in verse 35 for example: "Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." He talked to him about Him. He told him how this passage he was reading in Isaiah was referring to Jesus of Nazareth, things of that nature. Now all that the man requested of him about that passage in Isaiah was a simple yes or no answer. He asked him in verse 34: "Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man?" It could have been answered with a yes or no. But notice that Philip beginning at the same Scripture "preached unto him Jesus". How long it took him I do not know. How far they travelled while that was going on, I do not know. But you know it took some time. In other words, Philip did not just press a button and then came the answer. Not that kind of thing.

In verse 39 you read: "The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." He did not take him up in the sky. He did not catch him away as in a cloud, but He led him away. It is almost like He snatched him away. I think the picture would be that Philip very likely wanted to continue talking to this Ethiopian. Do you not imagine that with a new convert like that that Philip would want to talk more and more about the Lord? Apparently the expression, "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip," (He actually led him away, definitely led him away) indicates direct intervention to guide Philip away from this man. All the way through this incident Philip is being led just as if someone reached out by the hand, took him by the hand and led him.

I want you to notice in this that there are some things for us to learn with reference to being guided of the Lord. I think that the situation would definitely teach that to be led specifically by the Lord, a person must be generally committed to the Lord. If you are going to take this incident of Philip, this was a man who was wanting to obey the Lord. If I am going to look for the Lord to guide me about some specific thing, for instance what shall I do on this particular day, what do I do? What would I decide

actually? I could ask myself this, am I already minded to do God's will? Am I in the way of doing God's will?

I would point out in the second place that according to this man Philip that to be led specifically in a definite situation, a person must be in the process of obeying. This kind of call does not come to a disobedient person. This kind of call does not come to an unrelated person. Let me go on to point out something else. To be led specifically in a definite situation, a person must be willing to respond. That is something about which you make up your mind before. The Lord does not tell you what to do and then you decide whether or not you will. As a matter of fact in my own experience, I can remember very vividly when I was seeking the mind of the Lord in a very important time in my life. I wanted the Lord to guide me definitely about a particular matter. The first big issue that came up was whether or not I was willing to do the Lord's will. It was made very clear to me personally at that time, that if I was not willing to do the Lord's will, there was no point in asking Him. You know the Lord does not waste Himself that way. If I was not minded to do His will, there was no point in my asking Him what I ought to do. But if I was minded to do His will and was committed to do His will, already in it and already exercising my intelligence as best as I knew how to be doing His will, then I should be aware that the Lord Himself is watching over me. Now Philip would be all those things. If you and I have trust in the Lord, are minded to do the things that are pleasing to the Lord, and so far as we know, are already doing what the Lord wants us to do, and are active in this and ready and willing to respond, I think you and I could expect to be led. That is how it happened with Philip.

Being Led Into Unexpected Conduct

Is there such a thing as a person being led by God in practical affairs, in everyday affairs? Today I want to raise a question, would a Christian ever be led to act by the Lord in a way that would be contrary to what he had previously thought right? Do you follow me in that? Is there such a thing as a person being led by the Lord that he would be led to do something that he had never done before? Something that you might even have thought was not the right thing to do, but that your mind would be changed by the Lord, so that you would find yourself doing something that you had never done before.

We are going to look into the Bible for an instance like this. We find it in the Book of Acts. Here we have a classic example in the case of Peter. If you will open your Bible to Acts, chapter 10, you will see the incident to which I refer. The story is well known. It is the case of where Peter was led to go to Cornelius. Now for us to have the whole picture in mind, let me tell you that back in those days the Jewish people had a custom that it would not be proper for any Jew to go into the house of a man that was a Gentile. He certainly would not go in there to eat and he would not go in there for social relationship. So that normally speaking, Jews just did not go into the house of Gentiles. That was the general situation. Now the early Christians who belonged to the Christian church were all Jews. They had been preaching the Gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem and they had been preaching the Gospel to the people in Samaria, down among the Samaritans. But now, while this is going on, there comes a time in the history of the church when apparently the Lord would have them go out and start speaking to the Gentiles. Some one of them must do it, and Peter is the one that is chosen. He does not realize it, but he is the one that is chosen.

The situation that we are going to be discussing developed something like this; that while Peter was in Joppa he was called to go to the house of a Gentile by the name of Cornelius. I want you to notice how Peter was led to go. I wonder whether you understood from what I was saying, that Peter, as a Jew, would have every natural habit against going to the house of a Gentile. He would feel it was the wrong thing to do because he was brought up that way. He was a Jew and it was not proper for a Jew to be found in the home and in social relationship with the Gentile.

The story that unfolds in chapter 10 is very well known and I am just going to draw attention to it as far as Peter is concerned. Peter went up on the housetop, which was a kind of a roof garden, to pray while he was waiting for his noon meal. We read in verse 9 that it was the sixth hour, which is to say, just at noon. "And he became very hungry and would have eaten." He was anxious to eat and was waiting for food. As you read on you will see that Peter had a vision. The vision was about food. In the vision he was directed to eat food that he would ordinarily have, as a Jew, considered unclean. Today we would say it was not kosher. You know that an orthodox Jew who is seeking to obey the principles of his belief would not eat food that was not kosher food. This was Peter's experience. Now in the vision, this food was let down before him as if it were on a big sheet and he was told to rise up and take some of this meat and eat it. His answer was, "No, I have never done that." This happened three times. Each time that this vision came with this food in front of him, he was told, "Rise Peter; kill, and eat." And Peter says, "Nay, I have not done it. No. That food that is there before me is from animals that are not proper. They are not kosher. That is not the kind of meat I should eat." And each time he would hear a word like this. "What God hath cleansed call not thou common." If God has cleansed it, don't you say it is not fit.

Then it would go away. This happened three times.

Now up till then I am not sure that Peter had learned anything, but now I want you to see what else happened. While he was thinking on it, there came to him this truth or this communication. He was given to understand that several men would come up to the door asking for him. He was told to go with them, asking no questions. So as it turned out, they came to the door, just the way in which he had seen in the vision, and under the circumstances, he went. I want you to notice however, that he took with him certain witnesses. We understand that he took several men with him to watch, because he was going to go to the home of a Gentile which is not a proper thing to do. He wanted to have some men come along that they could see exactly what it was that he was going to do. He went to the house of Cornelius as you will remember, found Cornelius there and in the course of their relationship he began to tell him about the Lord Jesus Christ. As he told him the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius. Peter then said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" And he went ahead and baptized the Gentile. We all recognize that that was the opening of the door of the Gospel, you might say, to the Gentiles. These were the first Gentiles that believed. In it all Peter had to be made ready and willing to go to the house of the Gentile and preach to him, contrary to his natural feeling. He was led to go. This is in answer to the question which was raised at the beginning. Is it possible that I might be asked to do something I have never done before? Is it possible I might be led to do something that I would not have considered right for me to do before? The answer is "Yes, this is possible."

Now I want you to notice certain factors about this. This kind of guidance would not come to just anybody. It would come to anybody in relationship with the Lord. This is the kind of guidance that the Lord will give to those who are responsive to Him. He is personally guiding them. He is personally directing them. This is the way it was with Peter.

Now notice this situation with reference to Peter. You will remember that Peter was under orders to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. The Lord Jesus after His resurrection, before His Ascension, had told the disciples that they were to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. Peter had this in his heart and mind. He knew that this was the mind of God. At the particular time that this happened, Peter was currently obeying the Lord. He was down there in Joppa teaching and preaching. He was being used to win people to the Lord. At the same time Peter was unconsciously bound by tradition to have nothing to do with the Gentiles. There was nothing spiritual about that. It was a social tradition. It was a custom that the Jewish people had developed in the course of their history, and he, being a Jew, continued to have it. This actually would hamper the exercise of himself as a minister of the Gospel.

The Gospel was intended for everybody. This is now about to be revealed to the whole world but it is going to be revealed through Peter's conduct; that the Gospel is for everybody including the Gentiles. Here is a man, Peter, who has the Gospel in his heart. He is the one that can share with other people, and he is going to be led to go to the Gentiles which ordinarily he would not do. He was under a negative restraint that he did not know he had. He did not realize that deep down in his heart he was subject to this restraint and that he had definitely, as it were, been conditioned not to do this kind of thing. Yet this social restraint that he had would have kept him from carrying out the Gospel as it was planned.

Another thing to notice about this is that Peter was hungry and wanted to eat. Some psychologists will notice right away, "Well, there it is. He had a vision about food. That is natural. The Lord follows it on through." I expect many times people without any spiritual significance, when they have been hungry, have dreamed about food. I expect that anybody that would be dying of thirst, in the time that he was asleep, would possibly be dreaming that he had plenty of water to drink. This is not irregular and

it would show that the Lord is using a very normal process in this case, a natural psychological process. Nothing is wrong about that.

Peter received specific evidence of the authenticity of the message. You will remember that when he saw this vision three times, each time the word was said, "What God hath cleansed, call not thou common." But at that time, Peter did not know what it meant. Now he is told, "Several men are going to come to the gate asking for you." Sure enough they appeared. Now you see that would give him a feeling of the authenticity of the whole revelation of everything that had been happening to him. It would tie it down to something being actually real, like it was. He did not recognize the meaning of the vision even then. He knew he should go with these men. He went with these men and he took six men with him so that they would be able to testify that he had done only what the Lord led him to do. It was not until he was speaking in the house of Cornelius and the Holy Spirit came on those people that he recognized the meaning of those words, "What God hath cleansed, call not thou common." Here God had given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles, and although it was the Jewish custom to say that the Gentiles were not clean, that they were not fit company, God had blessed them. Therefore this must be the truth. The significance of what he had seen and heard in the vision came upon him with conviction when he was actually involved in it.

Now notice, for our own selves, such guidance is rare. You do not have instances like this often. You and I should not necessarily be expecting it right away. It is only for such which are already obedient. If you are already doing the will of God and moving forward in it, you could expect some such guidance as this. It is verified by events. If you have an idea come to you in the night and it stands absolutely alone, unrelated to anything else, it is not like this story that I just read to you. Peter was brought along in the will of the Lord by certain events that corroborated the guidance that he had.

Being Misled By Circumstances

I want to talk to you today about this matter of being led in your daily affairs. Now men who do not believe in God would certainly expect no guidance. If there is no God outside themselves and there is no power in the universe to whom they are responsible, then that makes them all alone here on the face of the earth. So, of course, so far as their life is concerned, it will depend upon their own will. Such people in looking forward realize that they might be fortunate and might be unfortunate. They might have interest in luck and would hope to be lucky. They speak of good luck and bad luck. Then there will be some people who will try to guide themselves in their own judgment. They will have good judgment or bad judgment, and I expect that some people will trust their intuition. They would say that they have a hunch about this, or a hunch about that. Maybe there will be some people that will use fortune tellers and astrologers, clairvoyance or something of that nature, because anybody and everybody will realize the danger of moving forward into the unknown. Certainly tomorrow and the next day and the next day are not known to us. No man knows what a day will bring forth. The same is true with people. When you think about trusting people and choosing people for this or for that, how do you know what they are going to do? You just would not know. You could easily make a mistake and you could, in the same way, make the right decisions.

Anybody could wonder about all this. Is there any way to get help? This would be especially true for a Christian. Because a Christian believing in God, would feel that God in some way has overruling control. So that brings us to a question. Is there some power that supervises our lives? Is there anyone who actually watching over us has in mind where He wants us to go? For the Christian – this would be God. I think that a very practical way of putting this would be to say that people who believe in God would believe that He (I think the language could be used to say) is a sort of a manager. The big word is "sovereign"; that He brings His will to pass. And if you believe that there is a general manager of all affairs in which you are involved, you could not help but wonder if your choice is going to be good or whether it is going to be bad, according to the plan that the manager is putting over. Actually, often with this very thought in mind when we are looking ahead, we look for signs to try to figure out some way if this trip is going to be lucky or unlucky. Am I doing something that is good or bad with reference to the results that are going to come. As we are looking ahead to try and decide whether we should or should not do this or that, it is possible to be misled. We can be fooled.

I want to draw your attention to one incident we have in the Bible where someone tried to figure out what was going to happen and made a mistake. I am thinking in the Book of Acts, in chapter 27, beginning at verse 11. This has to do with the time when Paul was being taken across the Mediterranean Sea to Rome as a prisoner. They were taking him along with some soldiers and he was being counted a prisoner to be taken to the court in Rome that he should face Caesar. So there was some question as to whether or not they were too late in the year to make a trip. In those days the sailing of the Mediterranean was with sail boats, and they depended upon the good winds to blow them across. They could not stand too much of a storm. There was a question as to whether or not it was too late in the season for them to go.

Now Paul warned them that it was too late. In chapter 27, verse 9, you will hear: "Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous," because it was that time of the year when the

storms came on, "because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives." In other words, if we travel now we will be in danger and in peril. Now verse 11: "Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul." These folks were trying to figure out what they ought to do. Now notice verse 12: "And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete." Now this is a very familiar saying amongst us. Perhaps you have heard it spoken of. When someone is wondering whether you should do something or should not do something, and then for a moment the condition seemed to be favorable, we comment to each other "the south wind blew softly" because we are referring to this incident. The condition seemed to be propitious. The weather was fine. The wind was in the right place, and so they supposed that they had obtained their purpose. They assumed that all would be well so they set out.

What you actually have here is something to warn everyone of us. Wishful thinking can lead us astray. You see, the truth is, back there in verse 12, that the haven, the harbor, was not commodious to winter in. It was not a big harbor, they did not have a big town there. They did not have good accommodations, and frankly the ship's crew did not want to stay there in the first place. They wanted to go on, and this is what is involved in the whole thing. They basically did not want to stay. They wanted to go on. So when they were looking for signs and the "south wind blew softly" they thought they had the sign and they set out. Actually they experienced disaster and peril. They nearly lost their lives. We cannot help but feel as we read the whole story that if it had not been for Paul's praying, they might have lost their lives. Apparently Paul received word from the Lord that God would spare them under certain conditions and He did. But I am interested in the fact that here is the ship's captain trying to make up his mind about what he should do. He thought he had the evidence. So he went ahead on the evidence he had. But it is not as simple as that. Underneath is the fact that he really did not want to stay where he was. He really wanted to go forward, and because he had such a strong desire and was so moved by wishful thinking, when the signs looked good, he thought that it was proper. So he went and ran into real trouble.

Now I have another incident in the Book of Acts that I will only refer to. We do not have time to turn to it, but I will remind you of how Paul was traveling along from Caesarea to Jerusalem and how people came and told him not to go. You will remember that a certain prophet by the name of Agabus warned him not to go. These prophets came at different times. They came to Paul and told him that by the Holy Spirit they foresaw that Paul was going to have trouble. I personally think that this would happen while they were praying. While they were praying for Paul and thinking about Paul, their hearts would become burdened and they would feel in their hearts that he was certainly going to have trouble. So they came and told him. This man, Agabus, took Paul's belt and tied his own feet together. He hobbled himself, and then he showed himself in this dramatic fashion, in this object lesson. He showed himself to Paul and everybody else and said the Holy Spirit told him that "the man that owns this belt is going to be tied just like this." He would be hobbled, he would be put in the stocks, he would be actually made a prisoner. Agabus was warning him not to go. There were others who did the same thing at this time.

Now here is an interesting thing. They were saying the conditions are not good. If you go, you will get into trouble. It was the truth. What they saw was real. We know the whole story; Paul did get into trouble. But would that be the reason Paul would not go? They urgently warned Paul not to go. Why? That he should save himself. Was that what Paul was in the world to do? Was he in the world to save

himself? Now had Paul been concerned for himself, he would not have gone to Jerusalem. But Paul had a commission to go to Jerusalem. He felt in his heart and soul that that was the thing that the Lord wanted him to do. What I am trying to say here, by contrast with the shipmaster we were talking about, is that here the signs are bad. All the signs are contrary. It looks as though he is going to get into trouble, and we know he did get into trouble. But you see basically, deep down in his heart, Paul wanted to serve the Lord. He understood serving the Lord would take him to Jerusalem. To Jerusalem, he would go. So they tell him it is not favorable, conditions are bad. You are going to get hurt. And Paul says, "Do you want to break my heart. I am willing to get hurt. I am willing to die in Jerusalem for the Lord's sake. Do not try to stop me. I am going right on through."

Do you see how different that was from the shipmaster? The shipmaster waited until he got favorable conditions, and when "the south wind blew softly," supposing they had attained their purpose, they set sail. But you and I know that down underneath, the truth of the matter is that the shipmaster did not want to stay where they were. The harbor was not big enough, and it was not comfortable. They would not have had a nice place to stay for the whole winter, and he just did not want to be there. The first time conditions looked favorable, he set sail assuming everything was going to be all right. He was mistaken. He got into a terrific storm. Here you have Paul, in this other instance, and they come to Paul and tell him the signs are bad, and they were bad. You are going to get into trouble, and he did get into trouble. But he went. Why? Because basically, down underneath, what he really wanted to do was to serve the Lord.

So in our considering a course of action, when you and I look forward to wonder about guidance, you know one thing we ought to check – what do we really want? Otherwise you cannot go by conditions. You cannot go by circumstances. You and I could be fooled. If we really want to go, it will not make so much difference what the conditions are like, what the weather is like, or anything else. And if we do not want to go, we will find some reason for staying. In other words, conditions are not really the thing that should determine. If you and I were planning to go to church, to church we will go. If it rains, it rains. Now if we do not want to go to church anyway, we are just really not interested, and it rains, we will say, "Oh no, we cannot go now, because the weather is bad." You see the truth of the matter is we did not want to go in the first place. So in this matter of being led by the Lord, it is a very important thing to have in mind what do you really want to do.

Discovering The Leading of God

For the past few days we have been studying various aspects of the general problem about discovering the will of God in your life, wondering just how a person could find guidance for what he has to do. I am going to talk some more about that, but just now I want to ask this question as we are thinking today. If a man were a servant of God and really trusted in God, would you expect him always to know exactly what God wanted him to do?

We want to study an incident in the missionary career of Paul. I want you to look in the Book of Acts, chapter 16 and verses 6-10. This is a story of an incident in Paul's career where you find Paul trying to find out what God would want him to do. Now the story itself is quite clear. Remember who Paul was? Paul was not only a man who believed in God and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, but he was a servant of God. He was a bond slave of Jesus Christ. He was a man who had had wonderful answers to prayer, and a man who had had personal fellowship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. This was a regular daily experience with Paul.

Here is the way the story unfolds. Paul and a company of others were on a missionary journey. "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." The story seems to be at this point that while they were wondering where to go next, they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. We pause here for a moment and ask ourselves, How would the Holy Ghost forbid things? Do you suppose they heard a voice? Do you suppose they saw a vision? How would the Holy Ghost stop them? Do you think they read it in a book? I am reading in the 7th verse: "After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not." Here you have the same idea. "The Spirit suffered them not" – He would not let them go into Bithynia. How did He do that?

The reason I am asking this question is that you and I, especially if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, can realize that if Paul was led that way, we could be led that way. Here is Paul on missionary work. He is traveling and he wants to go forward. We have already seen two places he could not go. He was forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia (that is in Asia Minor). Then he wanted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered him not.

"And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." That is the way the story goes. While they were down there in Troas and they had had no clear guidance until then, Paul had a vision. In this vision, he saw this man of Macedonia, calling on him, "Come over and help us." Evidently he came and told the company, because while the record tells this that Paul had the vision, when you read on from there the plural pronoun is used. "We" – meaning the man who wrote this Book of Acts was in on it, and we really believe that Luke was in the company at that time. "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." Incidentally this was the first entry into Europe. You will remember they went to the city of Philippi and there Lydia believed, and afterwards the Philippian jailor.

Now let us see what we can learn in this incident. I want to draw your attention to these factors. A

person trusting in God may not know where to go next. You can come to that point in your travels where you frankly do not know which way to go. Now mind you, Paul was an obedient servant. He was a diligent servant and he was a praying man, but he ran out of direction. He did not know where to go next. He had gone as far as he could go in the will of the Lord and no more information. You see, in this whole study, when I brought this whole matter up, I raised the question with you, "Do you think if a man really was obedient to God that God would always show him what He wanted him to do?" Now we know eventually He did show Paul, but do you think the man would know ahead of time? If I am an obedient Christian, ready to do the will of God about anything, could I expect that every morning I would know exactly what I was going to do that day? Would I be able to tell you at the beginning of the week exactly where I would wind up at the end of the week? A person trusting in God, as we can see here with Paul, may not know where to go next.

The second thing I want to point out about this is that a person trusting in God, and that will be Paul here, will seek guidance from God. He will seek the approval of God. Now when you read here that they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to go down into Asia, that obviously means to me they wanted to go into Asia. That is, they had figured it out. Here is a group of preachers. They had finished preaching at a certain place. Naturally they would look ahead. They would make their plans, and as they made their plans, they evidently planned the possibility of going down into Asia Minor. Personally, I think they were praying people. As they prayed, they would get no clearance in their hearts and minds to go. So as they continued in prayer, it was made clear to them that the Holy Spirit said, "No, you are not going into Asia." Now will you notice he did not tell them where to go. When they did not go into Asia, they did not know right away where they would go. We read now that "they assayed to go into Bithynia." That language means to say they tried it, they actually made up their plans. They organized themselves to go into Bithynia. "But the Spirit suffered them not." Again, I think this would be in praying. When they made their plans to go into Bithynia, and when they were seeking to decide what to do, the Spirit would not let them go. Now what I see in this is that Paul and this company were seeking approval from the Lord. They could have gone on into Asia Minor, I expect. They could have gone over into Bithynia. Travels were made in those days, but they would not go anywhere that the Lord did not give them clearance, that He would not encourage them to go. And He apparently did not want them to go.

Another thing I want to draw your attention to is that a person trusting in God and obeying Him may be minded to go in a direction which would not be in the will of God. Now here is Paul wanting to serve the Lord. No doubt about his mind. No doubt about his heart. No doubt about his intentions. He evidently had planned to go into Asia Minor, but it was not what God wanted him to do. He was a good man, a faithful man and he was in the will of God in general things. Then he decided that he wanted to go, "he assayed to go into Bithynia." I expect as they figured it out, they thought to themselves, "That is a good field." "But the Spirit suffered them not."

I want to draw your attention to another thing. A person trusting in God like the Apostle Paul will not proceed where God does not approve. When the Spirit forbade them to go to Asia, they did not go to Asia. When the Spirit suffered them not to go into Bithynia, they did not go into Bithynia. Do you catch the point? When these people did not have the freedom and liberty from the Holy Spirit to follow out their plans, they scrapped their plans. They would not go without this. A person trusting in God will not proceed if God does not approve. Another point we can see in this is that a person trusting in God may receive guidance from God even through a dream, even in a vision. I realize how uncertain this is, even while I am talking to you. I am satisfied that a great many of us have dreams many times that have no special significance. You might well ask yourself, "How would you know? What kind of a dream

would you have that would specially indicate that this is the will of God?" There never has been any description of that in the Bible, just that they saw a vision, or that they dreamed a dream. But the use of dreams and the use of visions in the Bible is very common. It is one of the ways God has of conveying His mind and heart. How would He communicate? Personally, I think something like this. Here is Paul and his followers. They tried to go into Asia. No. They tried to go into Bithynia. No. Time is rolling along and after all, there is a company of them. What are they going to do in their spare time? Personally, I think they prayed. I think they prayed, and they wanted to know. So Paul had a dream. When he came and told the others, it clicked. The thing that he saw in the dream fitted the situation in which they were, and they assuredly gathered. They considered it. They thought about it. They took the insight that came in Paul's vision and pointing it forward into the situation, it clicked with them that they should go to Macedonia. So they "assuredly gathered that they should go there." In other words, when they received this guidance in the dream, they did not take it because it was a dream, but they took the insight that was offered to them in the dream and compared it to the actual facts, and when it fits, there you have the key.

A person trusting in God will move into new areas as the way is opened before him. He wants to serve and he is ready to go forward. A person trusting in God, as Paul was, is encouraged by that kind of guidance. So in this incident, here in the Book of Acts, in the 16th chapter when we see the Apostle Paul trying to figure which way to go, we see him being led, but you will notice he did not know right from the beginning. In other words, a man can be a faithful servant of the Lord, and it does not mean he will know all of God's mind and does not mean that in every case, he will know exactly what to do.

How Can I Know The Will of God?

What is the will of God for me? How could I know what God wants me to do? May I point out to you at the very outset that this question is meaningful only for such people as believe in God. There are a great many people who do not have any personal conviction about God. They may admit that there may be a God. They may even believe that there is a God, but they are not having any dealings with Him. They are not trusting in Him. They are not counting on Him. They are not asking Him for any guidance, and they are not following anything that He specially says. These are the kind of people who live their lives the best they know how according to what the situation is and how it arises and according to what they want to do. And, if there are such who are listening to me today, you will understand when I go ahead and talk about knowing the will of God that I really have in mind that this is for people who believe in God.

Now if a person believes that God is in charge; that He is in control, that Almighty God is actually boss, that He can actually rule and decide and that He does really rule and decide in His will what He wants done, then the question of knowing the will of God is important. The reason it's important is because it would imply this: if I am doing the will of God I'll be blessed and if I'm not doing the will of God, I will not be blessed. We could phrase the question this way: "How can I know the will of God in my life?" And I would say that this is meaningful only for the person who understands that God is interested in the individual. If I raise the question how can I know the will of God in my life, that means I believe there is a will of God in my life. I really have in mind that God does have an idea what He wants me to do, and I am raising the question how I could find it out.

And again this question is a proper question only for such people as will obey. Let me put it to you this way. If I would go anywhere, then I can ask God where. But if I would not go anywhere, if I already have in mind that I would go north and I would go east, but I would not go south and I would not go west, and then I ask the Lord, "Where do you want me to go?", that's not true, That's not a real question. As a matter of fact the Lord would know better than that. He wouldn't show it to me. I've already decided I would not go south, and that I would not go west. But if I have already made up my mind, I have cut myself out from guidance from the Lord, because the person who is going to know the will of God must be the kind of person who would go anywhere.

If I am interested in knowing what God wants me to do, and I am beginning to search for what God actually does want me to do, I need to be the kind of a person who believes that God actually will ask me. This kind of question is important only to those people who believe that God's favor is important. If one person was to raise the question, "How can I know the will of God?", someone else might raise the question, "What difference does that make? How is it going to help you to know the will of God?" The person who raises the question, how can I know the will of God, will find that the whole question is operative only for such as are actually going in the will of God and walking in the will of God. If I am already doing what I think He wants me to do, I can look up and ask Him for guidance. In other words, you can guide a man that's moving. Let me point out to you, you cannot guide a person that is sitting in a rocking chair or who is standing still. If a man is standing still, he isn't going anywhere; but if he isn't going anywhere, you can't direct him. The only persons you can direct are the people that are going. And so I can keep this in mind: If I really want an answer to that question, I am going to have it settled that,

so far as I am concerned, I want to do the will of God.

Now that will come to people in various ways. I am not sure that it will come to any one of us perfectly. I expect to raise that question today and raise it in a week from now and raise it a month from now. You'll raise it again and again and again as to whether or not you will be willing to do the will of God. But at the same time, there is such a thing as having it in your mind and heart that you do want to do God's will. You may be reluctant about it, but you have the impression that if you could find out what is God's idea and what is God's plan for you, you would actually want to do it, because you believe that if you were doing His will, you would receive blessing from Him.

Now let us consider several aspects about the question, how can I know what God wants me to do? In the first place, I think you should stop and ask yourself about your own life. One way of putting it would be like this: "Well, who am I after all?" Whose child are you? Who were your parents? Where were you born? Many times when young men come to me to ask me what they should do, I find myself asking them "Who is your father and mother?" What does your father do? What kind of a woman is your mother? What sort of a family do you have? Do you have any uncles or aunts? Do you have any cousins? What are these people doing? What do the members of your family do? You see that is very important. What I now want to bring to your mind is that so far as you are concerned, that is already settled. When you ask me what does God want you to do, one of the first things I will ask myself is What has he already decided for me?

Let me tell you some of the things he decided for me. For one thing, I was born in Canada. That means a lot. That is different than being born in China. It's a whole lot different even than being born in Russia. I was born in Canada, and that means certain things. God's already done that for me; I didn't do anything about it. And, I was born of a family that lived on a farm. I had a certain kind of a father, and afterwards I had a certain kind of a woman as my stepmother. The kind of persons my father and my stepmother were actually affected me. When I am thinking about these things and before I ever had anything to say about it, it turned out that I was born a boy. Now I might have been born a girl, and believe me that would have been a different story.

Don't you see how important this is? When you want to know what is the will of God in your life, a lot of it has already been settled. What family were you born into? In what part of the world were you born? Were you born a man or a woman? What kind of a culture is there in the area where you were born? What kind of a person are you naturally? Are you quick or are you slow? Are you tall or are you short? Do you have red hair? Do you have any hair at all? Well all those things matter. They matter to your appearance. They matter to people. And they have all been settled for you. You didn't have a thing in the world to do with that. Are you strong? Are you healthy? Are you sickly? Are you weak? Do you learn easily? Are you slow learning? Well, you see, all those things matter. And, they were all done for you before you came along at all. What I am trying to say is that God's will is already operative in your life. He is already working on you.

Now here is the second consideration: what has God been doing in my affairs up until this present time? What kind of opportunity have I had so far as living is concerned? In my case, for example, I happened to be born in a family where the father was a man who thought that his son should go to high school. That may not seem very much to you, but I want you to know that in that community where I grew up and in my grammar school, I was the first boy that ever went to high school. And for a long time I was the only boy. The second boy that went to high school from that place was my brother. So you see, many other boys lived in that community and they didn't go to high school. It wasn't their fault. It just was not the way in which it was planned. But, you see, my father was that kind of a man, and that

was my fortune.

And then there are many other things in our affairs. For instance, you have lived until now. You mean to say that you couldn't have had an accident by now that would have snuffed your life out? You mean to say you never were so sick that you might have died? Up until this present moment, do you not have the realization that you are in the world because God let you stay until this present moment? You see God's hand is in all of this, and you and I do not have nearly the privilege of making our own selection that we actually think we do.

I have spoken so far of the control, the sovereign act of God, in the affairs of your life, the kind of conditions under which you were born. Now in the affairs of your life and experiences that you have had, let me move on to point out something else. If you want to know the will of God, consider the providence in your life. What has happened to you up until now? It all has a bearing. For instance, up until now you may have gone to school and you may have a high school or perhaps a college education. Maybe you have been trained to be a teacher, a lawyer, or a doctor. Well that has a lot to do with what you are going to do. If you have been brought up in a community of this country and you were sent to high school, to college, to medical school and now you're a doctor, what is the will of God in your life, I expect it is to be a doctor. That is where you were headed. Now there could be a change from that. But that is the normal expectation.

Perhaps your life is entirely different. You reached the age where you ought to support yourself and you had to go out from home and start supporting yourself. You were a young man, you didn't have any social skill of any kind, but you found out perhaps that being a carpenter would help you, so you became a carpenter. Maybe you got a job in a store being a clerk, and so you became a salesman. Maybe you had gotten a job keeping books, and you took special courses, and now you are somebody's bookkeeper. You see the Providence in your life, the way things happen, actually make a difference. And this leads us on to something else. What sort of preparation have you had? If you have been prepared for certain things, don't be surprised if the guidance is not right along that line. Suppose that for one reason or another you were trained to be a mechanic. Maybe you were trained to be a school teacher. Well the chances are you will have something like that to do. The past experience that you have had will actually involve you in what you are supposed to do.

In this connection, let us ask the question like this: What is the issue before you in knowing God's will? Well they are asking me to play the piano at the Sunday School. How can I know the will of God as to whether I should or should not? First of all let me ask you this, have you had any training? God overruled all those things. Are you able to play the piano? That means that God has given you your fingers and He has blessed you with your body and has given you your arms. He has given you all the things that are necessary for you to manage this music that you call playing the piano. And if God fixed it that way that you would learn those things and you actually are trained to play the piano, it is possible He may want you to play the piano at the Sunday School. You see if you were to ask me on a given day is it the will of God that I should play a piano in Sunday School, I would ask you do you go to Sunday School? Do you belong to a class that has a piano? Have they got a piano player now? No. Well then I'll ask you can you play the piano? Yes. I'll ask you have you ever played the piano? Yes. Well adding all that up, it looks to me like it is very likely God wants you to play the piano.

This may sound awfully simple to you, but let me tell you how this will work. Suppose a man were to come along who by some accident or misfortune had an arm cut off and he has just one arm. So he comes to me and he asks me, "Do you think its the will of God that I should play the piano for the Sunday School?" I would say, "No, I don't think it is." He would say why? I would say in His

Providence, in the way in which He has controlled your affairs, He has turned you out in such a way that playing a piano is a physical impossibility for you. I don't think He wants you to play the piano. You see the course of your life and the things that have happened can have a definite bearing upon this. So, when a person comes to me and asks me this question, "How can I know the will of God in my life," I would say, "How have things been going with you? Where were you born? What kind of circumstances did you grow up under and from your parents and the people that you grew up under, what would you be willing to do?" Then I would ask what have you been doing? What are you prepared to do? What can you do? The chances are that you can do what you have been prepared to do, and what is open to you to be done will very likely guide you as to what you are going to do.

Again, right at that very same point, let me suggest this. Someone will say to me, "Are you going to teach a Sunday School class? Is that the will of God for you that you should teach a Sunday School class?" Well, I will tell you one thing, if I were going to teach a Sunday School class there would have to be a class. Then again, I would have to be able to teach. Then, I would have to have someone ask me. Suppose that I grow up in a situation and belong to a church which has a class that does need a teacher, and I can teach, and they want me to teach. I know that there's more to it, but I think that is a big indication that that would be the will of God for me. In other words your preparation and your past experience can fit you for this service that you are giving to the Lord.

Then we should go on to another thing, and I am sure some of you have been waiting for this. Now I bring in the importance of praying. For people who actually believe in God and they believe God has a will, they believe that God would want His will done and that He would bless those who would keep His will, so this particular situation opens up in this way before you and you are willing to do His will, now why not pray? Why not bring all these things before the Lord in prayer, and ask Him to guide you?

When you are asking Him to guide you, I am not sure you should ask Him to speak it out in so many words. I'm not sure how you would feel if you heard a voice in the night telling you what to do. Maybe it won't come that way. Have you had any experience at all in hearing the answer when it comes? Let us just say that you are asking God to guide you. What do you expect? You would expect inwardly some idea to come to you as to what you ought to do. There will be a yes or no shape up in your mind or there will be some other way in which it will become clear to you that that's what you ought to do. And this is a very important thing. When you are wondering whether or not a particular course of action is the way of God in your life, pray. Think about it. Go along with God and get on your knees before God and speak out whatever you can by describing the situation. What is the situation really at stake? The question is whether I should teach a Sunday School class. Can you? Yes. Is there a class that wants you? Yes. Have you been asked? Yes. All right. Then are you still not sure? No. Well now go to the Lord in prayer. Bring all that before Him and ask Him to guide you.

I do not know how He will do it. He may bring things to your mind. He may indicate to you what the Lord has done for you, and you will think that you would do that for other people. He may bring to your mind that you are willing to do anything for His Name's Sake. There will be ways in which it will come to you. But prayer can have a very definite part in finding out the will of God. And remember this. You don't want to ask the will of the Lord in prayer if you are not going to do it anyway. As long as you have in your mind's eye that there is only one thing you want and you are going to ask the Lord for it, do not be surprised if you do not get it. Because, when you are going to come before the Lord in prayer, a humble yieldedness into the will of God and the willingness to take His will, whatever it is, will be a very definite contribution toward that answer.

In that connection I could ask this other question, have you ever had any intimation that that's what

God wants you to do? Have you ever had any dreams about it? Do you day dream about that particular thing? For instance, so far as this matter of playing the piano in Sunday School is concerned, did the idea ever occur to you. Now I know sometimes the Lord will suddenly open a door for us we never even imagined; but generally speaking, you will find that He will in some way have tipped you off to what He wants you to do and it will come out in your thinking about it. You will have been concerned about doing this thing. In the question of teaching a Sunday School class, you may actually in your mind's eye see yourself teaching. You can see the children listening. You can even find yourself preparing to teach.

I can remember one time when a certain woman was asked to take a place of responsibility in the women's work. Now this may seem strange to you, but let me tell you just how it went with her. She was asked to do this certain work. She thought she could not do it. She had felt that she did not have time. And so over the phone she answered, I can't possibly do it; I have too much to do. She turned away from the phone, and as she turned away to walk down the hall, something fell right in front of her, a picture or something off the mantelpiece fell on the floor and smashed. She turned around, called up this nominating committee chairman on the phone and told her, "I'm willing to act as President." Does that seem strange to you? Let us review the situation. This woman was competent. She could well be a circle chairman. The church had these circles, and she was an active, interested member of that group. This woman, in the providence in her life, was wealthy; and she had maid help in the house. There were many, many ways in which she would not be tied up every moment of every day. She really would have the time to act in this capacity. She had all those things in mind; but she wasn't minded to do it. As she turned away from the phone, this picture fell and smashed in front of her. It jolted her. She saw the whole thing. She came right back and committed herself to it. And by the way, she was for several years afterwards an active circle chairman. Because I was her pastor, I know.

Finally in this whole matter of knowing the will of God comes the matter of the personal call. Some inward feeling you have that this is what you ought to do. You may hear a voice about it but apart from hearing the voice you may have the inward conviction. It may grow on you, and you just feel in your heart this is what you ought to do. If anybody talks about it, you are interested. In your own heart and mind you are interested. When you pray about it, it is strong. Every time you think about it., it is strong; because this is the one thing that intrigues you. The chances are that that also will be in the will of God.