

# The Will of God for You

By Paris Reidhead\*

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That” and again it’s that little causative ‘in order that’ or ‘so that’ might walk or “be able to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:9-14).

Now we’re going to start at the 12<sup>th</sup> verse and work our way backward. Assuming that this is a missionary hour and a missionary message, we’re going to consider, therefore, why he should’ve attached so much importance to this 12<sup>th</sup> verse. Here as the culmination of four wonderful things we’ll later see. He says that one of the results of this glorious result of being “filled with the knowledge of His will,” “walking worthy of the Lord,” “increasing in the knowledge of God,” “fruitful in every good work.” One of the expressions of this is “giving thanks unto the Father.”

Now I suppose each time I’ve been here I have had some occasion to make reference to this. But I want to have you see it today. Already this morning I’ve had someone come to me and as we talked and consulted together the only answer that I could give that was appropriate and right and spiritual, the answer was I Thessalonians 5:18. Now, do you know it? Do you know it? I trust you do, but do you know it? If you don’t, you’d better learn it. It may be the most important thing you glean from this conference. It’s the will of God for you to learn it and it’s certainly the will of God for you to do. The verse is, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

Now as any missionary, I’ll have to admit that the greatest hindrance to the cause of Christ in the mission field are not the witch doctors, the demon powers, the climate and the food, mosquitos, snakes and all the other things that we generally associate with tropical countries. These are not the problems.

I was in Mahaffey Camp Meeting oh back in 1954 or 5 and I made the statement that 99 and 95 excuse me, 95% of the problems on the mission field were personality adjustment problems. And when I finished at lunch Mr. L.L. King our Foreign Secretary of the Christian Missionary Alliance said, “Brother Reidhead, I wish you preachers wouldn’t use missionary statistics without being sure of them.” I said, “Oh dear, what’d I do now.” And I said, “I suffer from acute foot and mouth disease, so don’t feel badly about it. But what did I do?” “Well,” he said, “that statistics you used about problems on the mission field. Didn’t you say that 95% of the problems were personality adjustment problems?” I said, “Yes. Isn’t that right? I’ve heard that it was that high and I think have pretty good authority.” “Oh,” he said, “Isn’t that high, it isn’t that high. The fact of the matter is 99 and 44/100<sup>th</sup> percent of the problems are personality adjustment problems.”

And personality adjustment problems have the root in the fact that you’re going straight ahead and he is going straight ahead and you meet in the intersection. And we call that, “He crossed me.” In other words, I want to do this and he wanted to do that. And see he crossed me. And the consequence of this is that he or she or whoever it is interfering with my plan and my purpose.

Now is to become the object of my contempt or my anger or my vengeance or my vindictiveness or something. I’ve even had missionaries tell me, “I so despise that fellowship missionary, that I wish one of us would either go home or die. Just to work on the field is impossible.” Now you can’t believe that it would come to that, but I’ve actually heard.

Now I feel that this verse that we’re dealing with is here because it is of paramount importance. It’s a little thing giving thanks, what’s important about that? “Giving thanks always unto the Father.” Isn’t that an innocuous little expression? But actually this is the heart, in a sense, of your day by day victory in the Lord’s work and in the Lord serves. As a missionary, whether the

serves is at home or abroad, wherever it maybe and unless you see the results from disobedience at this point, you're going to take this for granted and it won't be nearly as important as it should be.

Now here it is, one of the glorious results of that with which we are going to see later on is "giving thanks unto the Father." Now let's for a moment assume that you have events come into your life and you do not meet them on a Scriptural bases, what is the result? Perhaps some of you have heard me give this, but you'll bear with me and will be patience for the sake of those that haven't.

Some years ago, I suppose it would as long ago as 1954. I had my first visit to Glen Rocks Bible Conference up at Lake Rosseau in the Muskoka Lake district of Canada. The first day there, I was impressed with the first service of which I spoke by a gentleman that sat way in the back, came in later and left early. And he looked; well he actually looked like an accident that was trying to find a place to happen. He was the saddest person that I had ever seen. Honestly. The lines of sorrow were etched so deeply in his face and you just looked at him and you reach for the handkerchief. You just felt like crying. I mean, here was sadness personified and I'm not exaggerating. It was a face that had all the sorrow of the ages craved into it, it seemed. Well, I saw him get up and go out. Then the one in charge came to me and I said, "Who is that?" "That's Dr. Finley, a dentist from Toronto. And he has been here; he has been on practically a break down for 2 or 3 months and he's been staying up here along at the cottage. He's had to close down his practice." He said, "I hope you can help him." I said, "Will you pray with me that as we preach and talk, if the Lord wants me to be some help that he will come and ask for that help? And I can't go to him and don't you arrange it. Just leave it. If God wants some help from me for him come. Let him come."

Well, on Thursday night, he said, "Brother Reidhead, could I talk to you tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock at my cottage, if you could arrange it?" So I was there and I began to let him tell me, just tell me what happened. He started out saying he had been converted, he had a wonderful joy in the Lord, gone into a church greatly appreciated the pastor and had begun to witness to his professional colleagues in the city of Toronto, taken them to the church. Then his pastor did something quite unbecoming, actually dishonor to the Name of the Lord. He looked at me and the lines deepened, he said, "I was so disappointed, so disappointed." Then he said, "After a little while I went over to another church. They had a big program and a lot of activities. And my, we were seeing people converted and missionaries go. But you know at the end of the year it was the same group of us that were paying all the expenses. I tell you the truth when I began to realize it, these people were being converted were going somewhere, but they weren't coming to help us. I got a little bit discouraged." Then said he, "One of the brethren of that church came to me and wanted to go into business and he asked me to loan him some money and I did. The business didn't succeed and when I asked for the money he said, 'No it was an investment, it wasn't a loan.' Actually I got... Well," He said, "I got disillusioned. And I've been thinking about all these things for a couple of years. About three months, I got so depressed, I just couldn't practice anymore. I'd be in the middle of treating a patient and I'd just go in the room and cry. I've just been on a verge of a complete defeat, a nervous breakdown."

Well, he didn't know it, but he had given to me in that little recitation what I had come prepared to give to him. And so it made it extremely easy for me. I said to him, "Now, doctor, if I can prove to you that the condition in which you are in is the result of sin, will you believe it? Will you really believe it?" "Well," he said, "I will believe it, if you can prove it. During these months I have been searching my heart before the Lord, one thing I'm certain of I've deal with all known sin." "Well, if I can prove to you that your condition is caused by sin that you've committed and never forsaken or confessed. Will you deal with it, as sin?" "Yes," he said, "I will." I said, "Now, do you believe the law of God is the will of God?" "Yes." "And do you believe to break the will of God is the same as breaking the law of God?" "Yes." I said, "Do you know I Thessalonians 5:18?" He said, "No." I said, "Doctor, when patients come to you for treatment, you charge them. Now, I am here this morning and I don't know where I'll ever see you again or when I'll see you next, but if I ever see you again and the next time I do, I'm going to say to you, 'Doctor, I Thessalonians 5:18'. I'm going to expect you to give it to me like that and if you don't I'm going to send you a bill for \$100.00 for professional services." He laughed, "That'll be fine, alright." He learned it too. He was a Scotsman. He wasn't going to have any chance of \$100 for not learn a wee verse.

We turned to it and he read, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." He said, "Now, Brother, I want one thing clear you don't expect me to give thanks for a preacher who dishonored the ministry?" I said,

"I don't expect you to, but I think God does." "Well, I can't do that!" I said, "Don't argue with me. I never wrote the Bible. You've got some fuss about it, you go to the Lord. As far as I'm concerned, He said, 'In every thing give thanks.' And that means even for this situation." "Well, I don't know how I can do it." "Neither do I, but you'd better, you'd better do it."

And we went through that point by point and he saw the five steps to spiritual failure. The *first step down is disappointment*. No Christian ever has the right to be disappointed about anything. Disappointment is a sin mortal in its effect upon spiritual life, because in its essence disappointment says God isn't what you thought He was. Now, no one is honest enough to come out and say, Look, God bluffed me in this thing. We never do that. What we do you see is to say, I didn't have faith enough or I didn't do this or didn't do that. But in effect disappointment says if God had been up to what I expected of Him this never would have happened.

Now the reason a Christian cannot ever be disappointed is that Romans 8:28 and 29 are in the Bible, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose; For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." And from the very moment you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, from that moment God sent His sovereignty to the end of shaping and molding and forming you into the likeness of Christ. And He has sovereign said, that "all things must work together to good."

Now, not good in the general sense of you define 'good'. He defined 'good'. The good of all goods is that you should be like Jesus Christ. This is the one supreme 'good'. And therefore He said, that "All things work together for good for whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son." And His purpose isn't to make you happy or comfortable or successful or famous or anything else. His purpose is to make you like Christ. And He is much more interested in the worker than He is the working. He is far more concerned about the minister than He is the ministry. He is quite willing to let a ministry do the work in the minister, because it's the man He is interested in and not the ministry.

When you see this then you realize that nothing can touch you, but what your heavenly Father permits. Father let it come I care not whether—what area of your life it touch. He said, "In all things", and all things means all things. Nothing can touch you, but what it's to the end of making you like Christ. If it's sickness in the body that touches you, as it probably will along the way, initially your response is say, "Father, thank you for permitting this to come, because it has stopped me and forced me to seek Thee. You've use this to get my attention."

I hate to tell it, but I must because it illustrates it. You've heard of the man that sold a mule to a neighbor and he couldn't make the thing do a thing. And the contract said the mule will obey. So he called the seller back and said, "What are we going to do about this beast? It won't do a thing I tell it." He said, "Well, are you telling him what to do?" I said, "Yes." "Well, what do you do?" I said, "Get up and he stands there and he just doesn't move." "Well, I'll show you how to do it." He went over and picks up about a 3 foot length of 2 x 4 and gave it a good clobber across the head. He said, "Get up." And the mule went right up. "Your trouble was you weren't getting his attention." And it is this sense with us and God. There is so much that God wants to say with us He has so much difficulty getting our attention. We are well and pressing down the road and God says, "Child, child, child?" And so something touches us. Now the thing to do is to say thank you Father, thank you.

Whatever it is makes no difference because He said, "All things." Disappointment is a sin against God. It's a sin against our spirit, a sin against Christ. That's because disappointment invariably leads to the *second step into defeat and that is discouragement*. I've tried it once, what's the use. It didn't work. Oh well why should I try it again. Uncurried the first time I went into it, the second time, no. Discouragement. Discouragement soon gives way to a *third step downward which is disillusionment*. I thought I saw a city, but I pursued it. I was disappointed. I stop going and because it was nothing but a mirage. It wasn't a city at all. And how many there are that have moved in the direction of sanctification, the Spirit filled life and said, "Well, I tried it and it didn't work."

I was down in Orlando, Florida years ago, when we moved there and one of the dear people had a very real pressing physical need. She went to her pastor with Andrew Murray's<sup>1</sup> book on healing. "Ah," he said, "don't pay any attention to that. I was sick once and I tried that and it didn't work." In other words, disillusionment had set in and disillusionment was communicated. But the fourth thing that happens after disappointment and discouragement and disillusionment is *depression*. Depression is that state where we'll go to bed at night with a heavy cloud, when we awake up in the morning it's even heavier than when we went to bed. And throughout the hours of the day our minds are going over the same thing, but never creatively. Just going around and around and around and around in kind of a beast tied to a sweep of a mill. Just a rut that deepens daily. Depression a cloud that settles over the human spirit and then *the fifth thing is defeat* the disintegration of morale, a breakdown.

Now I realize there are many reasons why people have what are called, "breakdowns". Sometimes they are from glandular change and physical conditions and I wouldn't make light of it. But I also realize that so frequently we come to this stage of defeat because somewhere in the past we've had disappointment that lead to discouragement, to disillusionment, to depression, and to defeat.

And I went over this and used the very words Dr. Finley had used to me. And I said, "Doctor, this is a sin. You've had these events come into your life and instead of dealing with them the way God prescribed you've been disobeying God. And now look, you're paying the price of disobedience in your body and in your mind and in your spirit. You're invalidated out of your practice, because you disobeyed God. It's a sin." "Oh," he said, "it's not a sin alike drunkenness and adultery and murder, is it?" "Well," I said, "it has the effect of cutting you completely out of His service and ministry and witness. And in that sense it seems to me so devastatingly sinful. That you can't countenance it in anyway or take the edge off of it." I said, "Doctor, what are you going to do about it?" I said, "Are you enjoying this breakdown? Do you feel you've earned it? You don't want me to do anything that would cheat you out of it. Are you happy here?" He said brokenness, "Ah, no, no." Well, I said, "What are you going to do about it?" "Well," he said, "I just can't say thank you Lord when I don't feel it." I said, "You jolly well better. You say thank you just because God told you to and after a little while you will feel like saying it. But if you don't start simply because He told you to do it, then you'll never do it. You just do it cause He told you to do." "Well, I don't." I said, "Look," I said, "don't argue with me I never wrote the Bible. You got any fuss about it, just talk to the Lord. But you better do what He told you to do and discuss it with Him afterwards. If I understand it correctly, He's not going to change things to accommodate you."

Well, the next year I was back there. We were out in the open air walking looking across the grass toward beautiful lake Muskoka. And he stopped put his chest back and drew a deep breathe he said, "Oh Brother, isn't wonderful to be alive!" I said, "This year Murray, this year." He turned and He said, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Oh dear missionary friend going or coming, at home or abroad, here is the Spirit of God telling you one of the glorious benefits that comes, the ability to understand the importance in everything that touches us, in everything that touches us to be able to say thank you Father. There's no other way of dealing with the heart ache and the bruises of life, apart from Romans 8:28 - 29 and I Thessalonians 5:18.

I was speaking on this some many years ago and a dear brother came to me and said, "Isn't this marvelous it says 'In every thing' and not for everything?" Well, that was the first out I had ever found for the verse. And so the next time I preached it, I said, "But you've got to understand it says 'In every thing' and not for everything." When I finished, a sister came to me and she said, "How long has it been since you read Ephesians?" "Oh," I said, "quite recently." "How long since you read Ephesians 5?" I said, "Well, just recently." And she said, "Well, then do you believe it?" "Well," I said, "I certainly do." She said, "Then why don't you preach it?" I said, "Oh, I'm in trouble again. What is it now?" She said, "Do you know Ephesians 5:20?" I said, "I don't, I'm sure I don't. What is it say?" And she said, "Giving thanks always for all things." Cornered. Utterly cornered. Not a way out of it. Well, now that's only one result of being filled with the fullness of God, when we come to the place that we give thanks in everything.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Murray (1828-1917) He has authored over 240 Books

Look at the 11<sup>th</sup> verse of Colossians 1: “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto” international fame and evangelistic endeavor. Is that what it says? Oh, I guess I’m reading from the reverse vision again am I not. What does it say? “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.” Oh Lord couldn’t You’ve had some help besides this, “unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” Seems pretty mundane doesn’t it? What kind of a world did they live in? It was a world of persecution.

Do you know what the word “witness” means? Do you know what its root is? *Martyros*, Martyr (μάρτυς, *mártys*, "witness") One who witnessed for Christ, was one who dared to say Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, the Son of the living God and my Lord and my Savior. And Nero would say to his soldiers, “March past my statue and drop incense.” And church history tells us that there was one band known as the Holy Band, as the Christians that were valiant in service surpassing the nobility of all of Caesar’s legions. There were a hundred in that group and all of them loved Jesus Christ. And the order went out either drop incense or every 10<sup>th</sup> man will die. Ten times that company passed until all of the hundred had died. They were all gone. That’s what it met to be a witness. A martyr. That’s where the word comes from and this is the context of the New Testament.

We have found it very difficult to stand valiantly for Christ not against the sword that would be leveled, aimed at our heart, nor a whip at our back, nor stocks for our feet and hands, nor shackles that would bind us to a galley seat. No, we’ve not had. We’ve had to stand valiantly against a raised eye brow or a curled lip or a sneering word. And sometimes that raised eye brow or a curled lip or a sneering word has sent us mortally wounded into the dungeon of our regret that we ever identify with Christ.

No we haven’t had what marked other days, but I believe that it’s still imperative for you to see that this is the result of being filled with the knowledge of His will. “Unto all wisdom and spiritual understanding that you can walk worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;” that you might be “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Col. 1:9-11).

And so we have here every indication that being baptized with the Spirit of God, filled with the Spirit of God for this is His will and filled with the knowledge of His will is to be with Himself. For it is His will that we should be filled with the Holy Spirit, that Christ should live in us, walk in us as light. Let it be understood that the illustration of a Spirit filled life is not some great evangelist or missionary, but it maybe someone who being brought to that place simply chose to die for the Lord Jesus.

Word came out of China, where incidentally we’ve been told that 20 million people since 1948 have been, and I like this term don’t you it is sort of neat, sort of clean, nothing sanguine about it, 20 million people have been deprived of existence. Isn’t that a neat term? By the red Chinese. And we’re also told that 10 million of these have been deprived of existence, because of their steadfast adherence to religions brought in by imperialist adventurers. In other words, during the last 18 years at least 10 million people have died for the cause of Christ in China alone. That means more people have died for Christ in the last 18 years than have died all the centuries since the time of Christ before.

If you read Foxe’s<sup>2</sup> Book of Martyrs you’ll find that it was merely a fraction of a million in all that are described. But in the last 18 years 10 million people, according to official figures, have died for their faith in one country.

Now, we do not know what will be our lot. We don’t know, but we do know that we are here enjoined by the Spirit of God to be, “Strengthened with might, according to his glorious power.” The power that raised up Christ from the dead to the end that we might manifest patience in the mist of longsuffering not just endurance, but patience with joyfulness.

Now here are two principles, the first is that “in every thing” we are to give thanks. Giving thanks unto the Father for the longsuffering, giving thanks unto the Father for all the conditions, for everything that touches us. Manifesting patience with joyfulness in the mist of all the events.

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<sup>2</sup> John Foxe (1516/17 – 1587) An English historian and martyrologist, the author of *Actes and Monuments* (popularly known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*)

Now, let's just look one minute in closing "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will." God has a plan for your life. A plan that He made, in a sense, before He made the world. If you were as wise as God you couldn't make a wiser plan as loving as God, you couldn't make a more beneficial plan to you, to Him, to others. And if you were as powerful as God you couldn't make or insure a more successful plan. And He wants you to know His plan and so He avidly what is your plan for my life? What we want is a blue print of a journey with all the geographical stops and starts outlined for us. But you know what His plan is that "you would present your body a living sacrifice holy, acceptable unto God," and would invite Jesus Christ live His life in you and make yourself total available to Him (Rom. 12:1). His plan is that your feet become His feet, your hands, His hands that your body becomes the vehicle by which He can move in time and space, where and when, He wills. He wants you to present your body and personality to Him as unreservedly and as perfectly as He presented His body to the Father.

Remember, everything done by Christ in the three years of His ministry was not done by the Son, the second person of the trinity. Philippians 2 tells us this He emptied Himself (Php. 2:1-11). That is everything He did He did by the Father through the Spirit. He could've done everything He did as Son, but if He had He wouldn't have been "like unto his brethren." So at His baptism, in a sense, it's the emptying of the right to act in His essential deity as Son (Heb. 2:17). And He presented His body to the Father and He was filled by the Spirit, anointed with the Spirit. Now the Spirit of God had been in Him. Oh, yes from the time of His conception, but the Spirit of God now is upon Him. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," and everything done by Christ in His public ministry was done by the Father through the Spirit (Luk. 4:18). He said, "I do nothing of myself;" "I don't speak of Myself" (Joh. 8:28; 14:10). "I speak as I receive commandment from My Father" (Joh. 10:18). "The works that I do The Father He dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (Joh. 14:10).

Now this is His will, that He can live in you with the same freedom without restriction or hindrance or any impediment at all to His perfect will. Perfect. And Christ can live through you His own life. This is why He says, "That you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" 'in order that' you might "walk worthy of the Lord" However well you may meet a legalistic description of how a Christian should walk, you infinity fail unless you are permitting the risen Christ to live in you His own life. Because this is not a legalistic life that can be imitate by the Pharisee. This is a dynamic life that can only be produced by the risen Christ living through you. To walk worthy of the Lord is not simply to avoid this and do that, but it is to present your body to Him so that the Lord, Himself can fulfill His purpose in and through you.

So we find here that we are to "be fruitful in every good work." What good work? Every work that He has planned for you. He has a plan for your life and the only way you could ever finish your course is to permit the Lord Jesus Christ to live unhindered and unrestricted His own resurrected life in and through you. And in so doing, you will increase in the knowledge of God. In other words, you are intimate fellowship and union with God which is your reward for abandonment will so fill and flood your heart that as the dear little woman who wrote the book, the women she must have been, The Cloud of Unknowing said, "That you become so enveloped in the love of God or indicated you become so enveloped in the love of God that you need not mere words to express that union."

Well, here it is dear friend; He wants to live in you His life. This is His will. He wants to walk through you and fulfill His purpose that you might be "strengthen with might in everything to give thanks." You say missions? Is that missions? Why, of course. This is how you become a missionary. This is what it is. Being a missionary isn't a trip, it is a relationship to Him. The geography isn't as important as the relationship. Amen.

\* Reference such as: Delivered at Bethany Fellowship Bloomington, MN in the morning during a Missionary Conference, 1968 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.