

Do You Want to Know God's Will?

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[0 : 00] John 17, part three. This is called the high priestly prayer. Our Lord Jesus is praying while he's on earth. And so it's God, the son praying to God, the father to reveal himself in John, the apostle who's close by captures the prayer and the words of Jesus. I'm going to read today, John 17, beginning at verse 20 to the end of this chapter. As you hear this, remember, this is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear and sufficient word. It's God's very own word for us, his people. When I'm done reading, I'll say this is the word of the Lord and you can respond, thanks be to God. John 17, starting at verse 20.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be one as thou, father, are in me and I in thee. That they may also be one in us, that the world may believe that thou has sent me. Verse 22. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one. And that the world may know that thou has sent me and has loved them as thou has loved me. Father, I will that they also whom thou has given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou has given me. For thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. O righteous father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it that the love wherewith thou has loveth me may be in them and I in them. This is the word of the Lord. Lord, thanks be to God. Indeed, you may be seated. The Bible says that the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Let's pray.

O God, help us to behold your love in Jesus Christ today.

We ask that you will be glorified by the proclamation of your word. We pray, Lord, that you will cleanse our thoughts, renew our minds, help us to think of you exactly how you have revealed yourself through your word. I ask, Lord, that you will protect my lips and the words that do come out that are not pleasing to you, Father. I pray that it will be forgotten, that it will blow away like the dust, but I pray that your word, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the ministry of your spirit through the preaching of the word, I pray, Lord, that that will serve the purposes that you intend in your people.

[3 : 33] Those whom you love so dearly in the Son. We ask all of this for Christ's sake alone and for his glory. Amen. Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, do you want to know God's will?

Do you want to know God's will? Jack Benny had a difficult marriage. His wife Sadie was, quote, a sharp-tongued, demanding, vain woman.

He had a tradition, nonetheless, of expressing his love to her by sending her roses. Well, in the Christmas of 1974, the day after Christmas, Jack unexpectedly died.

His wife didn't expect to get the traditional roses, but they arrived. She thought this must be the last time. That year, Sadie trimmed the stems and placed the roses in a special vase beside the portrait of his smiling face.

She'd sit for hours in Jack's favorite chair, staring at his picture, the roses sitting there, as someone put it in a poem. So even after he died, this expression of love stirred her heart, and it began to soften this widow.

[4 : 57] Jack's final act, an expression of love, it revealed his heart for his bride. Christ, in John 17, is praying hours before his final act to reveal his love for his bride.

3 p.m. on Friday, the Lord Jesus Christ will die. In John 17, it's Thursday night, and Jesus Christ prays.

John 17 has to be one of the best chapters that we can meditate on to be reminded of God's love, because it is the Son telling the Father how much he loves his bride, the church.

In this chapter, Jesus makes it crystal clear. He wants his bride with him. So do you want to know the will of God?

Well, put your eyes on John 17, verse 24. This is the key verse that I want to try to hold on to and open up for you in this passage. John 17, 24.

[6 : 13] Jesus says, Father, I will. Here's what I will. You want to know my will, church? Here's what I will. That word has been translated, here's what I want.

Here's what I desire. Jesus says in verse 24, Father, I will that those you've given me be with me where I am. That's the will of God.

That they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, for thou loved me before the foundation of the world.

That's the will of God. That verb, the will of God, in this verse, it's given to us in the first person, singular, masculine, present, active tense.

If there's ever a time to get excited about grammar, this is one. That means that Jesus, actively, right now, currently, in an ongoing way, wills that you be with him.

[7 : 16] And he wills that you see his glory, the glory that his Father gave him. Jesus says, I, the Lord God, I desire you.

I, the Lord God, want you. I, the Lord God, chose you. You want to know more of God's will?

It's all good news today. It's all good news. And here's, here's another thought related to this. The better you know someone, the more you understand what they wish, what they want, what they will. We think of this a lot this time of year, where it's a tradition to give one another gifts. The better I know my wife, the better I'll know what this time, in this stage of her life, she will want. What is it her will right now?

What would she enjoy? Just think about that. That's how well the Father knows his Son. That he gives you, the bride, to the Son, as a gift.

[8 : 25] And that's the direction. Yes, the Lord knows us, and he knows all of our needs can only be met in Christ. But here, the message is that you are the gift from the Father to the Son.

No one knows the Son better than the Father. What is it that the Son wants? It's exactly what the Father's going to give. It's you. God proves that he knows his Son by giving his Son what his Son wants.

And his Son wants you. I'm going to try to open up for us today five insights into God's will from this glorious passage. Number one, it's God's will that you and I believe in Christ through his word.

That's God's will. We see that in this prayer, Christ is revealing the eternal decree of God. Christ prayed for you whom God chose to believe in him.

Look at verse 20. I do not ask for those only, referring to his apostles, the disciples, but for those who will believe in me through their word.

[9 : 34] Anyone who will believe in the testimony of the new covenant, the new testament, and receive, this is God, Jesus Christ, the Son, the mediator. That's who Jesus is specifically praying for.

All who will believe. What does this mean to believe in this way? I love this definition by John Gill, to believe, to receive the word of God. Quote, to believe in this saving sense is a spiritual sight of Jesus Christ.

Do you have that? You need to be able to see the necessity, the fitness, and suitableness of Jesus Christ as a Savior. It's a going forth unto Jesus Christ, laying hold of Jesus Christ, and depending upon Jesus Christ for life and salvation.

that's what it means to believe. And Jesus, as he prays, he's praying for this vast multitude of souls worldwide that will believe in him.

This is what the New Testament calls the elect. It's the elect. It's those Christ came to save. That's exactly who he's praying for.

[10 : 46] In 1 Peter 3, 9, we read that God is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

He wills that. Man is responsible to believe in God. So think of that. You're in this position, and I am in this position when we're born.

It's our responsibility to behold God and believe. And he desires that none should perish. And Jesus is praying for you who will believe. He desires that all should come to repentance.

God said in John 3, 36, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. This is what's at stake. But here's the other side of that double-edged sword.

Whoever does not obey the Son, Jesus said in John 3, shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. You were born in the default state of being under the wrath of God because of sin. [11:52] That's the curse of being under the fall from Adam. Ever since then, we're all born with that sin, and we add on our own sin on top of that. Well, now we arrive at this glorious insight.

Christ, he prays for you who will believe in him through his word. That's his will, is that you will believe in him. And we saw in John 17, verse 9, you can look there in your Bible just a few verses back, referring to the elect and the apostles specifically, and then all those who would believe by necessary consequence there.

In John 17, 9, he says, I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. So for whom does Christ pray in verse 20, I pray for every soul who will believe in me through their word, through the word of the apostles.

I'm going to try to lay a foundation here that's very important for what I believe he's emphasizing in verse 22 and verse 21. And the best way to put this dilemma, so you have the wrath of God remaining on you because of sin.

Shilin, the rapper, church planter, he put it this way, because of your sin, God's wrath on you abides, and hell is the place you'll eternally reside.

[13:19] That means your wrath from God hasn't been satisfied. So how does the cross relate to those in hell? Well, they be saying, Lord knows he tried, but we believe his mission was accomplished when he died.

Do you understand what he's saying here? He's saying that this people, this bride of the Lord, the ones that Jesus prays for now, are those same souls that the Father chose.

The same souls the Father gave to the Son in the covenant of redemption. Before he purchases those souls on the cross, our Lord Jesus prays for his elect, for his bride.

Shailene put it this way, it's the same souls that the Father chooses. The Son gets bruised for them, and the Spirit renews them and produces fruit in them.

It's the same people, the people of God. If you believe in Christ, it is because God decreed to give you his Son.

[14:30] He chose you, he purchased you, he renewed you, he is sanctifying you, and he will one day glorify you. We read in Romans 8. So it's the will of God that you believe in him through his word.

And if you believe, it's because he has called you through his Son. Christ prayed for you whom God chose to believe in him.

Here's a test. You want to know right now, is Christ praying for me? Am I one of those he is praying for today?

Those who are the bride of Christ, you can have assurance from Revelation 22. the bride prays, oh, return quickly, Lord Jesus.

The Spirit and the bride are the ones longing and calling others to invite Jesus back. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. We desire your second coming. The second insight into the will of God is this.

[15:37] God desires to prove to the world that Christ succeeded in his mission. God desires to prove to the world that Christ succeeded in his mission.

Look at verse 21. He prays that they may all be one just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me.

So the unity of the body and the bride, that's one of his desires, but it's leading to something else.

It's so that the world can believe that he succeeded in his mission.

What is happening in the church cannot be explained any other way except that Christ did it. The apostles testified in the scriptures.

Yes, the Father sent the Son. The Spirit breathed out the New Testament. That same Spirit ministers the Word of God today to the ends of the earth and those the Spirit is regenerating and calling and opening your eyes.

[16:41] You receive the Word of God that way. You receive it as the testimony about Jesus Christ and you believe. This is what's described in 1 Thessalonians 2.13.

When you receive the Word of God which you heard from us, you received it not as the Word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of God which effectually works in you that believe.

It effectually works in you that believe. Was Jesus trying to make the whole world His bride? Shailene asks. Well, we can answer that directly with 1 Corinthians 7.23. You, church, were bought with a price.

If Jesus bought you, you are His. His wrath has been satisfied for you. Shailene again put it this way in his song.

[17 : 41] Quote, If saving everybody was why Christ came in history, with so many in hell, we'd have to say that He failed miserably. So many think that He came only to make it possible.

You're saying the cross by itself doesn't save. That we must do something to give the cross its power. That means at the end of the day, the glory is ours. But Christ, He paid for you. He paid the price. He ransomed you who believe. Why did He do this? For the glory of God alone. Soli Deo Gloria.

When you believe the testimony of the New Testament, the gospel of Jesus Christ, of how God saves you, then your faith is proving to the world that Christ succeeded in His mission. You can testify like Paul in Romans 1.16, I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. When you are united to the spiritual family of Christ, the church, your membership, it proves that Christ succeeded in His mission.

[18 : 56] Acts 4.32, the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul because they are united to Christ. Do you want to know the will of God?

God desires to prove to the world that Christ succeeded in His mission. And He uses us to prove that to the world as 1 Thessalonians 5 says it, we rejoice always, we pray without ceasing, we give thanks in all our circumstances.

This is God's will in Christ Jesus for you. That means that when you pray, when you commune with the triune God, your prayers prove to the world that Christ succeeded in His mission.

A third observation, God wants the world to see that He is love. Do you want to know the will of God?

It's the will of God to show the world that He is love. He tells us this plainly in 1 John 4.8, God is love.

[20 : 09] Father, Son, and Spirit, the one God, the triune Godhead, the creator of all. What is He? God is love. Look what Jesus prays in verse 22.

Father, the glory that You have given Me, I have given to them that they may be one even as we are one. I in them and You in Me that they may become perfectly one.

I'm going to read a bit more to explain the connection with God is love and that's what He wants to show the world. But let me clarify one thing in passing first. Look at what He says at the end of verse 22.

that My people will be one even as Father and Son are one. That's a difficult teaching, right? Even as. What does He mean by even as?

there was a false teacher named Arius and he took what we know about the relationship between people and he tried to apply that to God and that's the upside down way of doing theology.

[21 : 15] We start with what is true of God and then that informs what we make sense of ourselves as people. So Arius, here's the wrong teaching. He said that the church is united to Christ in a way of not being the same essence as Christ and we agree with that but then he took it a step further and said Jesus Christ therefore can't be of the same essence as the Father.

That was Arius' teaching. So Augustine clarified biblically from the full counsel of God's word even as we are one. Augustine said this can refer to essence and it can also refer to love.

So in essence the Father and Son are one but in their distinction the two persons of Father and Son there's a love there's a love between Father and Son and that's what Augustine said is the correct interpretation.

Yes, Father and Son are one in essence because of they're the Trinity it's three in one God but the relationship between Father and Son also communicates a love between the persons and it's only in the latter sense not in the essence of being united to God in essence but in being united to God with such a loving bond as the Father and Son have in their love.

So love is the essence of who God is God is love and God wants to share that love among Father, Son and Spirit with the Bride of Christ.

[22 : 43] That's how tight the union of God's people is to God through the Son. God wants the world to know that the Father sent the Son because He is love and God wants the world to know

that the Father loves His elect just as the Father loves His own Son.

What a glorious truth. 1 John 4-7 calls the church beloved let us love one another. Why? For love is from God.

God shows the world He is love by infusing divine love in us. He shares His glorious divine love with His people. And then the world looks on and they could say the words of Psalm 133.1 we testify behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.

Do you want to know the will of God? It's that we share His love with one another. The love that the Father has for the Son that we would share that with His people.

God wants the world to see through the church that He is love. The invisible God shows the world He is love by His visible people.

[24 : 09] This is our generation. We are the ones living on earth now. We're united to Christ but He's leaving us here to reveal His love. It's the love of Christ the fruit of the Spirit the righteousness of God the Son put on to His people.

Paul describes it this way in Ephesians 4 2 and 3 The love is made visible with Christ-like humility gentleness patience bearing with one another in love eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

Jesus had told them this already in John 13 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. Fourth insight into the will of God is this God wills you to behold His glory in the Son.

You want to know the will of God? It's the will of God that you behold His glory in the Son. Look at verse 24 Jesus prays Father I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me for Thou lovest me before the foundation of the world.

In John 14 23 Jesus had said my Father will love those who believe in me. We will come to Him and make our home with Him.

[25 : 54] Jesus wants you with Him so you behold His glory. We have to ask the question why? Why does Jesus want you?

And the answer He gives in this verse is simply Jesus wants you for the same reason the Father wants the Son. It's because He loved the Son eternally.

God wants you with Him because He loved you eternally. You were chosen in Christ before the foundations of the world Ephesians 1 says.

Sinclair Ferguson summed this all up so simply and correctly I believe He pointed out three things God tells us He wants in this passage.

God wants you church to be one. That's number one. Number two God wants you to see Christ's glory. That's number two.

[27 : 03] Number three God wants you. Simply that God wants you. We behold the love of a holy perfect righteous God and we think I can't be one with you God in this way.

Even though I'm saved I know you've washed me clean. I still have remaining sin in my flesh.

Sinclair Ferguson pointed out the only interest Jesus has in your sin is to get rid of it.

He only cares to know how can I get rid of this sin so that there is nothing between us. Why?

Because He wants you. Ferguson said the reason God wants you is because He loves you.

The reason He loves you is because He is love. 1 Thessalonians 4.3 tells us this is the will of God your sanctification.

Why? So there can be nothing between you and God. He wants you that much. Do you want to know the will of God? God wants you and He wills you to behold His glory in His Son Jesus Christ.

[28 : 32] will of God. Well the fifth insight into the will of God is that God chooses to make Himself known to you. God wills, God decrees, and God chooses to make Himself known to you.

Look at what Jesus prays in verses 25 and 26. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know you.

They know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name and I will continue to make it known that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them.

God chooses to continue to make Himself known to you who are chosen in Him. Aquinas pointed out Jesus is praying this right before He goes to the cross.

And what He's praying for, His words to the Father are being accomplished in time in history. What Christ prays for as a man, He is also simultaneously accomplishing as God.

[29 : 51] This glorious resurrection life, Jesus will give to His disciples. Jesus prays to His Father what we receive as a promise that He will continue to make God known to His people.

Jesus says, I will continue to make known to them the glory of my resurrection which you Father have given me by your eternal decree and which soon will be accomplished in history.

This is so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them. God chooses to make Himself known to you again and again and again.

Day after day, week after week, isn't He so faithful? He makes Himself known. He reminds you, I am love.

Year after year, in deeper ways than you could ever dream of, He continues to reveal who He is to you, His people, whom He called. Do you remember that story I told you about Jack who died and left the roses?

[31 : 07] Well, another year went by and his wife was learning to live without her mate. This poem tells it this way, that with loneliness and solitude that had become her fate, then the very hour the doorbell rang and there were roses sitting by her door.

She brought the roses in and just looked at them in shock, then went to get the telephone to call the florist shop. The flowers you received today were paid for in advance, they told her.

Your husband always planned ahead. He left nothing to chance. There's a standing order that I have on file down here and he has paid well in advance. You'll get them every year.

And each year he sent her roses and the note would always say, I love you even more this year than last year on this day. My love for you will always grow with every passing year.

And for nine years his gift continued to remind her of his love. Well, this is a mortal man and he can't grow in his love for her from the grave.

[32 : 18] How much greater is the love of Christ for his bride? Because he is not dead, he is alive and he continues to make known his love for you church.

Day after day, month after month, year after year, because he's alive and he wants you to be with him, that you will behold his glory. And it's the glory that he had with the father before time.

He's the lamb that was slain from the foundations of the world. There's nothing that can add glory to God, his glory is full. But now he brings his bride into his presence to enjoy his glory and to see that he is love and to share his love with you, his people.

Christ's final prayer reveals he is love. This is Christ's last will. It's his final wishes for you who are his.

God's will is for you to believe in him through his word.

[33 : 38] God's will is for you to trust that Christ succeeded in his mission. God's will is for you to see Christ and know that God is love.

God's will is for you to behold the glory of God in the sun. God's will is you that you know him.

God's will dear friend is that you be with him. my encouragement to us in a special way this week as we prepare for Christmas you get to be with God because he came to you.

He came to dwell and to be with you. And we have the promise that he is resurrected and alive and we will join him in his second coming. We will join him in our glorified bodies and this kingdom of God will never come to an end.

We will worship him with this vast multitude that no man can count more than the stars of the sky.

We will be among that number because God is love.

[34 : 44] Let's pray. Oh we praise you our triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit. We thank you that this is the will of God.

We thank you that this is the desire of our Lord Jesus Christ to have his people. Proverbs 13, 12 says a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

And this was Christ's desire which he fulfilled and he became the tree of life that we could abide in his city, that we could enter through the walls, enter through the gates and be us standing on the foundation of the true glorious temple that is Jesus Christ.

Lord, we receive this by faith now. We believe help our unbelief and one day we trust that you are faithful. You will make our faith be turned to sight.

We long for that day. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. And his bride joins in saying Amen. Amen. Amen.