

Prayer and the Will of God

by Andrew Murray

Andrew Murray emphasizes the importance of prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit to discern God's will in our lives.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5

Topics: "Prayer", "Discernment of God's Will"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the significance of prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit to discern God's will, drawing from the experiences of George Muller. He illustrates how Muller, despite overwhelming challenges, remained assured of God's guidance in his orphan work, demonstrating a childlike trust and a commitment to seeking God's honor above all. Murray encourages believers to approach their decisions with prayerfulness and patience, trusting that God will reveal His will through the Spirit and His Word. The sermon highlights the importance of maintaining a calm heart and a focus on God's glory in the pursuit of His plans.

Transcript

It is through The Word, and the Word Alone, that the Spirit teaches...

One of the greatest difficulties with young believers is to know how they can find out whether what they desire is according to God's will. I count it one of the most precious lessons God wants to teach through the experience of George Muller, that He is willing to make known, of things of which His word says nothing directly, that they are His will for us, and that we may ask them. The teaching of the Spirit, not without or against the word, but as something above and beyond it, in addition to it, without which we cannot see God's will, is the heritage of every believer.

It is through The Word, and the Word Alone, that the Spirit teaches, applying the general principles or promises to our special need. And it is The Spirit, and the Spirit Alone, who can really make the word a light on our path, whether the path of duty in our daily walk, or the path of faith in our approach to God. Let us try and notice in what childlike simplicity and teachableness it was that the discovery of God's will was so surely and so clearly made known to His servant.

...the prospect before me would have been overwhelming had I looked at it naturally...I was sure it was the will of God...

With regard to the building of the first Home and the assurance he had of its being God's will, he writes in May 1850, just after it had been opened, speaking of the great difficulties there were, and how little likely it appeared to nature that they would be removed: 'But while the prospect before me would have been overwhelming had I looked at it naturally, I was never even for once permitted to question how it would end. For as from the beginning I was sure it was the will of God that I should go to the work of building for Him this large Orphan Home, so also from the beginning I was as certain that the whole would be finished as if the Home had been already filled.'

The way in which he found out what was God's will, comes out with special clearness in his account of the building of the second Home; and I ask the reader to study with care the lesson the narrative conveys:--

...from the beginning I was as certain that the whole would be finished as if the Home had been already filled.

'Dec. 5, 1850.--Under these circumstances I can only pray that the Lord in His tender mercy would not allow Satan to gain an advantage over me. By the grace of God my heart says: Lord, if I could be sure that it is Thy will that I should go forward in this matter, I would do so cheerfully; and, on the other hand, if I could be sure that these are vain, foolish, proud thoughts, that they are not from Thee, I would, by Thy grace, hate them, and entirely put them aside.

'My hope is in God: He will help and teach me. Judging, however, from His former dealings with me, it would not be a strange thing to me, nor surprising, if He called me to labour yet still more largely in this way.

...little, very little comparatively, came in, i.e. about four times as much was going out as came in...

'The thoughts about enlarging the Orphan work have not yet arisen on account of an abundance of money having lately come in; for I have had of late to wait for about seven weeks upon God, whilst little, very little comparatively, came in, i.e. about four times as much was going out as came in; and, had not the Lord previously sent me large sums, we should have been distressed indeed.

'Lord! How can Thy servant know Thy will in this matter? Wilt Thou be pleased to teach him!

December 11.--During the last six days, since writing the above, I have been, day after day, waiting upon God concerning this matter. It has generally been more or less all the day on my heart. When I have been awake at night, it has not been far from my thoughts. Yet all this without the least excitement. I am perfectly calm and quiet respecting it. My soul would be rejoiced to go forward in this service, could I be sure that the Lord would have me to do so; for then, notwithstanding the numberless difficulties, all would be well; and His Name would be magnified.

The burden of my prayer concerning this matter is, that the Lord would not allow me to make a mistake, and that He would teach me to do His will.

'On the other hand, were I assured that the Lord would have me to be satisfied with my present sphere of service, and that I should not pray about enlarging the work, by His grace I could, without an effort, cheerfully yield to it; for He has brought me into such a state of heart, that I only desire to please Him in this matter.

Moreover, hitherto I have not spoken about this thing even to my beloved wife, the sharer of my joys, sorrows, and labours for more than twenty years; nor is it likely that I shall do so for some time to come: for I prefer quietly to wait on the Lord, without conversing on this subject, in order that thus I may be kept the more easily, by His blessing, from being influenced by things from without. The burden of my prayer concerning this matter is, that the Lord would not allow me to make a mistake, and that He would teach me to do His will.

I converse with no one about it. Hitherto have I not even done so with my dear wife.

'December 26.--Fifteen days have elapsed since I wrote the preceding paragraph. Every day since then I have continued to pray about this matter, and that with a goodly measure of earnestness, by the help of God. There has passed scarcely an hour during these days, in which, whilst awake, this matter has not been more or less before me. But all without even a shadow of excitement.

I converse with no one about it. Hitherto have I not even done so with my dear wife. For this I refrain still, and deal with God alone about the matter, in order that no outward influence and no outward excitement may keep me from attaining unto a clear discovery of His will. I have the fullest and most peaceful assurance that He will clearly show me His will.

...I judge that I cannot go about this matter with too much caution, prayerfulness, and deliberation.

This evening I have had again an especial solemn season for prayer, to seek to know the will of God. But whilst I continue to entreat and beseech the Lord, that He would not allow me to be deluded in this business, I may say I have scarcely any doubt remaining on my mind as to what will be the issue, even that I should go forward in this matter.

As this, however, is one of the most momentous steps that I have ever taken, I judge that I cannot go about this matter with too much caution, prayerfulness, and deliberation. I am in no hurry about it. I could wait for years, by God's grace, were this His will, before even taking one single step toward this thing, or even speaking to anyone about it; and, on the other hand, I would set to work tomorrow, were the Lord to bid me do so.

...that it may be yet more abundantly manifest that God is still the Hearer and Answerer of prayer...

This calmness of mind, this having no will of my own in the matter, this only wishing to please my Heavenly Father in it, this only seeking His and not my honour in it; this state of heart, I say, is the fullest assurance to me that my heart is not under a fleshly excitement, and that, if I am helped thus to go on, I shall know the will of God to the full. But, while I write this, I cannot but add at the same time, that I do crave the honour and the glorious privilege to be more and more used by the Lord.

'I desire to be allowed to provide scriptural instruction for a thousand orphans, instead of doing so for 300. I desire to expound the Holy Scriptures regularly to a thousand orphans, instead of doing so to 300. I desire that it may be yet more abundantly manifest that God is still the Hearer and Answerer of prayer, and that He is the living God now as He ever was and ever will be, when He shall simply, in answer to prayer, have condescended to provide me with a house for 700 orphans and with means to support them. This last consideration is the most important point in my mind.

...if He would be more glorified by not going forward in this business, I should by His grace be perfectly content to give up all thoughts about another Orphan House.

The Lord's honour is the principal point with me in this whole matter; and just because this is the case, if He would be more glorified by not going forward in this business, I should by His grace be perfectly content to give up all thoughts about another Orphan House. Surely in such a state of mind, obtained by the Holy Spirit, Thou, O my Heavenly Father, wilt not suffer Thy child to be mistaken, much less deluded. By the help of God I shall continue further day by day to wait upon Him in prayer, concerning this thing, till He shall bid me act.

'Jan. 2, 1851.--A week ago I wrote the preceding paragraph. During this week I have still been helped day by day, and more than once every day, to seek the guidance of the Lord about another Orphan House. The burden of my prayer has still been, that He in His great mercy would keep me from making a mistake.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5,6).

During the last week the book of Proverbs has come in the course of my Scripture reading, and my heart has been refreshed in reference to this subject by the following passages: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5,6). By the grace of God I do acknowledge the Lord in all my ways, and in this thing in particular; I have therefore the comfortable assurance that He will direct my paths concerning this part of my service, as to whether I shall be occupied in it or not.

Further: "The integrity of the upright shall preserve them" (Proverbs 11:3). By the grace of God I am upright in this business. My honest purpose is to get glory to God. Therefore I expect to be guided aright.

"Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established" (Proverbs 16:3).

Further: "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established" (Proverbs 16:3). I do commit my works unto the Lord, and therefore expect that my thoughts will be established. My heart is more and more coming to a calm, quiet, and settled assurance, that the Lord will condescend to use me still further in the orphan work. Here Lord is Thy servant.'

When later he decided to build two additional houses, Nos. 4 and 5, he writes thus again:--

...that thus, by quietly waiting upon God, I might not be influenced by what might be said to me on the subject.

'Twelve days have passed away since I wrote the last paragraph. I have still day by day been enabled to wait upon the Lord with reference to enlarging the Orphan work, and have been during the whole of this period also in perfect peace, which is the result of seeking in this thing only the Lord's honour and the temporal and spiritual benefit of my fellow-men. Without an effort could I by His grace put aside all thoughts about this whole affair, if only assured that it is the will of God that I should do so; and, on the other hand, would at once go forward, if He would have it be so. I have still kept this matter entirely to myself.

Though it be now about seven weeks, since day by day, more or less, my mind has been exercised about it, and since I have been daily praying about it, yet not one human being knows of it. As yet I have not even mentioned it to my dear wife in order that thus, by quietly waiting upon God, I might not be influenced by what might be said to me on the subject.

This evening has been particularly set apart for prayer...

This evening has been particularly set apart for prayer, beseeching the Lord once more not to allow me to be mistaken in this thing, and much less to be deluded by the devil. I have also sought to let all the reasons against building another Orphan House, and all the reasons for doing so pass before my mind: and now for the clearness and definiteness, write them down. . . .

'Much, however, as the nine previous reasons weigh with me, yet they would not decide me were there not one more. It is this. After having for months pondered the matter, and having looked at it in all its bearings and with all its difficulties, and then having been finally led, after much prayer, to decide on this enlargement, my mind is at peace.

...much exercise of faith and patience may be required; but in the end it will again be seen, that His servant, who trusts in Him, has not been confounded.

The child who has again and again besought His Heavenly Father not to allow him to be deluded, nor even to make a mistake, is at peace, perfectly at peace concerning this decision; and has thus the assurance that the decision come to, after much prayer during weeks and months, is the leading of the Holy Spirit; and therefore purposes to go forward, assuredly believing that he will not be confounded, for he trusts in God.

Many and great may be his difficulties; thousands and ten thousands of prayers may have ascended to God, before the full answer may be obtained; much exercise of faith and patience may be required; but in the end it will again be seen, that His servant, who trusts in Him, has not been confounded.'

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