

The Will of God - Part 3

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing the will of God, being open to God's guidance, and having a spiritual vision of Jesus Christ to make progress in Christianity.

Duration: 45:38

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Proverbs 29:18, Matthew 4:10, Acts 7:58, 2 Corinthians 10:4, Galatians 1:16, Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Will Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power of having a vision and purpose in the Christian life. He uses the example of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall to illustrate how a clear vision can unify and energize people. The preacher highlights the need for Christians to have a new understanding of God's purpose and will in order to be unified and focused. He also emphasizes the importance of having a divine imperative and a deep personal encounter with Jesus Christ, which will enable believers to persevere in the face of trials and temptations.

Transcript

The letter to the Hebrews, chapter 12, Therefore, let us also, and let us run, looking off unto Jesus, the author, or captain, or fire-leader of our faith, and the perfecter of our faith. I want to try to gather up and focus and coordinate the ministry of today. Taking you back to the beginning, reminding you that then we pointed out that the whole Bible, in every part, is concerned with the will of God.

And that, it being the word of God, means that the will of God is to be found and only found in the word of God. Then we pointed out that the Bible introduces God to us as a going God. A God moving in purpose and with purpose.

He is in action, from the first verse. In the beginning, God created us. God in action.

And all the way through the Bible, God is seen to be this God on the move, pressing onward in purpose, and revealing himself and that purpose in his word. So that the word of God has to dominate everything if the purpose of God is to be fulfilled and completed. That was the foundation of the day.

We moved on to see in the afternoon that in order to be in that full, comprehensive will of God with purpose, it is necessary for us to have no purpose of our own, but only his. And so we dwelt upon the great law of spiritual progress, forward movement, the law of letting go, being able to let go, the law of

renunciation of all unto God. This all, of course, based upon a three-pronged fork with which we began.

Famous preacher and expositor, Dr. Alexander McLaren of Manchester, always took three points for every sermon. One day his people asked him, Doctor, why do you always have one, two, three? He said, well, I don't know. I think a three-pronged fork is a very useful thing with which to feed the people of God.

And our three-pronged fork this morning was, as you remember, we gather to this ministry today, firstly because we are supremely concerned to know the will of God. Then that we are quite prepared to at least listen to and consider anything that might help us to know the will of God. We're open-hearted and open-minded.

And more than that, we are ready to hear anything that can help us in this knowledge of the will of God. And the third prong, we are committed to do what the Lord shows us as to that will. Now, that is the point at which we've arrived so far.

I've said I want to gather that all up this evening. One other great essential to going on with God. And let me say this, in the presence of such a great deal of misapprehension of what Christianity is, of inadequate understanding in our time with the Christianity that is before us, and preaching and teaching and so on, in the presence of an inadequate Christianity, that Christianity really is that persons are caught up in the goings of God.

The Apostle Paul used the word apprehended, that's what he meant, that he'd been apprehended of Christ. Christ was going on, moving forward. And he was moving at that time, wasn't he? In the early days, it's so evident in the book of the Acts, this is a forward-moving Christ.

He has a great forward movement from heaven. And in that going, that tremendous going of Christ, this man was caught up and carried on. As one under our rest.

And that is what Christianity is. It's not just some little thing, it contains all sorts of things, many things I mean, many things. But with all those things, what it really amounts to is you and I have been caught up in something.

We have been taken hold of. You know, there's a word, a very interesting word in the New Testament that is just this very thing. We read it this morning in our private reading about the betrayal of Jesus and the band coming out to arrest him.

The little clause says, And the men that held Jesus mocked him. The men that held Jesus. For you to see what kind of men they were, pretty tough sort of men.

To get into their grasp and grip would certainly be something not easy to resist. And the men that held. But that word held is a very interesting word in the New Testament.

It's the same word as the Apostle Paul used when he said, The love of Christ constrained us. Same word in the original, held, constrained. And the word just means that you are taken hold of irresistibly.

Or almost irresistibly and carried on. When the woman came to touch his garment for healing. And he said, Virtue has gone out of me, I perceive.

Who touched me? And his disciples said, Master, the throng, the throng pressed thee. That word again there is the same word. Have you ever been in a mob, in a crowd, in a multitude that's going? Well there's

plenty of this sort of thing today.

This rushing multitude and you get in, what can you do? Go. No use trying to resist. It's that.

This is the word. And Christianity is just that, being caught up in the eternal going of the eternal God in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Must.

Carried on. Almost irresistibly. I'm very careful that you should get the point this evening.

Because this is a law of progress. Of course that sounds, seems very obvious, doesn't it? But the principle of it. Now look, here's Hebrews.

Hebrews. You know the content of this letter to the Hebrews? What does it do from the beginning, right at the beginning? It gathers up everything of all the goings of God. God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, gathering up all the previous movements and goings of God and focusing them in His Son Jesus Christ.

At the end of these times, spoken not by bits, not in pieces, not here and there, diverse portions and manners, but focused, concentrated, consummated, full and final in His Son Jesus Christ. And then the writer goes on to tell us what Jesus Christ is, who He is, greater than the angels, greater than the angels, greater than Moses, greater than all. This wonderful Christ that this writer is presenting.

You see why? Then he uses the metaphor, a race, a doing. We're caught up in something, as in a race. And what is this that is governing this movement, this race, all this energy? Looking unto Jesus.

This Jesus, this Jesus, this marvellous Jesus about which he's been writing, greater than the angels, greater than the Lord, greater than Moses, greater than everything, this Jesus looking up. The full and consummate embodiment of divine purpose into which we are called and caught up. And what does that say to us? There's a lot of words, isn't there? What does it mean? It means this, dear friends, that a law amongst the others, a law of going, let us, let us, we've read, let us.

This letter is full of that, isn't it? Let us. Let us press on. Let us leave beginnings, go on.

Let us, let us, caught up in something that makes us shed every impeding thing, every arresting and hindering thing. What is it that carries us on? We have seen the Lord Jesus. Now we have seen the Lord Jesus.

Here it is in the letter. We've had a vision, not objectively perhaps, but in our hearts. Something has happened and Jesus Christ has become the all-mastering, all-controlling and all-absorbing object of our existence.

We've seen Jesus. And that vision carries us on. What we have seen about Him, what is God's purpose in Him, what we have seen in Jesus has become a dynamic in our life.

Such a dynamic that nothing else matters. Let us lay aside. That doesn't matter.

That doesn't matter. That does not matter. Let us lay aside.

That's not the thing. This is it, what we have seen of God's will in His fullness, comprehended in His Son as for us. All that meant for us.

All that He is, is for us. You know friends, we have not yet after all really grasped that. I say that meaningfully and knowingly.

Oh, how many of our worries would go if only we'd seen the Lord. How many of those delaying, arresting things in our life would go if only we'd seen the Lord Jesus. What is it that's holding us back? The sin that does so easily beset, slowing us in the race or even holding us up in the race.

Oh, this terrible sinful thing that I am. This wretched man that I am. This poor thing.

Weak and sinful and faulty. Listen, I think about this and I dwell upon this and I'm troubled about this and then what happens? I stop running. All the gold goes out of my... Isn't that true? You stop and think about yourself for five minutes and see how fast you'll run forward in the Lord.

Ah yes, we all do it. We all do it. We are obsessed, overwhelmed with this terrible thing that we are, this poor thing that we are, this miserable thing that we are.

Isn't it true? We dwell upon it and then we flop down. The race has an end for us while we're there. We have not seen the Lord Jesus.

See, in Him we have been dismissed. In His death we've been put out of sight. In Him risen we no longer appear before God.

He appears for us, as us. He is us. Not this.

That same Jesus. If only we got hold of Him. If only we got hold of Him.

If only our eyes really did see. God has made Him to be for us. For of Him are we in.

Christ Jesus, who is made unto us from God. Made unto us from God. Wisdom.

Dwelling upon your own foolishness and folly. Right? Unto us wisdom from God. Righteousness from God.

Sanctification from God. Redemption from God. What more do you want? Comprehends everything in redemption and unto glory.

Looking on unto Jesus. See what I'm trying to say. The writer of this letter then sees us as the metaphor of other race.

And he says that if you're going on in this, if you're going on in this, you've got to see Jesus and keep Jesus before you. Not be seeing yourself and other people all the time, but keep your eye on Him. You'll keep going.

If you don't, you'll stop going. Now that's very plain, very simple. Not very profound, but it's the gospel.

Concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ. Now what is it that I'm trying to get at? It's this. You and I, dear friends, individually and if we are belonging to a local company of the Lord's people, here or there, a company of the Lord's people, we'll only make progress towards that full, ultimate end of God in Christ if we have got a spiritual vision of Jesus Christ.

Vision is essential to progress. Vision? Is it necessary for me to stay with the Word? I'm not thinking about something objective that you see with your eyes aflame. You know that.

It's something that has happened inside of you and your inner spiritual eyes have been opened. I have seen and that's revolutionized my life. That's put me on my feet.

That's set me on a course. That has become a dynamic in my life which, in spite of myself, in spite of myself, keeps me going. Yes, it works like that.

Oh, thank God it works like that. I know the aspect and factor of our responsibility. But God help you and God help me if it's all going to be left to our responsibility, what we do.

I tell you, and this may have been your experience, if not, this may interpret your experience, many, many times I, in the man that I am, would have given up the race. That's an awful confession, isn't it? Yes, I would have given up the race. Indeed, indeed in my heart I've given it up.

So be it. I can go no further. It wasn't therefore because of my persistence, but was what Paul calls the power that works within us.

The power that works within us. What is it? The Holy Spirit has done something and put a dynamic in us. We have seen it and we can't unsee it.

And it will come back. It may fade, it may even be eclipsed by days of darkness and trouble. We may know what Paul meant when he said, Pressed beyond our measure.

A terrible thing for the greatest of all apostles to say. Despaired. Beyond our measure.

What happened? Paul would get up and say, well anyway, I'm going on. Not at all. The power that worked within us got him on his feet again and again.

Let Elijah seek out his juniper tree and say, take away my life. The Lord doesn't agree. It's given him a part in a great eternal purpose.

And so, it'll come up again. Be encouraged. Are you down? Are you despondent? Are you despairing? Are you feeling you can't go on? It'll come up again.

And I say it, God forgive me, I say he'll come up again. Something has taken place. I'm calling it vision.

That may be misleading. What I mean is, something has come into our life, which is a spiritual knowledge, and become a spiritual dynamic, and given us a sense of purpose. Purpose.

God's purpose. God has done it. And that is going to be the secret of our survival, at least.

Survival. We'll not survive but for that. That, which I call vision.

No, we'll not get through on any resource of our own, but we will go on in the going of the eternal goings of God, if there has been this initial something of seeing God's purpose in Jesus Christ. Oh, I do wish with all my heart, that in the preaching of the gospel to the unsaved, the note of eternal purpose was more often struck. It's what we're going to get.

The appeal to our souls to have something that will make us happy. The whole set-up is that, being happy. No, no, no, you won't get much of a kind of Christian by that means.

But you will, if those who have come to the Lord have come because they have seen something of the greatness of Jesus Christ and of their calling in Him. This vision, which has produced a sense of vocation. In other words, a sense of purpose.

Mastering purpose. Without it, I say again, we'll not get very far in the race. It's that which the apostle means.

In symbolic language, it is true. Don't just dwell upon the literal idea. The spiritual motivation looking up unto Jesus, who started it and will finish it.

The beginner, the final leader, the perfecter, did not begin with us. Thank God. How many times we have been rescued by that word of the Lord Jesus, you did not choose me, I chose you and ordained you.

I initiated this thing and I'm going to complete it. If you let me. If you will fall in to this going.

If you keep your eye on me, and off of the things that delay vision, whatever other words you may use for the idea, the principle, the law, something that has taken hold of you and you know, that carrying you on. Have you got that? Are you a Christian of that sort? I'm not asking you if you've had a Damascus Road experience when the whole thing was visual and ocular and sensational like that, but whether there's something that's happening. If you wanted to see Jesus Christ, and in him, my eternal destiny, as being bound up with him, how shall I do it? You see what I mean? I'm trying to convey.

Like that. A mastering motivation, brought in to us and upon us by Jesus Christ, at the beginning. That will make us Christians that go on, that go on in this race with patience.

A mighty divine imperative in our life. Have you got that? A mighty divine imperative. I do wish I could get this home.

After all, after all, your troubles and trials and difficulties and temptations, are you prepared to give up? Are you prepared really to come to it and abandon everything? Say, I'm not going on in this any longer. Are you? Well, sit down and try. I venture to say that you're not getting very far with that.

You may have two or three miserable days, or weeks over it, but sooner or later, I'll have to go on. Something like that, is what I mean by vision, this dynamic, this sense of a purposeful God, a God of purpose having laid hold of us, carry us on. Now this is exactly what is meant, you see, by inspiration.

The Lord's people ought to be inspired people. Inspired people. Men and women who are inspired.

There's only another way of saying, inspirited. And we ought, because of that, to be an inspiration to others. Oh, if we're not an inspiration to others, there's something seriously lacking in our, the very nature of our Christianity.

We can't inspire others. If we do not bring inspiration, in our ministry and our context, if in our leadership, there is no inspiration, then that's a contradiction in terms, because the Bible idea of leadership, in any way, is inspiration. Inspiring people.

If you're leading a meeting, you ought to inspire them. Whatever kind of meeting it is, you ought to bring inspiration. And what should be true of the individual should be true of every company? The company of people who are being carried on by this mighty divine dynamic of purpose or vision.

We know where we stand. We know where we are going. We know what we are after.

We know. Many of the Lord's people today don't seem to know where they're going and where they are. No assembly ought to be like that.

It ought to be a going company. Those people have seen something. Those people are mastered by something that is carrying them on.

It's a real force in their being. Such a vision has many side effects and values. One of which is the resolving of the whole question of unity.

And what a question that is. I don't know what to say and what not to say. There's so much to say.

But you take up your letter to the Corinthians. Your first letter to the Corinthians. And what have you? People in internal dissensions and divisions quarrelings.

Anything and everything but unity. Oneness. Paul knew it well before he went to them.

And so he said, I determined, when I came to you, I determined. I made up my mind. I resolved that I would know nothing among you save one thing.

All unifying thing. Jesus Christ. The unification of a focused vision on Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ. Meaning of his... If you have this, that I am calling vision, this dominating sense of purpose and meaning given by the Lord, it will resolve so much of this trouble manifested in divisions, lack of real fellowship. It's a unifying dynamic, this vision of Jesus Christ.

Go back to the Old Testament for an illustration, the case of Nehemiah. Well, Nehemiah had a vision, didn't he? A man of vision. He saw Jerusalem rebuilt.

The wall reconstructed and finished, made complete. He had a vision of this new Jerusalem on the earth for that time. Well, you see, the man first of all mastered by his vision, tremendously mastered.

But then all these people, poor people, a poor lot really, a bedraggled remnant coming back. All the possibilities of more disintegration, moanings and quarreling and what not, to hinder the realization of this thing that had mastered this man. They shared his vision.

They were gathered up in this man's vision. And look at them. Persecution, opposition, everything to deter by the verdict is and the wall was finished under the heart.

The people had a mind. And what was that mind? Well, it was this vision of the purpose which had been put into the heart of this man and it unified the people. Let the devil come along and do everything that he could to discourage, to make difficulty.

Even the subtle rules of trying to let the devil come along and do everything that he could to discourage, to make difficulty. Even the subtle rules of trying to get Nehemiah to come and have a conference and discuss things. No, said he, not on your life.

I am doing a great work and I see the power of a mighty objective, a vision to unify, to energize, to keep going. Don't we need that? Doesn't Christianity need that? Don't we need it in our assemblies? Something like that we do? Oh, then we must have this new apprehension of God's purpose and will as centered in His Son, Jesus Christ, concerning us. A mighty animating power in life.

That is, as I said, and want to say again, is more powerful than all our capacity for giving up and being discouraged and resigning. More powerful than all the weaknesses of our own soul. Oh, I do thank God for survival.

It's a weak word. I know it's not enough to just say you survive. We're doing more than surviving, I believe.

We're triumphing. There must be something more than ourselves. He is greater than us.

Greater than us. Thank God we've proved that many times. Well and I give up.

Just one more word. This thing, call it vision, call it what you like, but you know what I mean now. This is a mighty emancipating power.

I use that word emancipating in this sense. A great power for lifting us out of our smallness, our narrowness, our littleness. How shall I illustrate? Will we take our good friend who supplies us with so much instruction in this matter in his own history, the Apostle Paul.

You know, you know dear friends, that the cause of the old Israel's calamity, calamity, first of all being sent into Babylon in captivity for seventy years and then eventually handed up by God, dismissed by God. The cause, the reason, exclusiveness, the answer, no other answer, exclusiveness. We are the people, the truth will die with us, no one else has any place at all.

We are it and only it, and it is us. These nations, these Gentiles, they are mere dogs, no place for them in the divine economy. We are the chosen people, God's elect, and no one else.

In spite of all the prophecies about what they were meant to be by God to the Gentiles, to the nations, they were to be the seed in which all nations were to be blessed. In spite of all that, the covenant with Abraham, no, they closed in and in and in on themselves until they were the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Exclusiveness.

And Paul the Apostle was a representative of that, born into that, brought up in that, trained in that, imbibing that. He was the embodiment of that exclusiveness. Paris, say it, exclusive.

What are you going to do with a man like that? Well, try. Try arguments, see how far you get. He'll out-argue you.

Try persuasion. Oh, not a bit of it. He's not the kind to be persuaded.

He's a bigot in this. Try persecution. It makes no difference.

You want to move that man, shut him to this exclusive position. Because it's done. The thing is done.

He's emancipated. He's out. No longer the old Israel.

He's perished. The world is perished. How vast is the range now of his vision? Tremendous, isn't it? You can't cope with his language on this.

He's leaped over all language barriers. Because what? He's seen Jesus Christ. He had a vision.

Not only seen as an incident of vision of a person. He has seen the significance. What Jesus Christ means in God's universe, in God's economy, in God's eternal goings from eternity to eternity.

He's seen. You cannot be exclusive if you have seen Jesus Christ. That would dissipate and ruin all exclusiveness.

You cannot be mean, contemptible, little, small if you've seen Jesus Christ. And don't you agree with me that this presentation of Christ in his infinite greatness is the only way to emancipate people from their littleness in spiritual life? Isn't it needed today? Oh, indeed it is. Unifying because we've got one central object which draws us together and makes us say about thousand and one things that we get in the way.

You get out of the way. We are set upon this purpose of God. Unifying, emancipating and enlarging.

Oh, that the Lord would give us this emancipation again. Enlarge us. The psalmist said, I will run in thy ways when thou wilt enlarge my heart.

An enlargement of heart will make you fleet a foot in the ways of the Lord. Closed, not the subject. By any means, but for this day, vision is the great battleground.

Oh, if you have seen, you'll be a marked person. Your eyes have been opened. You know something of what that fellow knew when the Lord opened those eyes to him blind from his birth? It's all so, so true to life, isn't it? He had his eyes opened and said, I, whereas I was blind, I see.

That's one thing I know. You can't rob me of that. When he got his eyes opened, well, it wasn't long before he was excommunicated from the temple and the synagogue, cut off, made an object of their spite.

True to spiritual experience, if you have seen you're in the battle, you really are. You won't be troubled very much by the devil if you haven't got this dynamic in you because it's this dynamic that spells his final overthrow. You've got to count for God and you only count for God by having seen you're marked as a battle arm.

That very vision, not you yourself, but that very vision is the mark. The object, anything, anything to destroy you, get you out of that, put you out of the run, out for the battle. The spiritual seeing, what are we going to end the day with? What are you praying? Tell you what I'm praying? After all the years I've prayed with all my heart, more than ever, reveal thy son, reveal thy son in me, give me a yet larger apprehension.

Are you going to pray that? Are you going to pray that? Will you seek the Lord and seek continually the Lord will enlarge and strengthen your apprehension of Jesus Christ so that, figurative language or not, this is what it is, actually looking of all that he means, all that he contains, all that he represents, of God for us. The file, the completer, the beginning, seen in the heart, dominating power of our life, will bring us into despair in ourselves and in others and in the world. But there it is, it's something done.

I have seen the face of Jesus. Tell me, Lord, how are you?

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