

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, September 4, 2011 – 11:00 AM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

Knowing God's Will - Acts 9:1-6

Introduction: Do you know what God wants you to do? What would you say if I told you there was a way you could know? For the Christian, this should be one of the most eagerly sought after pieces of knowledge of all. And for the non-Christian, it is the most important thing you can know. This morning, I want to explore a pattern for determining the will of God for your life.

In Acts 9:1-6, a man named Saul had a face-to-face encounter with Jesus Christ. *1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."* **Acts 9:1-6 (NIV)**

Now, in the KJV, at the beginning of vs. 6, there is this added sentence; *"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"* I believe Saul had to have asked this question because of Jesus response *"...go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."* I mean, it just makes sense, doesn't it?

However, it is that last directive of Jesus is what I want to call your attention to. God had something else for Saul to do. He didn't tell him what it was at this time, but he hadn't knocked him down and got his attention for nothing. We now know that that something was, but at that moment, Saul didn't know. He would later want to know and God was more than willing to show him, and in fact, would teach him and guide him along the way.

We live in a day where knowledge and information is growing at an unprecedented pace. By the time the latest technology reaches the market, it's obsolete. And as a result, we have people who earn many degrees, but can't find their car in the parking deck. We have folks who may be geniuses, but they can make some pretty dumb mistakes. We live in a generation of clever creatures who know a lot but in many ways, they have lost their way. The good news we learn from Saul's experience is that guidance for life is promised. Jesus promised Saul that if he would go about it the right way, He would show him what he wanted him to do. We can know what God wants us to do, and we can be sure of it, if we know how to look. First, let's talk about:

1. The Will of God

There are three categories of the will of God – **God's Sovereign Will** which is always done and there's nothing that can be done to stop it. For example, it is God's sovereign will to love you. No one can stop Him from that.

Second, there is **God's Moral Will**. There are things God tells us that we must do, and things He considers wrong. Love is right, and honesty is right, and kindness is right, and they are part of God's moral will. But lying and murder and pride are wrong, and that is also part of God's unchangeable moral will. He has fixed the standards of right and wrong in His moral will.

Thirdly, there is **God's Particular Will**. **Acts 9:15 (NIV)** describes God's particular will for Saul: *"Go, this man is my chosen instrument to carry My name before the Gentiles, and their kings, and before the people of Israel."* God had a special plan for Saul, and for each of us. So when a Christian says, *"I want to know God's will for my life,"* they are usually referring to God's particular will.

That might sound presumptuous, but listen - the reason God is interested in us individually is because He loves us. I might be one insignificant speck in the sea of humanity, but God knows me. He knows my name, how many hairs I have. He loves me and calls me His own. And because He does, He has designed a particular plan for my life. He has promised to guide me.

But unfortunately, some Christians can get confused because they believe some of the myths about the will of God. I want to share some of those with you in hopes that you would avoid them.

Myth #1--"God will give you a roadmap."

When we say that God will show you the way, it doesn't mean that God gives you a special roadmap for your life. Instead, He provides a relationship. When the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, God didn't

give them a roadmap of where to go; He provided a moving cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night and told them to follow it. He set up a relationship with the people. We tend to want God to send us a map to follow that will outline everything we're supposed to do in life, but that's not how He works. That would take the adventure and excitement out of the Christian life.

An example of God not providing a roadmap can be illustrated by my "*calling*" into the ministry. My calling was not a result of God showing me each step He would lead me and then inviting me to follow it. No, my calling was entirely a result of my relationship with God. God's will is a relationship, not a roadmap.

Myth #2--"God doesn't want you to have fun."

Did any of you have or do you have a favorite uncle? I did - my Uncle Duval. He was my grandmother's brother and He lived in Chicago, and later Wausau, WI, so I only got to see him maybe 4 or 5 times in my life. Now that made him a bit of a novelty in my life, because he was so different that we were. He had lived up north for so long; he didn't act or talk like we did. His ways were sort of strange to us. In fact, it was a wonder we weren't sort of afraid of him - he was so different.

But there was something about Uncle Duval that drew me to him. I suppose the main reason I liked him was because He'd let me just have fun whenever I was around him. I guess you could say he spoiled me because he didn't have any kids of his own.

Now I use this illustration of my uncle as a way to describe how a lot of people feel about God. Unfortunately, some people view God as weird uncle who is so different and so abnormal that they just don't want to have anything to do with Him. Their view of God is that He's nothing but a cosmic killjoy, and if you do what He wants, you will be unhappy and miserable.

If the truth were known, the reason some people are afraid to find the will of God because they do not know God. They are afraid of what He will ask them to do, thinking it has to be something hard or no fun.

But put yourself in the place of God. If a son or daughter you loved very much came to you and said, "*I'll do whatever you want me to do,*" would want to make him or her miserable? Of course not! You love your children, and you want what's best for them. Don't be afraid of the will of God. God is good and He loves you.

Myth #3--"God only speaks to the Preachers."

Many people seem to think that God only speaks to pastors or missionaries or special leaders of the church. But God has a will for every pastor, plumber, or pie maker. His will isn't limited to a certain kind of person. He has a will for your life.

Myth #4--"God Only Speaks through experiences like Saul's."

Some people think that they have to have a Damascus Road experience like Saul in order for God to speak to them. Saul's experience was certainly sensational, but it is not the norm for most Christians. Yes, God sometimes has to get our attention in an earthquake, a hurricane, a tornado or a brush fire, but most of the time He speaks in a still, small voice. Don't buy into the myth that you have to have some dramatic experience for God to speak to you. More people are led to Christ quietly by the Spirit, than dramatically by an earthquake.

Myth #5--"God reveals His will to the young."

It's not just young people that need to find the will of God, but every person regardless of age. If God were finished with you, He would have taken you to heaven. God has a plan for your life, no matter what age you are or how much time you have left.

Myth #6--"God's will is hidden and difficult to find."

You would never say to your son, "*I want you to do something very important. If you obey, you'll be rewarded. If you disobey, you'll be punished. But I'm not going to tell you what it is.*" No loving parent would say that! And neither does God. God doesn't hide His will from us. The Scriptures talk about God revealing His will, not hiding it. He wants you to know His will so discovering it is not a game of hide and seek. In fact, we don't discover the will of God so much as we build a relationship with the Father.

So we've talked about the difference between the categories of God's will and the various myths about God's will that we need to dismiss, so now I want to turn our attention to just how we are to go about finding God's will. Let's look at:

2. The Guidance of God

God has promised His personal guidance in finding His will, but there are certain provisions that we must be aware of.

A. The Obedience Factor - For example, you must be willing to obey Him. When Saul first saw Christ, he knew God had something in mind for him to do. The Lord hadn't got his attention for nothing. Unfortunately many Christians ask God to rubber-stamp the plans they have already made. If you really want God to guide you, you have to be willing to listen and obey whatever He calls you to do.

B. The Meekness Factor – Meekness means having power that is under control. When Saul responded with *"What would you have me do,"* he displayed his teachable spirit. He allowed God to be in control. **Psalm 25:9 (KJV)** says, *"...the meek He will teach His way."* If you aren't meek, you won't know His will.

C. The Openness Factor - A third provision for God's guidance is openness. You must pray for God to guide you. You report for duty as a Christian soldier, rather than wait around to be drafted. If you have been waiting a long time for God to guide you, you need to consider how much time you spend with Him in private. If you spend time with the Lord in quiet time every day, praying and reading His Word, you'll discover God already speaking to you. Are you listening?

D. The Yielded Factor - You also must be yielded to the Lord if He is going to guide you. After Saul's encounter with Christ, vs. 8 says, *"...but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus"* **Acts 9:8 (NIV)**. Get the picture...here was this tough guy, who had previously been taking others captive, and now he was being led around by others like a little child. It's quite a contrast isn't it? But the symbolism here is that now, Saul was yielded to the Lord. If you really want to know God's will, make sure you are ready to obey it. Examine yourself and see if you are willing to listen, ready to learn, and anxious to obey His leading. Finally, we need to know just how God works in our lives to reveal His will to us.

3. The Working of God

I close with some practical ways that you can know His will.

A. Miracles. What happened to Saul was a miracle, and God occasionally works this way. There are examples in Scripture of God leading through dreams and visions, or even speaking in an audible voice. He doesn't normally guide this way, but sometimes there is just no other explanation. The more common way God guides us is in:

B. God's Word. Even before Saul met Christ, he knew the Scriptures. So when Jesus appeared to him and told him that it was He whom he was persecuting, it was like turning on a light in Saul's mind. God's Word was being made plain to Saul, and it was in direct contrast to what he thought was right. But God's Word sometimes works that way. Psalm 119:105 reminds us that His Word *"is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path."* When you are facing a situation and you wonder what you should do, I urge you to go to your Bible. Read it and see what He has to say about your circumstances. Another way that God works in our lives is:

C. Through Other Christians When Saul arrived in Damascus he was introduced to Ananias, who had been sent by God to preach the truth to Saul. When God wanted to show Saul His will, He used another Christian to do it. That's why the Proverbs teach that *"guidance"* and *"victory"* are found in *"many advisors."* **Proverbs 24:6 (NIV)**. Don't be so proud that you're afraid to listen to the counsel of others. Finally, God works in our lives through:

D. The Holy Spirit The Spirit of God will confirm His will to you. *"Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul; he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me, so that you might see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit'"* **Acts 9:17 (NIV)**. From that time forward, Saul was led by the Spirit of God. Saul learned to recognize God's voice, and he began to obey what God had told him to do: that is - preaching Jesus. He was willing to obey the Lord, because He knew God's will for his life. The Spirit of God leads the people of God. We need to learn His voice, and so He too can lead us.

Conclusion: I don't know specifically what it is God wants you to do, but I hope you are one who truly wants to know what it is. I hope and pray that you are serious about finding God's Will because this is one thing you will need to know and do in order to be happy and fulfilled in life. **Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)** says, *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."* If you are trusting in God and acknowledging Him in all your ways - if you are meek, teachable, open, and yielded to God, I can promise you that He will guide you to His will. So spend time in God's Word, seek the wise counsel of other Christians, and listen for the Spirit's leading. God has a wonderful plan for your life, and He wants you to know it. Do you want to know it?