

**Jesus, Still Lead On**

*Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760); tr. Jane Borthwick (1813–1897)*

Jesus, still lead on till our rest be won.  
And, although the way be cheerless,  
We will follow, calm and fearless;  
Guide us by Your hand to our Fatherland.

If the way be drear, if the foe be near,  
Let not faithless fears o’ertake us,  
Let not faith and hope forsake us;  
For, through many a woe, to our home we go.

When we seek relief from a long-felt grief—  
When oppressed by new temptations,  
Lord, increase and perfect patience.  
Show us that bright shore where we weep no more.

Jesus, still lead on till our rest be won;  
Heav’nly Leader, still direct us,  
Still support, console, protect us,  
Till we safely stand in our Fatherland.

**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ**

*In the Nick of Time*

**Knowing God’s Will: Part Two**

*Kevin T. Bauder*

If God is not giving further revelation, then how can believers know His will for their lives? Some theologians have denied that God has an individual will for each believer, but their objections are not convincing. More often than not, their case against an individual will of God is really an objection to ongoing revelation. They overlook the possibility that God might have an individual will for each believer and that His will can be known (at least approximately) without sacrificing either the finality or the sufficiency of Scripture.

I have already given reasons for believing this to be the case. Along with those reasons comes a responsibility to explain just how believers can discern God’s will for their lives. I have said that several components are involved in this process. The first component is that God’s will always accords with Scripture rightly understood. God never leads any of His children contrary to what the Bible teaches.

The second element in discerning God’s will is closely related. It is simply that believers who want to know God’s will must be committed to doing God’s will. Submission precedes knowledge.

This principle should surprise no one. It follows the pattern established in the book of Proverbs. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (1:7). God refuses to answer those who call upon Him without first seeking Him; the fact that they do not fear the Lord shows that they really hate knowledge (1:28-29). The one who understands the fear of the Lord is the one who finds knowledge (2:5). This fear of the Lord involves hating pride, arrogance, and the evil way (8:13). It is the beginning of wisdom (9:10), and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. The fear of the Lord gives His people strong confidence and is a fountain of life (14:26-27). This fear precedes instruction in wisdom, just as humility precedes true honor (15:33). It leads people to depart from evil (16:6). It tends toward life, results in settled satisfaction, and spares one from calamity (19:23).

These and similar verses imply that God’s will is not known in the abstract. We do not have the privilege of placing God’s will under scrutiny or of sitting in judgment over it. We are not permitted to find out what God’s will

is so that we can subsequently make up our minds about doing it. God has no reason to help anyone discover His will who has no real interest in doing His will. God leads those who are willing to obey.

Who is willing to obey? Certainly not everyone who professes to be willing. While it may not be quite apposite, Jesus' parable of the two sons (Matt. 21:28-32) certainly teaches that not everyone who professes willingness really is willing. It also implies that not everyone who resists obedience is ultimately unwilling.

So how do we know whether we are really willing to obey God's will? The answer is clear in the parable. The one who is willing is not the one who professes obedience, but the one who actually obeys. Our willingness to do God's will becomes evident only by our actual obedience. We are willing to do God's will if and only if we are obeying God's will.

How can we obey God's will before He makes it known? The answer to this question is painfully simple. God has already disclosed His will, or most of it, in a clear and objective manner. The text of Scripture is written to make God's will known. At minimum, the teachings of the epistles apply directly to Church saints. While we may nuzzle at some points of interpretation and application, God has certainly made His will clear enough for any believer to follow.

Of course, the Bible does not give us direct, personal guidance for every possible decision. Still, professing that we want God's leading for unique circumstances while avoiding His revealed will in Scripture is merely pretending. If we are knowingly disobeying God's revealed will, then agonizing over His individual leading is flat hypocrisy.

Believe me, professing Christians play this game. When I was a pastor I once had a woman come to my study to ask whether God could lead her to marry a divorced man. I told her that Christians take different views of divorce and remarriage, and I tried to give her the categories for making a wise and biblical choice. She was quite upset with even the most relaxed understanding of the biblical text; she saw it as impossibly narrow. Later on I learned that she was already sleeping with someone else's husband, laying plans to destroy his marriage so that she could capture the man for herself. She never had any interest in doing God's will, even though she initially pretended to.

Granted, that is an extreme example—but it clarifies the point. God is only interested in leading those who want to do His will. We demonstrate our intention to do God's will by obeying that part of His will that we already know. The part that we know is revealed in the text of Scripture. If we refuse to obey what we know the Bible teaches, then all talk of doing God's will rings false.

On the other hand, habitual obedience actually clears up an amazing number of perplexities in the believer's life. If we are committed to doing God's will, and if we are actually obeying that part of His will that we already know (because it is revealed in Scripture), we do not worry about what we ought to do under most circumstances. We simply entrust our paths to the God who providentially oversees our lives. We do not agonize in prayer, for instance, before deciding whether to breakfast on Kellogg's Corn Flakes or Post Toasties.

The principle here is really rather simple. If you want to know God's will, then you must begin by doing God's will. Your obedience to what you already know is the outward exhibition of a heart that genuinely wishes to follow God's leading.



---

This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

---