

## WHAT DOES GOD WANT FROM ME?

1 Timothy 2:1-5

We are about halfway through the fall semester. After some tests, students find that the key to getting a good grade is often a matter of knowing what the professor is going to put on the exam. You may have been assigned a lot of pages to read and view certain videos, that information may or may not be on the exams. Often it is better to take good notes and memorize them, because what is most important to the professor is what he speaks in lecture. Greek houses help their members get through by having a collection of old tests that really help to focus on what may be on the exams. But you can't always be sure. What will the professor put on the test?

The same kind of question is asked by workers wanting to know what their bosses are really expecting from them or by contractors providing a service for someone. What do they really want? A greater dilemma can exist for a man who is trying to find the perfect gift for his wife. He may know something she could use, but what does she really want?

What does God want from our lives? What is His will with us? We think of people in the Bible who found that out. Moses was called by God in the burning bush to lead His people out of slavery in Egypt. David was anointed by God's prophet Samuel to be king. Mary was told by the angel Gabriel that she would give birth to God's promised Savior, Jesus. Peter and Andrew, James and John were called away from their fishing boats by Jesus to be His disciples. Paul was literally knocked out of his saddle by a blinding light and the voice of Jesus. He was then told he was to be Jesus' missionary to the Gentiles. But what about us? What is God's will for your life and my life?

You might think about me, "You are to be a pastor?" But God did not speak to me in a light from heaven as He did with Paul. It might be His will that I quit doing this next week. But it is more likely that as an old person I am pretty much set in my ways. What about some of you who are young, who are still at the crossroads wondering what to do with your lives, who can truly wonder, "What is God's will for me?"

Many people have found themselves going into all kinds of directions trying to find an answer to that question.

William Borden was born in 1887 as an heir to great wealth from his family in Chicago. At age 16 his parents took him on a trip around the world to give him a more cosmopolitan view of life. Instead, it opened his eyes to all the suffering in the world. He decided to enroll at Yale University to be trained to be a missionary. At Yale he organized a Bible study that grew into more groups until by the time he was a senior, 1,000 of the 1,300 students were in one of those groups. The groups were involved with outreach to the poor in New Haven, Connecticut

where Yale is. Borden graduated and trained to be a missionary in a remote part of China. On his way to China, he traveled through the Suez Canal and became sick. He died in Egypt of spinal meningitis.

So, what was God's will for William Borden—to die before he could even begin the mission work he felt called to do?

So, what is God's will? Paul clearly tells that to Timothy, "God, our Savior, wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." "Saved" often calls to mind that people will not go to hell. That is the intent when we are asked, "Are you saved?" But "saved" means a whole lot more than not going to hell. If it did then the main reason we would want to be "saved" is to save our own skins, and that is as selfish as you can get. "Saved" means being in a living relationship with God, so that we can be in a real living relationship with each other. "To come to the knowledge of the truth," is not some intellectual thing like you earn a university degree to get. No, it means to "know" God in Jesus. That "know" is best expressed by Jesus as the faith a child has. The child may not know as much about a parent as other adults do, but the child "knows" the parent better in terms of trust and love. God's will is that all people be His, as we were created to be.

So, what does that mean in your life, my life? It means that no matter what else happens in our lives, God wants us to be His. In Jesus Christ, He has given us forgiveness to take away the sin that separates us from Him. We may not know how things will play out from now until the time we die, but we know that we are God's, forever.

When we stand at the moments like deciding where to go to school, what major to have, what job offers to pursue, which person to marry, what job to transfer to, when to retire, what treatment to take for a disease, we probably won't know what is God's will for those decisions. But we do know that God will be with us to the end?

Two hundred and fifty years ago the American Revolution had started. The war went back and forth between defeats and victories for what would become the United States of America. I think of two decisions that were made during that war. One was the decision of a man named who was in charge of the defenses at Fort Stanwix in New York. At the same time another general named St. Clair was in charge of the defenses at Fort Ticonderoga. Gros decided to hold on to the fort. It began to look bleak for them until a larger American army scared away the British forces surrounding the fort. St. Clair, on the other hand, decided to abandon the fort. He was seen as a coward. Yet, though the fort fell with a lot of supplies, the men who escaped with him were later a part of the victory later that year at Saratoga where a British army surrendered. That victory caused France to get into the war, which was needed for the revolution to succeed.

We can never see how things will go on in our lives. Borden's death may have prevented him from going to China, but his legacy is still an inspiration to Christians.

In our Old Testament lesson, we heard about Ruth who was a Moabite, not an Israelite. Yet, she chose to remain with Naomi taking the risk of not being taken care of as a foreigner. She did this to be able to stay with Naomi and Naomi's God. She did not know how things would turn out. But she learned God's will that God wanted her to be a part of His people. In our Gospel lesson, the Samaritan man returned to give thanks to Jesus for healing him from his leprosy. We don't know how the rest of his life turned out. Even though he was no longer a leper, an outcast to society, he probably was a part of the typical peasant class who lived each day not knowing if he and his family would go to bed hungry or not. But he knew the will of God that even he, a Samaritan, was wanted by God through Jesus.

What does God want from me? He wants you and me. What is His will for my life? To be His along with everyone else. No, not everyone will because many chose not to be. But He wants you and me to be His, no matter what else happens!