



Finding the
WILL OF GOD
when the Bible is Silent

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FINDING THE WILL OF GOD WHEN THE BIBLE IS SILENT!

What do you do when there is no clear direction for life?

Dr. Denis V Smith



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A civil servant in a major nation in South East Asia has a friend who would also like to work for the Government. The civil servant has access to the tests that the Government uses to screen people who apply for jobs. So he “helps” his friend by giving him the answers.

A certain South American country assumes that most of its citizens will cheat on their taxes. So the Government raises taxes to excessive levels to gain the minimum funds it requires to function. Honest citizens can’t pay what the Government says they owe and still stay solvent. *What should the Christians do?*

In a West African nation, dozens of Government officials syphon off tax monies for personal use. Bribery is common. It is nearly impossible for citizens to obtain even basic services from the Government without first paying someone off. *What should the Christians do?*

In a Latin American country citizens accept “*la mordida*” – the bite – as a part of life. Most have paid bribes to avoid traffic tickets, to get Government documents or to speed up service from Government agencies.

What should the Christians do?

The United States, which prides itself on being a *Christian Nation*, is continually confronted by scandals in Government. A poll shows that Americans do not think it possible to have a Government free of corruption. And Wall Street investors are accused of illegally using inside information to make millions of dollars on the Stock Market.

What should the Christians investors do?

Is it possible to be honest and succeed in a world that is rife with dishonesty? Should we be concerned with being honest anyway?

Around 10,000 people packed a Chinese department store in the north eastern city of Changchun when the lights went out. Nothing was stolen! People holding goods when the blackout occurred, handed them back to staff members. Others lit candles or volunteered to help keep order. Bank notes totalling the equivalent of \$AUD100,000 was lying out in a bank vault in the store. But not one was taken. Store employees commented "*the store was blacked out, but the customers were a shining example of honesty*".

Are there answers to these dilemmas?

What do we do when the Sales person gives us more in change than we paid for the goods? I was in Myers store a number of years ago and the young sales assistant gave me change from \$100 when I had only given her a \$50 note. I realised this, after I had turned away and was putting my money into my wallet. I returned to her and attempted to explain the situation. She said I was wrong. I explained she would be \$50 short in the till that day if she didn't listen to me.

A supervisor saw our animated conversation as the assistant waved her arms around [she must have been Italian!] and came over. I explained the situation to her and we resolved the matter as I returned the money. Why didn't I say "*Praise the Lord – here is an answer to prayer?*" Why did I go back? The supervisor was so impressed with my honesty; she gave me about 50 reward tickets that you scratched to see if you won a prize. I put them in my pocket. "*Now God will reward me by my winning a refrigerator or a computer,*" I thought. I went home and eagerly scratched the tickets. And what did I win? You guessed it – nothing!

What do we do when the Coke machine operates like a poker machine and we hit the jackpot and get ten free cans?

What do we do when we are faced with these predicaments?

In the last few chapters of Romans, we will find Paul's answer to the many dilemmas that face us in the twentieth century.

The Bible speaks of...

- Precepts
- Principles
- Promises

Precepts and promises are fairly easy to define.

An example of a New Testament precept is...

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Honour your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that you may live long on the earth." And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." [Ephesians 6:1-4]

An example of a New Testament promise is...

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." [Matthew 6:33]

We will see examples of New Testament principles as we look at the last chapters of Romans.

It is important to note that when we are looking for answers, God is looking for commitment to His principles.

So, if you are serious about finding the will of God, then it is vital that you preface any search with a commitment to the will of God. This truth is echoed in the opening verses of chapter 12...

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." [Romans 12:1-3]

Therefore, having accepted that you really want to know something about the will of God, we can proceed. This is what Paul does...

He gives some fairly simple, yet effective advice in Romans 12:9-21:

“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil.

Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. “Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; If he thirsts, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

His instructions are simple and straight forward! It’s therefore easy to discern the will of God in matters of Christian conduct.

He is saying that our general conduct as a Christian will be different that those around us. People will be able to look at us and read our lifestyles. We will then be in a position to respond to their question, *“Why are you different?”*

- We will not be hypocrites
- We will turn away from that which is evil
- We will cling to what is good
- There will be a genuine concern of love as in honour, we give preference to one another
- We will be diligent
- Enthusiasm will be seen in everything we do, as if we were serving the Lord
- We will be happy people

- patient when trouble comes
- prayerful
- Generous and hospitable
- We will bless those who persecute us
- And be happy when someone else is happy and even share another's sadness
- We will not be wanting to get our own way - but
- living peaceful lives
- not avenging ourselves
- not angry people
- We will go the "second mile" with those who try and get us down
- Not being overcome by evil, but overcoming evil with good.

That's what we will be like!

That is clearly the will of God for our lives!

In the next chapter, he tells us the will of God in regard to **civil authority**.

What is the will of God in our attitude towards the Police? It plain and simple as we read Romans 13:1-5

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment upon themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority?"



Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake."

The will of God is clear...

God has set up the concepts of civil government. Now, His ideal is people living in the kingdom of God, obeying Him as King. He understands that not all will do so. Accordingly, He then sets up the concepts of government in order that society will not self-destruct.

Without government there would be anarchy! He reminds them that the Police are not a threat to the Christian, because the Christian will naturally obey the laws of the land because he/she is a member of a greater kingdom!

We do not steal because the laws of God's kingdom are clearly stated. We do not fear the consequences of being caught as our motivation – rather because we have a conscience to guide us according to the will of God.



What about **paying taxes**? What is the will of God?

Paul answers that in Romans 13:6-7

“For because of this you also pay taxes for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.”

Accordingly, we pay what taxes are rightfully levied upon us, within the statutes of the country and also declare what we bring into the country when we come through Customs.

When you land in a country, you must declare the goods you are bringing in. *“Do not cheat the system!”* the Word of God declares. The politician who, a few years ago tried to bring in electronic equipment ultimately lost his credibility and his job!

What is the will of God concerning **borrowing** and **paying our debts**? Paul said in Romans 13:8:



“Owe no man anything except to love one another, for he who loves has fulfilled the law.”

If you have entered into an agreement concerning borrowing, then you must honour that agreement. In other words, don't have unpaid bills.

When the time comes for the deadline – pay up – else you owe the person for the services!

What about **paying our tithes** and **giving to the Lord**?

I had completed my message, prayed and handed the service back to the pastor. Afterwards a rather agitated man in this small pioneer church in Queensland expressed his disappointment with me because I was teaching about the joys of giving to God.

I had also mentioned that in their giving, they should have a goal to financially support the pastor of this new work. I illustrated with biblical examples and challenged the congregation to believe the pastor might soon be free to minister within the congregation and to his community.

After he had gone through his arguments about tithing being *under the law* – and I informed him that tithing pre-dated the giving of the law – I asked him a question – *"How much do you give to the work of God in this church?"*

His reply told me everything I need to know. *"Nothing!"* I asked him if he felt he should be the authority on this subject.

God owns the 100 percent – not just the ten percent! Later I told the pastor of my encounter and how I had handled it.

He was thrilled, because this man had been negatively influencing some members of the congregation.

Apart from many biblical references, Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23-24:

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel."

Paul re-emphasises the power of God's love working out in our lives.

He says that we need not worry about checking our spiritual pulse by the Ten Commandments – **IF WE TRULY LOVE, WE KEEP ALL OF THEM!**

Paul said in Romans 13:9-11:

“For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of our sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”

He introduces a concept now concerning **“evil and darkness.”**

Whatever those things were, the Christians of that day clearly understood what Paul meant in Romans 13:12-14:

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

He speaks of

“The works of darkness,” – that which is opposed to light! It’s not difficult to define them!

“Let us put on the armour of light.” – A positive act of making a decision to be different and put on the lifestyle God has provided for us!

“Let us walk properly,” – He’s not talking about walking with your feet at the proper angle – he’s saying watch where you walk! If you know there’s quicksand up ahead, which has the potential to kill you, don’t walk into it!

“Not in revelry and drunkenness,” – Have a good time, enjoy life, but don’t become yahoos and be part of drunken parties!

“Not in licentiousness and lewdness,” – we live in a day of “R” rated movies and videos – this is what he was referring to in such a twenty-first century context. The words he uses speak of abandoned sensuality!

“Not in strife and envy.” – Brawling, fighting and “green-eyed” jealousy are not part of our walk!

To accomplish this lifestyle in the will of God, we must...

“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

This is a definite act of will, mind and purpose! It’s something we must do!

If someone comes to you and says, *“try it you’ll like it!”* you don’t have to bite at every bit of bait on the hooks of Satan.

“How will you know if it’s wrong, if you don’t try it?” the Tempter suggests!

“How can you reject something you haven’t tried?”

Now, if someone suggests to me that there is a great sensation awaiting me if I put my head inside a spinning concrete mixer full of brickie’s mortar, I’m not about to put my head in just to see if it’s true or not!

My brain tells me so!

I’m just not that stupid!

But, some people are just as gullible in the matters of

- drinking,
- smoking,
- pre-marital sex,
- pornography and a hundred other smutty things
- offered in today’s supermarket of options.

But now he moves into the **grey areas** where people had questions...

VEGETARIANS AND MEAT EATERS – Romans 14:1-4

“Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.”

Now, he is not just talking about vegetarians and meat eaters. He opens up the whole subject of the Jewish Christians having problems with eating some of the foods banned in the Old Testament lists. Meat from many animals was forbidden. What should a person do?

He introduces a concept of people being "*strong in the faith*" and "*weak in the faith*"

We need to understand that what we do influences others and we should be careful about our conduct before them. Jesus spoke words of condemnation to the person who offends a child – Woe to that person!



"Don't become judgmental about another's lifestyle!" That's his message!

I like the slogan which says, "Please be patient, God isn't finished with me yet! But don't use that as an excuse for immaturity when you've known Christ for years!"

WHICH DAY OF THE WEEK IS THE MOST IMPORTANT? – Romans 14:5-6

"One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks."

He uses a similar illustration here. Some of the Jewish believers had a fanatical commitment to certain days of their calendar and brought this over into their Christian walk.

They became as fanatical over that, as they had while observing the Jewish calendar.



Paul says, "*Give these new Christians time, they'll grow to maturity and then they will understand.*"

“NO MAN IS AN ISLAND!” – Romans 14:7-9

“For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end, Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.”

This is an important thing to note. People say, *“Well, I’m not hurting anyone other than myself!”* Wrong! We influence others by our lifestyle!



And woe to the person, who by his foul mouth, wicked ways and evil habits, who causes another to stumble in their faith!

I would not like to stand before God on the Day of Judgment and have the angels of God unroll the scrolls of my lifestyle and list the people I had offended by my walk.

Rather, I would like to have people come to me and shake me by the hand and say, *“Thank you, you caused me to walk closer to the Lord!”*

JUDGMENTAL ATTITUDES – Romans 14:10-12

He quickly removed hypocritical people from their ivory towers of judgment who set themselves up as the conscience of other people.

“But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: “As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”

The message is clear.

There is coming a day when you will give account for all your deeds in this life. Your attitudes and actions and manner of life will be questioned by the Lord.



To some, it may be “embarrassment city!”

STUMBLING BLOCKS OR STEPPING STONES? – Romans 14:13-23

“Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way. I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore, let us pursue the things which makes for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.”



Here is the simple answer – be a stepping stone and not a stumbling block!

By your lifestyle, assist people in their Christian walk – do not become stumbling blocks – snares or traps – in another’s way to cause them to fall.

THE STRONG AND THE WEAK! – Romans 15:1-7

"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on me." For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."

If you are "*strong in faith*" then do not use your strength to cause others to stumble.

Then, what do we do when we face situations and temptations in life?

Simple!

Don't think of yourself first – think of others!

That's a real key in discerning the will of God when the Bible is unclear!

Have these attitudes –

I will...

- Accept the weak; realising there can be different valid opinions!
- Not condemn others – God is judge!
- Be responsible for my lifestyle as a priority!

I will...

- Be considerate – not causing others to stumble either by my judgmental attitudes or sloppy lifestyle!
- Be loving and encouraging, knowing there is enough in this world that is out to tear us down rather than build us up!

I will put on the armour of light as I walk in this world of darkness!



It makes sense when you think about it really!

God's Word tells us so! The Church tells us so! Godly leaders tell us so!

Our conscience tells us so – you know!

There is an "inner voice" that warns you – God put it there. I know that we can condition our conscience, but it's there as the red light on the dashboards of our car, warning us that something is wrong!



A friend of mine called the red light an "idiot light!" He did this because he reckoned a person is an idiot to ignore its warnings.

Imagine, you are travelling at 100 km per hour and the "idiot light" flashes. What do you do?

You take out your chewing gum and stick it over the light! Right?

- You continue driving.
- You hear noises!
- You turn up the stereo so you can't hear the noises!

Then you smell smoke – what do you do? You turn up the air conditioner as well as wind down your windows!

Now, when your car self-destructs at top speed and you come back to the wreck after being ejected from the cockpit, what are you going to do?

Kick the idiot light?

The problem is not with the idiot light – it's been the loose nut behind the wheel!

That's why God gives us a conscience! If ever it's flashing "red" or even "amber", stop what you are doing and check out what's wrong.

Whatever you do, don't keep heading in the same direction! You might self-destruct and find yourself before the Throne of God – then, what are you going to say when He says, "*I warned you?*"

So there it is! I hope this has helped you a bit in discerning difficult dilemmas.

What lessons from this message can I apply to my life?

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