

2 Corinthians 8

Sunday 1/13/2013

I. The Heart of Ministry: Review of Principles

If you have your Bibles this morning, I want to invite you to turn back to where we started last week in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. I told you last week, and most of you know, that we have been coming through the book of 2 Corinthians because we are really focusing this year on teaching everybody the aspect of ministry. This includes not only ministering in your own family, but also ministering within our church here and getting people up and ready who truly want to help me deal with people who come in with their issues. We are really excited about that.

You remember last week when we started this chapter, I told you that this chapter, along with chapter 9, really deals with the heart aspect of the minister. I told you, if you remember last week, how God designed two chapters around this. I told you that the very issue of our attitude of heart is the key to ministry. We learned some great principles. I do not know how you do it, but when I go through a chapter in the Bible, I will many times list out the main points with the verses where I see them and how, and then that way I have a breakdown of it.

Last week we talked about the importance of some great principles we learned.

1. We talked about the importance of our attitude of heart, that everything you and I do, no matter what it is, is based on attitude of heart. Every relationship you ever build, every job you ever take, and certainly for serving the Lord, attitude of heart is everything.
2. We also saw that as a child of God, as you work and you get that attitude of heart, you develop God's heart. I showed you that two men in the New Testament who really understood it were John and Paul. We talked a little bit about how John actually heard the heartbeat of God, and how that translates for you and for me is through the Word of God as we hear God's heartbeat. God's heartbeat is for the souls of men and for winning people to Christ and to truly fulfill what God saved us for.
3. We also saw with that, that the heart of the ministry and the heart of the minister is giving to others. I know I am biased because of who you are and how proud I am of many of you, but this church has a great giving heart and aspect of helping others and doing what needs to be done, and I really appreciate that. It all goes back to all these principles that we are talking about.

We saw how it all starts with you giving yourself to God first, coming to that point in your life where you realize what God has done for you, then you give it back to Him. Yet I showed you last week how all of this, everything that we talked about, everything you are going to do in life, comes back down to man's free will: you choosing that you are going to do what you want to do for God or choosing not to do it.

We learned that grace is a multifaceted concept; it is not just about salvation. We learned that we grow in grace, and we learn in time as we grow in grace to, in ministry, use all the different aspects of grace in all that we do for God. I showed you a great verse in 1 Peter 4:10 that talks about that we are to be, not just have the grace, not just understand the grace, but the Bible says

that we are to be stewards of the manifold grace of God. We talked about that and all that it really gets into.

I think probably one of the most important things we talked about last week that really forms the balance in a Christian life is the concept of grace and truth. Grace being your ability to give to people, but truth being the ability to keep it all within the white lines and keep it all balanced in your life.

I think the greatest thing that I wanted to leave with you last week that we learned is that we all need to go away and understand that God wants something from us. He gave us the gift of salvation. The greatest gift that you or I or any Christian could ever give back to God is to give themselves to the Lord. You are going to find today we will talk about the second one, but next week the third one. This chapter is built around three great principles. I like when chapters in the Bible kind of define themselves out easily. Sometimes they will have two principles that they are divided around. Here it is three. Sometimes it is four or five, but it makes it easier for me to split up that chapter and see how it deals with.

In chapter 8, he deals with three great principles in the ministry of us being as ministers in our hearts to the Lord. Last week we looked at the first one: our attitude of heart in ministry and giving in the grace to this ministry. We learned that ministry is giving. We saw the great principle where at the church of Corinth the Bible says they gave themselves first and then they did what God wanted them to do. Today we are going to look at the second one. The second aspect will also be building on last week's, but this is one that is just as hard as the first one. I told you last week that there is nothing harder in a Christian's life than guarding this attitude of heart. The thing we are going to talk about today is certainly just as hard, but it is also just as important.

II. Understanding God's Will Versus Our Own

I want to talk to you today about the aspect of God's will in your life versus your own will in your life. I want to talk to you about understanding God's will. Most Christians do not even understand what the will of God is. They have no clue what God's will is for their life. Many times Christians, who I think are doing wonderful and helping me in doing this, will make an appointment and come over and say, "Bob, I do not even know. I am doing a lot of things, and they are good things, and I am not really doing anything bad, but I just do not know if I am really in God's will for my life." Those are great questions to ask. Those are questions that I want to answer today, so that when you leave here, if you pay attention, you will get the answers to those questions.

You have to remember, and I tell you this all the time in just about everything that we go through, life is about choices. We have a free will, as we talked about last week, to be able to choose what we do and what we do not do. This aspect of God's will in your life versus your own will in your life is a great study. We will talk about it today, and all the great verses that we need are here in this passage.

Now I want to begin reading today in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. Let us pick it up in verse 7 and we will come down here to the line in verse 14.

2 Corinthians 8:7-14

Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

Father, we do thank you and praise you, Father Lord Jesus. We love you. Thank you for the time that we have had today. Thank you for those that are here today. We pray now you will take this time and use it for your honor and glory. We love you. We thank you for the Word of God that you have given us and for the men and women who want to dedicate their life to helping others and doing what God has saved them for. Lord, we just thank you as we look forward to this next year with all that we are going to do, with all that you have given us and the task laid before us. We are just excited about the fact that we can do something and that you are going to train people and give them what they need. Bless us now today and thank you for the visitors here. We pray that they will be blessed by what is said and we will love you and thank you and praise you in Jesus' name for a sake we ask it. Amen.

What he is saying down here in verse 11, 12, 13, and 14, it kind of looks like it is a little confusing, and I want you to be able to put a note in along this. Here is what he is saying. This is certainly not our message today, but I like to explain it as we go. What happened was that this church at Corinth had started a year ago to take up and get this offering ready for the poor saints of Jerusalem. Then things got really bad and they quit doing it. Then when Paul wrote them after 1 Corinthians, they started to pick it up again. What he is saying down here in these last couple of verses about the equality or putting all the balance together, he is simply saying, "Look, I do not want one person to be burdened more than another. I mean, you started it and then you could not finish it, and now you got right with God and now you are going to finish it. That is great. I want to air all the Christians, whoever are trying to help this from all the different churches. I do not want the burden to fall on one person." He says what you were willing to do a year ago, now

you are going to perform the performance. You are going to bring it about. That is really what he is talking about here as he lays this thing out, just so you have an understanding of that chapter.

III. The Grace of Christ: The Model for Ministry

Before I jump into the second issue today about God's will, there is another great principle here and a great verse that I want to draw your attention to. Certainly this is a verse that every child of God should memorize in your heart. It is certainly one of the greatest verses in the Bible. It says in 2 Corinthians chapter 8, if you do not have this on a three by five card or you do not have this memorized or it is not marked in your Bible, you want to mark it today.

2 Corinthians 8:9

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

I think with all that we are talking about, with every aspect of the ministry, attitude of heart, willingness to do, giving of your own self first, all of those things, this verse is really the verse that says everything that we are trying to convey and talk to you: knowing the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the grace that God gave us.

Grace in this great verse is simply the fact that God had all the riches of the universe. He was the aristocracy of heaven. He had everything that God could give anybody. Yet when you look at it in that great verse, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." In other words, you know what He had, though He was rich, He had everything. We talk about He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. I have news for you, He owns the hills. He owns everything. Everything that God created was put at His feet. Everything. There was nothing that He did not have dominance over. There was nothing that He did not have. Yet the Bible says, "although he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor."

The greatest concept of ministry that will drive you to serve God, if you are drivable, the greatest aspect that if God is ever going to get a hold of your heart, that you are going to do something for Him, get you to that point where you choose through your own free will based on what God has done for you, the only thing that will ever turn that lock of your heart is the fact that you realize that He had it all and yet He gave it all up. He gave everything up that He had because He saw that your need and my need was greater than everything that He had.

If you ever fathom that concept, if you ever allow that to penetrate your heart, get into your mind and get into your very soul, the very fact that God who owned everything, that He was the richest of glory, He had everything there was. But when He looked down through eternity, He saw you and He saw me, and He saw that our need, what we needed, was greater than everything that He had, and He was willing to put it aside for you and for me. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," and that is exactly one of the great concepts and really that is the model of ministry right here in this church, the church at Corinth.

Giving up, it is the aspect of every aspect of ministry, giving up all that you and I have and all that you and I are because somebody else's need is greater than what we want to do with our

lives. You follow that same model that Christ did when He had everything and He saw you and me and our need, and He was willing to give up everything that He had simply because my need, your need, He esteemed greater than all that He had. That is the key to ministry in all that you have and all that God has given you and all your abilities and all the things that you fancy in this world and this life. You look beyond that and you see down the road men and women, young men and young ladies, people whose need is greater than what we have, and we are willing to put aside and put that aside and to become and do what God wants us.

IV. American Christianity and Deep Poverty

This is the greatest single principle I think from which everything hinges on, and that is what the church at Corinth had done. They were a very poor church to begin with. Verse 2 says that they are giving out of their deep poverty, not just poverty, deep poverty. They do not have anything themselves. It is an incredible study. They are in deep poverty yet they gave to other Christians. I know in America it is hard for American Christians. It is hard for me. American Christianity has no concept of that kind of giving of yourself.

American Christianity, I am not kidding you, Americans in general, they are self-centered, they are self-serving, and their life is about self-gratification. They only want what they want the way they want it, and the concept of giving to others when you have nothing yourself is hard to grasp. Yet this church here at Corinth, who had nothing, who were in deep poverty, yet they saw the church in Jerusalem and they counted their needs greater than their needs.

In American Christianity, I do not speak a lot about it, but we are in the chapter so we have to deal with it. American Christianity basically does four things or four attitudes about their giving.

4. American Christians who give, they usually give out of their abundance. They do not give out of their abundance. Many of God's people just give themselves or whatever their finances out of what is left over. You get everything you want first and then if there is anything left, God gets it.
5. There are a lot of God's people that do things, give things, begrudgingly out of necessity, the Bible says. They have a bad attitude about it, and they are just, they give, but they will give, they will do this, they will do that, they will do this, they will give this, but they are always complaining about it.
6. Then you have some who get God's salvation, take all that God has got, and they never give anything back.

You see this church, the church at Corinth, they recognized the grace of God. They had recognized what God had given up to them, and what you are seeing now is their reproducing that in their own aspect of giving of themselves first, and you are seeing it work all the way through. That is the model. That is the model. The Bible says they were in deep poverty yet they counted the saints at Jerusalem worse off than themselves, and I say that because we as Americans, we do not understand deep poverty, not yet anyhow. I do not mean that there are not people who go through some tough times. There certainly are, but even in that, it is safe to say that 98% of the time people get into the tough times they get into because they do not do what is

right with what they have to begin with. To find people who really love God and serve God and yet are in deep poverty and yet they continue to function without that poverty being a hindrance is a rare thing to find today. It really is, and American Christians just cannot ever get to that.

I remember when I was in Romania, and this was back in probably right after the wall came down and communism had pretty much dissipated. For almost two years I had teams of 20 people flying, crossing in the air, going into the former Soviet bloc country, discipling churches, working with them, helping them. I will never forget one time I was in Romania, and Romania at that particular point in time was just destitute. I remember going down and standing and watching people stand in line in a grocery store that was about half the size of this room, and people had begun to line up at four o'clock in the morning just to get some bread, and they ran out of bread 15 minutes in, and hardly nobody got anything. So I went into the store, shelves were bare, all that was on there was a couple of canned bottles or something that I would not have touched if you had paid me the New York lottery for. It was destitute.

I was staying with a Christian family, and they were one of the sweetest families I ever met, and that is why I talk about it is so important sometimes to get to see other cultures and what they go through. These people had nothing. They had no indoor plumbing. They had a bathtub, but water was so limited that they decided on their own that because I was an American and I was a guest and they were so happy to have me, and I never have felt more humbled and never have felt more worthless than being in that scenario. They had nothing. I had everything, and yet I was envying what they did not have and languishing in what I did have. I watched a couple, a young family, that would not take a bath for a week because water was so rationed, and they wanted to save it for me. They had no food. There was no grocery store. They grew their food. They slaughtered whatever animals they had. They killed only one of three chickens that they had to provide a meal, and yet when we sat down to eat, it bothered me so much, but yet what do you do? There is a time when you have to accept something like that even though you do not want to do it. They would have dinner. They would have some vegetables and a chicken and this or that. They would do everything they could because I was a guest in their home, but then they would sit back and not eat till I ate to make sure that I got to eat. What do you do with that? You do not want to rob them of the blessing because you know that this is real Christianity, but it is absolutely the most humbling thing I ever went to.

The verse talks about in verse 8 about proving the sincerity of our love, and that couple in Romania, they gave out of their deep poverty. They gave out of their deep poverty. Barkley Fonestok was a missionary to Ethiopia. I have not talked to Barkley for 20 some years, but he was in Ethiopia when it was communist, and he went through some very tough times in Ethiopia. It was one of the poorest countries on the planet at that particular point in time. He was telling me the story how they got a little church together and a group of people, and they did not have a place to meet, and the people were so poor. He came back and told the story. I remember him telling the story in front of 2,500 people. It never touched or moved anybody when he told this story. Now that they wanted to, and he was a guy who had seen it, the deep poverty, coming back to an American Christianity in a church with an \$80,000 sound system and a pastor driving a Ford Lincoln and everything out there, and he is trying to relate to God's people what deep

poverty is. He talked about how the fact that they wanted to build a church building. They got the 20 or 30 or 40 people together, and they wanted to take up an offering, and he said they loved God, they wanted a church so bad, but nobody had anything. He said that they were actually, husband and wife, putting in their wedding rings in their offerings so they could sell them and build a church. He said but the all-crowning thing that broke my heart, he says one lady, one lady, sold herself into slavery and took the money from that and gave it to build the church. American Christianity has no concept of that. American Christianity, and that is why we are the way we are and so indifferent to the things of God.

I was in Korea a number of years ago with a missionary there, and we got off the plane and we drove in a bus over mountainous country for eight or nine hours to get to this little place, and it was another church that was with us at that particular point in time, both 40 people. We were going to try to help however we could. I will never forget, we drove all night long, got off the bus about 10 o'clock in the morning, everybody was tired, and my people were on one bus and this other guy with his people on the other bus. I got my people rallied up and I said, "You know what, I told you to sleep on the bus, we got to hit the ground running." And this other group over here, I never liked going to other groups because I can train my people, I cannot be responsible for somebody else. But they looked across the field and here was a dad plowing the field with his son hooked up to the plow. Immediately the American tourists got their cameras out and started taking pictures. Some of them thought it was funny, some of them laughed. They thought it was the most hilarious thing in the world until the missionary told them that the church had suffered a devastating fire and they were trying to rebuild it and had no money. That dad and that boy took the only ox that they had and sold it and gave the money to refurbish that church, but the plowing still had to get done. Prove the sincerity of your love. I am just telling you, this is where American Christianity is. That is called giving out of deep poverty, and that is what American Christians know nothing about.

I hear God's people all the time, I mean I hear it all the time, talking about the fact, and I do not ask them, I guess they are just justifying their conscience. "Well, we talk about offering, we talk about this," and they always say, "Well, we cannot afford to tithe, we cannot afford to give anything." We gripe about it or they just simply say, "Hey, look, we cannot do it." Yet if you would go to their home, there is not a home that I have not went to that does not at least have one car in the garage, usually two. You walk inside the house, there is flat screen TV, there is plasma TVs, there is two or three TVs in every room, they have DVD players in every one of them, they have decent furniture, everybody has their own bed, three meals a day, they have microwaves, they have an oven, they all have cell phones, they have iPods, computers or smart phones, they have decent homes, they all get to take a vacation every year, they wear decent clothes, they all have more shoes than dealers do, they have guns, they have boats, they have cable TV, they have internet, they have dishwashers, they have refrigerators, they have washers and dryers. Man, we are almost destitute, are we not?

I hope at the judgment seat of Christ that God grants all of us the chance and the honor in line to go up to stand between a little Romanian couple, a little Ethiopian girl, and a little Korean guy to prove the sincerity of your love. I want to tell you, 2 Corinthians 8:9 is a great verse to

memorize. It is the source and the basis for everything that you and I are going to do, understanding that God who had everything gave up everything because your need and my need was greater than what He had. When you get to that point in your life, you will not laugh about restart and think it is stupid. That is American Christians for you. When you get to that point you will see the need for everybody to get involved to make sure our kids get a camp this year that is going to put them over the top and give them like little Gavin did. When you start to see and understand those things it does not matter.

V. God's Will vs. God's Plan

Now verse 9, as I gave, is a great verse and a great principle. But today I want to, that was a bonus, I just could not pass that verse up. But I want to talk to you about God's will in your life over your will in your life, and it really all goes back, and that was a great introduction to it. But the verse we are going to talk about today is verse 12. This verse is our verse that we are going to lay out today, and I think it will help you.

2 Corinthians 8:12

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

Verse 11 says that this church had a readiness to will. In other words, their will was ready to turn it over to God. They were ready to will. The Bible says as far as a ministry of giving to others, you first have to have a willing mind. Then he says if you do, well, let us go on. It is a tremendous principle. He is saying if man is willing, a willing mind to do what God asked of him, he is accepted on that basis. What that man has or what that man does not have never comes into question. In other words, whatever God calls you to do, if you have the grace and the faith and are willing to do it, He will supply you, call you, and give you all you need to accomplish it. That is the principle. That is what he is saying. He is saying it is not about what you have or what you do not have. Here is a church that had nothing. It goes back to not what you do or what it goes back to your free conscious choice of, "Are you willing to do with your life what God has called you to do?" Very frankly, most of God's people are not.

Man's will is an incredible thing. The human will is an incredible thing. I was watching last week the story of Gabby Giffords, the senator who was shot in the brain out there and wherever she was, and the remarkable recovery she made. I can say, and I do not even know her, I just saw the story, read a lot of things about her, but I can tell you just by her husband and by their relationship and the kind of person she is, the doctors did a great job, but I want to tell you what got her through was that little gal's will, the will to survive.

I read a story, I cannot think of his name right now, I read a story about the guy who climbed Mount Everest. Now keep in mind Mount Everest is something like five miles high, and if you start going up, you get 10,000 feet, you get low in oxygen, and you get some problems. He climbed the whole Mount Everest up and back without any oxygen. Incredible. That shows you the depth of man's will, what he can do when he puts his mind to it.

I think the greatest picture story of man's survival and his will to survive, I first bumped into it when I was 12 years old. We got a Life magazine, and on the front of it was a picture of some draped bodies in flags in a little circle in the desert, and over the caption of Life magazine it simply said, "The Lady Be Good." I read that article, and I have never forgotten it. I bought every book on it I could find. I did every study on it I could find. To me it goes down in military history as the greatest survival story and the greatest declaration of man's will.

Back in 1943, a B-24 that flew out of Benghazi to apply a mission against Naples, Italy, was called "The Lady Be Good." On the way they got cloud covered, they dropped their bombs into the Mediterranean, they did not hit it, and they were flying back. What happened was that the navigator missed a checkpoint, and they thought that they were flying out into the ocean and were lost, when in actuality they had flown right over their base. They were not over water at all. They were over the Libyan desert some 300 miles off course. It was nighttime. They could not tell anything. They are thinking they are over water. They cannot get anybody on their radio. The radio beacon is saying they are flying to it, and they are thinking they are following that going to it, but in actuality they had flown over it, and the beacon that they shot they got was after they had passed it, and they crashed in the Libyan desert. They all bailed out. They thought they were over water. They hit the desert, and they realized they made a terrible mistake. The plane just kind of feathered its way on down and came down and crashed about a half a mile where they were.

For 17 years, 17 years, "The Lady Be Good" was missed as missing in action, and nobody ever knew what happened to them. Around 1958, 1959, somewhere in there, 17 or 18 years after the fact, a petroleum group was over in the desert looking for oil, and they came across this B-24 that had landed in the desert, and it looked like it had just landed there, and it was a great mystery. No crew was found around it. They knew they bailed out. The parachutes were gone. It was almost like the plane was preserved. The radio still worked. The machine guns still fired. There was still coffee and sandwiches in the bays where they kept it, and it was one of the greatest mysteries that the Air Force had ever found.

That same petroleum crew, as they were looking for oil, found about 70 miles away a little camp of four or five bodies. They called the Army back in. They came over. They recognized them as the crew from this plane. They were missing three or four guys. They were not all there. Later on they found one guy's parachute did not open, and they found him about a quarter of a mile from the plane. But they found the log and the diaries of the captain. His name was Robert Toner. He began to read through there what happened and put it all together. They crashed in that Libyan desert. For eight days, for eight days, they traveled over 120 miles on only a half a canteen of water for eight guys. They traveled over there trying to get where they were going, and they all, it was freezing at night. It was 130 degrees during the day. They wrote in the most pitiful entries you ever saw that got close to the end, how they are all praying. They all could not go any farther, and two or three guys went on to try to get help, and they had to stay there, and that is where they died. Later on, about two years later, that same British petroleum group found the other two guys. And then after that, a group found the last guy. It goes down in the annals of military history as the greatest testament to man's will, that they were not going to give in to the

circumstances, that they traveled over 100 miles on a half a canteen of water for eight people with no food, that they survived the freezing nights and 100 blazing plus temperatures. But in time, they all died. Man's will is a very powerful thing. If you have some time on a rainy afternoon, Google "Lady Be Good." It is an incredible story of what it is all about.

Man's will is an incredible thing. In this verse here, he is saying, that is the problem. Man's will, he holds on to it over God's will. When God saved you, when God saved you, when it talks about giving of your own self first, that is what it means. It means you surrendering your will to God's will. It means you giving God what you want to keep for yourself. The verse down here says, "For if there first be a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." What you have or what you do not have never comes into question. God does not care if you are in deep poverty. God does not care if you are a multi-millionaire. What God wants is your will to give into Him to accomplish His will. It does not matter what you have.

The greatest example of that is Moses back in the Old Testament. Moses is a great example. God wanted to call him out and use him as a great tool to bring the nation of Israel out of Egypt. But Moses always was alibiing, just like so many of God's people. He says, "I cannot do it." He keeps telling Him over and over again, "What am I going to say to Pharaoh? What am I going to do? What am I going to tell him?" He basically says what so many of God's people say. He says, "God, I do not know if I am able to do what you want me to do." God looked down and said, "Moses, I was not asking you to be able." I was asking you to be willing, because Moses, if you are willing, I will be able." He was, was he not? Most of God's people are not willing to give God their will. Yet I will be honest with you, you know this is true. It is true of everybody in this room, including me. The greatest battle we have faced in our life after we are saved is that simple battle: Are you going to keep everything you have and God has given you to yourself and run it through your will? Or are you going to give it to Him and His will? That is the battle. It shows that there is a battle going on.

Somebody said one time, according to our will over God's will, a great little truth. They said that in life, there comes a place where God's will will run one way and our will will run opposite the other way. He says, "Where they cross, where God's will and your will crosses, where they cross, that is where you stop and remember what God did for you, where your will and His will come to a cross because it was on that cross that He gave up what He had because your and my need was greater. It is at that cross is where our will should stop and God's will should begin." "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now let me explain something else here. This is a very confusing thing to most people. God's will is never you or me doing anything. There are two aspects of this aspect of the will of God, will of man in ministry. People never can seem to get them straight. God has a will for your life and God has a plan for your life. They are a lot like the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. We have talked about that New Year's Eve, and we have talked about it many, many times. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are different but they are connected. The will of God for your life and the plan of God for your life are different but they are connected.

Much like the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, one is spiritual and one is physical. Just like the will of God and a plan of God, one is physical, one is spiritual.

God's will for your life, He has for everybody in this room, and it is absolutely the same. God's will for you in here if you are a saved person this morning is exactly the same as it is for the person sitting next to you this morning. I hear people all the time get up, and I am a key guy on exactness in the Bible. I think things ought to be exact when you talk about the Bible. I think because it lends confusion, and I know it is true because of what I am going to say. I do not know how many times I have heard a young Christian, a missionary, a preacher get up and start to give his testimony or talk about the work, and they talk about the fact that, "Well, God's will for my life is to be a missionary. God's will for my life is to be a pastor." The moment they start talking that way, they may be the greatest guy in the world and God may be using them, but I am going to tell you right now, when they start talking that way, it tells me they do not understand the difference between God's will and God's plan.

God's will for your life is the same as everybody in this room. God's plan for your life is different from everybody in this room. God's will for your life is something that is spiritual. God's plan for your life is what God is going to have you do. God's will for your life is the same for everybody in this room. God's will for you after you get saved is that you become more like Jesus Christ every day of your life. That is God's will for your life. God's will is not for you to be a missionary, not for you to be a pastor. God's will for you once you get saved is that every day of your life you die to self, you get more like Him, you yield yourself to Him, and you make sure that the will in your life spiritually is what God is in your life changing you to be more like Christ.

God's plan for your life is the physical side of it, what God wants to do with you. It may be God's plan that you are a missionary. It may be God's plan that I am a pastor. God's plan will be different for everybody in this room, but God's will will be the same. The only way you ever understand and fulfill God's plan is to first fulfill God's will. God's plan overall is what God has planned for you to accomplish in your life for you to do. God's will is your willingness to accept it over your own will because of your recognized the grace and what He gave up and what He did for you.

It is very clear when you come through the Gospels and you see the model of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said in John 4:34:

John 4:34

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

He had one goal, and that was He came to do the will of His Father. After He saves you and gives up everything for you, it has to be your will and my will that we give up everything to finish the work for the Father. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

Now somebody says, "How do I know God's will for my life? How do I know what God's will is? How do I know I am in God's will?" It is real simple. When you make God's will number one

in your life and you become more like Him every day of your life, you will never, never, never, never have to worry about, "Am I fulfilling God's plan or not?" You see, they are different but they are connected. You cannot under any circumstances, no way on this planet, do God's will in your life and miss God's plan in your life. What happens is people, they worry about doing something for God instead of first being something for God, and that will end in disaster every time because that is not the way God does it. The problem is that God's people just, they do not know the difference. Just as I have told you a hundred, a thousand times that understanding the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven is the key to figuring out the Bible, understanding the difference between God's plan for your life and God's will for your life is the key to your relationship with God and fulfilling the ministry that God saved you for.

The problem always comes down to one thing: our will. "Oh, I am glad you saved me, God, but I am going to do what I want to do." "Oh God, I am sure glad you saved me. That is alright for you to give up everything for me, but I am keeping everything I got." The truest statement I ever heard was a quote by Bob Jones Sr. that he quoted back in the 20s. He said that the mark of a successful Christian is not one that never fails. The mark of a successful Christian is not a man who never falls in life. The mark of a successful Christian is not a man who does not ever make any mistakes. He says because we all fail, we all fall, we all make mistakes. He says the mark of a successful child of God is simply a man or a woman who finds out what God wants him to do with his life and then spends the rest of his life doing it.

In life we define things on such a narrow spectrum. You have to look at it on a broader scale. We all struggle. We all make mistakes. None of us are perfect, and it is hard to clobber one person for making a mistake when we make our own. But on a broader scale, that is not the mark of a successful Christian. It is simply a man or a woman or a mom and a dad or some of you young men and young ladies who simply put your will aside, find out what God saved you for, and then give Him the rest of your life putting His will in your life instead of yours. When you do that, or I should say you only do that by putting together what we talked about last week, the concepts of grace and truth, the concept of giving of your own self first, the concept of understanding God's will for your life and then fulfilling God's plan for your life.

VI. Consecration: The Willing Mind

Verse 11 said, "but it takes a readiness to will." Verse 8 says it takes "proving of the sincerity of your love." Verse 12 says it takes "a willing mind." In the Christian life there is a word that you do not find much anymore. All the new modern Christianity has done away with them. Most Baptist churches at one time stood in the Word of God and preached the Word of God. They have all went either charismatic or neo-evangelical, and they have lost all the principles, all the mooring posts I called them that we would anchor ourself to. You do not hear any messages on this anymore. You do not hear preachers talking about it anymore. You do not even hear God's people talking anymore. It is a lost word in Christianity, but it is the key word in all that we are talking about, and it is simply the word consecration.

The model for that word is found in the book of Leviticus in the Old Testament because it is in the book of Leviticus that you find the consecration of the Old Testament priests. If you know

the New Testament application, you and I are priests after the order of Melchizedek. Now you take the book of Leviticus and you break it down, you will find there are two aspects.

7. Chapter 1 through chapter 10 talks about the only way we are going to get to God is through sacrifice. That is the only way we are going to get to God. There has to come a time in your life that if you are ever going to get favored with God or get to God, chapters 1 through chapter 10 tells you that the only way you are going to get to God is through sacrifice.
8. Then chapter 11 through 27 says the great theme: the only way you are going to walk with God is through consecration.

In those chapters he talks about all the aspects of how the priests were consecrated. I know it is Old Testament priesthood, I understand that. I know it is old stuff back there, but I am telling you, and I have told you many, many times, everything literal back there was a picture of something spiritual. It is the book on consecration. If you want to learn what consecration is, go back and study how the Old Testament priests were consecrated, what it meant, get the types down, and then apply it to your own life.

I will give you an example. Years ago when I first started reading the Bible, I was coming through here and I remember coming through Leviticus and I read some of this stuff and I thought it is the goofiest stuff in the world. I do not understand it. But I can say after 35 plus years in the book and going through some things in life, I understand a little better now. He goes over there in chapter 8 verse 24 and he is talking about the consecration of the priest. He talks about it, he takes that sacrifice and he takes that blood and he tells you that during that passage that he takes that blood and he says he puts blood on the right tip of the ear, he puts blood on the right thumb, and he puts blood on the right big toe.

Somebody said, "What is that all about?" It shows you a picture of consecration. It is a picture of what it is. You have the blood on the right ear because that will affect what you hear and what you think so you are covered under the blood. You have it on the right thumb because right hand of God, right side of the Bible is always the right side with God. He puts it on the right thumb because that represents your hands, what you are going to do for God, covered by the blood. Then he puts it on the big toe, and a big toe is a great study in the Bible. I do not know if you know that or not. But he puts the blood on the big right toe because the big right toe, maybe you have one now, but if you lose one, you are completely out of balance. It is that big right toe or big toe that keeps you in balance. You take it off, you are out of balance. You cannot walk. If you lose your thumb, you cannot do hardly anything.

Back in the Old Testament in Judges chapter 1, remember that guy back there? I cannot remember his name, but they finally caught up, and you know what they did? They cut off both of his thumbs and they cut off both of his great toes. That is what they did to him. Now most people do not understand why they did that because the Bible principle is very clear. You cannot do anything in life without your thumbs and your big toes. I do not know. Check it out when you go home. Check your dog. You have a guinea pig? Check your guinea pig. You have horses? Check your horses. You have cows? Check your cows. The only being that has five toes are humans. Animals have four.

Now back in Judges chapter 1, the reason why they cut off his thumb and his big toes because that was humiliating to him, and the rest of his life it made him like an animal. But the principle goes beyond that. The principle that goes beyond that in the picture here is that those things represent what we do for God. Your right ear represents what you hear and what you allow to go in, which is going to affect the way you think. So being consecrated, you want to have your ear covered by the blood of what you hear because what you hear and what you think will affect what you do with your hands, so you want to make sure that the hand, the big thumb, is covered by the blood with what you do with your hands. In the big toe, whatever you think, whatever you do is where you are going to go. Totally consecrated from head to toe. That is the picture. The Christian life should be totally consecrated to the will of God and to fulfill the plan of God.

The verse for our consecration in the New Testament is the verse we have right here in verse 12. This is it.

2 Corinthians 8:12

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

If at any point in your life as a Christian, you want to find out if you are really in God's will, verse 12 is where you check your oil level. It is the dipstick for Christianity. There are certainly some dipsticks in Christianity. If you want to ever find out if you are in God's will or you are not, it does not take a theological degree. It does not take a color chart. It takes verse 12. Just ask yourself, "Are you willing to go? Are you willing to do? Are you willing to be whatever God wants of you, no matter what you have to give up?" That is what it is. That is the test. You can give it to yourself in 30 seconds or less and know exactly where you are at.

Now you need to know this too. Sometimes God will test you with a certain thing just to see if you are really willing and then He will pull it back. The model of that is Abraham in Genesis chapter 22. God wanted to see if he was willing to offer up his own son as a sacrifice. He let that man get all the wood, get all the fire, get it to the right place. He let that man think about it for three or four days. He gave that man a knife, and just before the final second, before he plunged that knife into that kid, He pulled his hand back and said, "Stop." Sometimes God will do that. As long as the child of God is flexible enough in his life to go and to do whatever God wants him to do, you are in the will of God because that is exactly what Christ did. That is the model. He had everything and yet He gave it up because your need and my need was greater than all that He had.

It is not complicated. Many times God's people get mad at God. They get bitter at God. They get mad at other people. No sickness or death or maybe some hard time or something does not go the way they want it to go in their life. Those are the places in your life and my life where you have to be very careful, my dear friend, because we get so focused on what our personal assault was as we perceive it. We get so upset about it did not go the way I wanted it to go. We get so upset sometimes and mad at God or this person or that or even me because He did not deal with it the way I would have liked the word to be dealt with. Well, just put this down and remember it. The Lord may be trying you to see if you are willing to take a bigger load for Him, and if you cannot

handle the load He has brought your life right now, you will cancel out what is coming down the line. Taking a bad, hurtful, tragic circumstance of life to test your mettle to see what you are made of. But American Christians have a tough time with that too.

When I talk about being flexible, when I talk about being adaptable or pliable, I am talking about you being ready to yield at any time to God your own self and your will over His will. I am talking about you looking at what comes in your life that you may not like, that may not work for you, that may not be the way you want it, and begin to realize that this may be God trying to see if I have got the stuff to go to the next level. God's people never look at it that way.

VII. Jacob's Will: A Picture of Our Struggle

The greatest example that I know of of man's will against God's will in the Bible is a study found back in Genesis chapter 32. I think it is the greatest example anywhere in the Word of God in Genesis on the life of Jacob. I want to read very quickly for you here. I will pick it up in verse 24. It is a very personal passage to me.

Genesis 32:24-32

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

In my Bible, if you would ever look at it in Genesis chapter 32, right down around verse 24, I have one little simple note. It is a note that it means a lot to me because I understand this passage very well. I just have one little note there before I start putting all the other notes in. It just simply says, "The day God gets you alone."

This picture here, this great wrestling match with the Lord, what this is is a picture of God wanting to do something with Jacob. God wanted to accomplish something with Jacob. We know from New Year's Eve, the line of coming up through the Bible, and I broke it down and we got to Jacob, from Jacob comes the 12 tribes. We know that Jacob is a necessary part of the equation of God's plan, that from Jacob is going to come 12 boys that are going to come to 12 tribes, and then down the line are going to come the Lord Jesus Christ. He is crucial in this. Yet here we are, Jacob, who is crucial in the plan of God, so stupid and inept of understanding that God had something for him. He will not give up his will so God can endorse His will in his life. He reminds me of so many of God's people today that wrestle with God all the time, and they just do not want to give up. The reality of this story is what God had for Jacob, what He must have for you, and what He had for me. This battle is over Jacob's will, over what God wanted to do with him. God wanted to change his name, bring the 12 tribes from him.

You know why? Because the name Jacob will never work. The name Jacob means "schemer." The name Jacob means "supplanter." Jacob was a conniving, a crook who tried to manipulate every circumstance in life. He wanted what he wanted over what God wanted, and you cannot be a Jacob and do God's will in your life. God had to change his name. This is not a picture of Jacob's battle over the surrendering of his will. It is a picture of our struggle, you and me, in keeping our own will and a creed of breaking Jacob's own will as he came down through there and getting to the place where God could do him.

Jacob had to first of all understand God. God really breaking our will is no different than a parent breaking the will of your little child when it is growing up. I tell you in parenting all the time, the thing that you have, every kid is different. You have some kids that grow up and they are no problem at all. You have other kids that grow up and they have their own will, and your job as a parent is to break that will but not damage that will, and you have got to find a way to do that, and the Bible tells you how to do that. You will find it in your children, and the way that God will break your will is the way that you break their will. I have two dogs, you can see their will. If you have animals, you see it in them. Why do you think they call them "mule stubborn"? He has got his own will. I tell my dog not to do that. He looks at me. He knows exactly what I am telling him. First time I am not looking, he is doing it again. He wants to exercise his will over my will. You know what you do? You break him in that, you beat the fire out of him. You know how you fix it in your kids? It is not called time out. It is called time down.

The process to breaking our will is so clear here, and you will need this in the people ministry to understand what I am about to say. I know we will go through it in great detail when we get to that point, but you need to understand the process in breaking the will. I want you to know this so that when God does it to you, you understand what is happening. Of course, if you are not saved, He will not do it to you, and you do not have to worry about it.

9. The first thing he did, found in verse 24, God got him alone. There has to come a time in your life, the only way you will listen to God is if God takes everything from you. That was Jacob's deal. Jacob was so busy doing his thing, wanting to exercise his will over God's will, he was not even listening to God. So, God had to get him alone. We are the same way, and sometimes God just has to take everything from us. God has to put us on our back. God has

to put us down. God has to take everything that we thought was wonderful away from us, and that is the only time He will get our attention and we will listen to Him. So the first part of that process is God gets him alone.

10. The second part is found in verse 25, God touched his thigh and it went out of joint. I do not know if you know it or not, but Jacob limped the rest of his life. You know why sometimes God puts terrible things in our life and things in our life that are struggles to go through that bear marks and scars the rest of your life? So you will remember. Painful experiences we tend to remember. The rest of his life he hobbled, he limped. It made such an impact on the Jews, to this day they will not eat that part of the meat. An honest Christian that looks back at his life who understands what I am talking about will thank God for every painful experience you ever had because in reality it is probably what got you where you are at today. God reaches down and touches his thigh and it goes out of joint, and it is terribly painful, and God sometimes puts painful things in our life because one, we will not listen, He knows we are always going to go back to our own will, and when we start to take that step that direction, you remember the pain.
11. A third thing, and this is the most important one right here really, God asked him his name. Jacob means "schemer." Jacob means "supplanter." Jacob is the type of the worldly child of God who wants his will, not God's will. Jacob is a picture of the old nature. When God changes his name, that is a picture of you and me getting saved and getting a new nature. But no, not Jacob, he had to scheme to get the birthright from Esau. He could not wait and realize that Esau is a wicked kid who would have forfeited it by sin anyhow. No, no, no. Jacob schemes to get it. Then he schemes to get the birthright, then the blessing. Then when he gets with Laban, he schemes to get the cattle. Laban says, "You know what, you take care of my cattle, all the nice cattle that are all one color I am going to keep, all the speckled ones and the spotted ones you can have." You know what he does? He read in Farmer's Almanac someplace that the way you produce speckled cattle is they are going to go down and cut a certain kind of bush off and feed them that, and it produces when they have babies speckled cattle. So Laban is coming out there and saying, "Wow, we had 48 calves today. Only one of them was solid, the rest of them were speckled." He manipulated everything. Manipulated everything just like a lot of God's people. He schemed to get the birthright, he schemed to get the blessing. When Laban tried to scheme him back and give him the wrong wife, he just took it in stride and had a couple more wives.

I think it is relevant in Genesis 32:27 when God really began to deal with him the first thing He said, "What is your name, Jacob?" I do not know if you know it or not, but that would be a painful remembrance. Back in Genesis chapter 27 that is what his daddy asked him when he deceived him. "What is your name, son? Who are you?" God will always bring back the old circumstances when we were crooked to make us deal with who we are. For God would change his name and make him fruitful and a blessing of God. He had to deal with the fact that he was a schemer. He had to deal with the fact that he was a supplanter. He had to deal with the fact that he was Jacob. The only way you do that is for God to look you eyeball to eyeball and say, "What is your name again?" You have to get honest.

I will tell you right now, only after Jacob's will was broken, he wrestled with him there, and when God finally busted him by touching him on the hollow of his thigh and putting his leg out of joint, and he squealed like a stuck pig, that Jacob surrendered his will to God, and then God changed his name to Israel. The blessings of God of the 12 tribes of Israel, in which believe it or not the whole Gentile world got in on that blessing because the Bible says in John 4:22:

John 4:22

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

What you have right now today and what God has given you in your salvation in that book goes right back to Jacob saying yes or no. I have always wondered where I would be today if Jacob would have never surrendered his will to God's will. I think of many, many times where people out there today who are waiting for somebody just like you to surrender your will and what God will do with them and how He will get the blessing to them through you. But just like Jacob fought with the Lord, you fight with the Lord. I fought with the Lord.

VIII. Commitment: The Sincerity of Your Love

It comes to the point, ladies and gentlemen, and this is the bottom line, where you look at what you have, you look at what God has given you, you look at all that is around you, and then you see somebody else whose need is greater than yours. I know some of you people laugh about restart. Certainly I would like to slap your face off. You know what your problem is? I do not care if you do not go because you are old or you are sick or you know, but this laughing at it and thinking it is stupid and it is too good for you, you know what that is? That is you just, you are a will over God's will, and you have got all that you have got. You have got all your ability and all your talents and all that you have. You are not willing to look at somebody else's need that is greater than yours. Worthless, absolutely worthless. The willing mind of the child of God.

Being an old military guy myself, I love the recruiting slogans. I remember one time years and years ago after God got me out of the army, I always had a thing for it, and my sister and I were downtown for something and she was doing something, and I kind of walked over there and there was an army recruiting officer, and there was all those posters, and all those things in there, and I am walking in and looking at all those things. I had been out about, I do not know, a couple of months. The recruiting sergeant came over and he said, "Why do not you sign up?" I said, "Well, I would like to." He said, "Well," he says, "I can get you signed up back up and I told him I had just gotten out so I can get you back in and get you another grade and get you all those things." He said, "You look like, I cannot understand why a guy like you who loved the army would ever get out of the army. I will get you back into the army." I looked at him and I said, "You know what, sergeant, I will tell you the truth. I am still in the army. I just got out Uncle Sam's army, and now I am in God's army." I witnessed that old boy right there on the spot. But you know what the old saying is, "You get the boy out of the army, you never get the army out of the boy."

I love the recruiting slogans that they use to lure young men into the military, young ladies too. They get a little shirt that says "Army Strong." Then they come out with "Army of One." I love

that ad. They do not play it much anymore, but the Navy SEALs, it was at nighttime and the moon was in the clouds, and it would show you on the beach, and the waves would come up and the waves go out, and they come out, and the moon goes behind the clouds, and it comes out, and the moon is out, and the footprints where they come out of the water, and then it goes back in, and the waves go back in, and the footprints are gone. That is a great thing. I tried that in the bathtub but fell out and broke my neck. You do not ever hear this from a special ops world. They used to be a slogan that you would not put it on a billboard, but they used to say, "Join the special ops, travel to exotic far away places, experience great skin, winning cultures, meet fine, wonderful, interesting people, and kill them." I saw an ad with quite a time for a Marine Corps sniper school based on one of the Hallmark card deals. So they shoot guys at 400, 500, 600 meters. Charles Hathcock shot somebody a mile away one time, and they had a little slogan down there, "Become a sniper. Long distance calling, the next best thing to being there."

The Marines come up with a few, "The Proud Marines." Or, "The Marines were looking for a few good men." But the latest one the Marine Corps comes out with I think is probably the best one. I saw this the other day driving back into Raytown, and it simply said on a big billboard, "The United States Marine," had a tough looking guy up there, and it said, "We do not take applications. We take commitments." I looked at that and thought about that, and I thought to myself that is so true of Christianity. Most Christians will turn in their application, but they will never make their commitment. God's will over your will. A ready mind, a willing mind, a readiness to will.

2 Corinthians 8:9

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

God, with all that He had, gave up everything that He had because He looked down through time and He saw me and you, and He saw us in our sin. He saw us as no way we could make it. But God simply said to Himself, "I will give up everything I have because the need of Bob Alexander, the need of Bob Greg, the need of Eve, Nikki, the need of everybody down there in Kansas City and that church, the need of William, the need of Zach, the need of Diane. Their need is greater than all that I have." So He gave it up. He did. He became sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. "For ye know the grace." I hope you do. I hope you do. But it takes a ready mind, a willing mind, a readiness to will. Giving of your own will first because you do know that grace. By all of that you come to the place in your life that you prove the sincerity of your love. Every head bowed, every eye closed.