



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4
8AM & 11AM ET

THY WILL BE DONE

DISCERNING AND DOING GOD'S
WILL FOR YOUR LIFE | **PART 2**

JEREMIAH 29: 4-14

A SERMON BY

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SCAN FOR PHJW
SERMON NOTES

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Date: February 04, 2024
Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
Sermon Title: *Part II Thy Will Be Done*
Scripture: Jeremiah 29:4-14 (NIV)

“This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. “Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. “Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” “Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. “They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the LORD.

“This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. “Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. “I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the LORD, “and I will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

SERMON SUMMARY: In Part II of the sermon series, **Thy Will Be Done**, Pastor Wesley recaps the first two lessons drawn from Jeremiah 29.

1. God has a plan/will for every aspect of our lives.
2. God’s will cannot be discerned without desire.

This week's sermon provides two more valuable lessons for our lives.

Only God can reveal God's will for our lives. Though there are some universal aspects to God's will for humanity (e.g., salvation, forgiveness, compassion), God designs a unique will for each human being. The will of God is based on who and where you are in your life and faith. We must be careful to not imitate or desire God's will for another's life, because we are not that person.

Also, God desires to speak to us directly, and uses other people only to confirm what God has already revealed through prayer and fasting, studying and worship, and prayer and meditation. Pastor Wesley urges us to stop listening to every voice that comes along with "a word from the Lord". Instead, we must practice saying, "I don't receive that" when others bring a word that does not align with God's word for our lives.

The final lesson offered in today's sermon is, **God's will is not always easy.** The will of God allows difficulties to enter our lives, but each challenge is meant to prepare and change us. If our lives were only easy, we would be less likely to turn to God or seek him at the point of our desperation. However, in the midst of storms and trials, God has our full attention and can change and shape us into the people he wants us to be. God uses the difficulties of our lives as transforming moments, after which we are better able to face future challenges and further wiles of the devil.

As he moves toward the end of this great word, Pastor Wesley outlines the way God's will works. First, God has a **Perfect Will**. We each have the opportunity to walk in the perfect will for our lives, but through the agency of human freedom, we often find ourselves operating under one of the following aspects of God's will.

- **Permissive Will:** This is the will God allows when we step outside of the perfect will, and though it does bear disastrous consequences, it is a position that is damaging to our spirits.
- **Prohibited Will:** This is the will God allows that bears more significant consequences, but God's mercy is available to keep us even in our sin.
- **Punitive Will:** This is the will God allows when we have strayed so far from God that dire consequences seem the only way to gain our attention and pull us back. This is the will under which Israel is operating in the Babylonian exile.

The final point of the sermon is no matter where you are in the will of God, God has a way of drawing us back. Just like Google maps, when God gives us a perfect road into and through the will of God, and we deviate, God's will recalculate and continues to guide us toward our destination, being in the perfect will of God.

KEY POINTS:

1. God has a plan/will for every area of your life.
2. God's will cannot be discerned without desire.
3. Only God can reveal God's will for your life. God never wants us to be dependent on anything or anyone to know God's will for our lives.
4. God has a perfect will for us collectively and individually. The same God who made sure your fingerprints, genetic code, dental records, and other aspects of you are unique, made sure the divine will for your life is tailor-made for you.
5. Sincerity + Conviction \neq Ordination. (Sincerity plus Conviction does not equal Ordination). Just because someone is sincere in their message and convinced of its truth does not mean they have been sent by God.
6. The best way to discern what you *don't know* about God's will; is to obey what you *do know* about what God's will.
7. The will of God is not always easy to obey.
8. God's will allow what isn't easy to prepare you for what is evil.
9. There are four types of will: Perfect Will, Permissive Will, Prohibited Will, and Punitive Will.
10. God always has a way for you to come back to His will.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU:

1. Pastor Wesley reminds us, "The greatest peace, joy, sense of fulfillment, purpose you will ever experience in this life is when your life is aligned with God's will." What happens in your life when you experience the peace of God? What is that peace worth to you?
2. In the sermon, Pastor Wesley states that God tailor's His will to our individual characteristics/personalities. What makes you distinctively special? How have you seen that uniqueness be used by God?

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Wesley references I Peter 5, verses 8a and 10b. Though the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, after we have struggled and suffered, God's promises to "restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." What are your anchor scriptures in times of struggle and suffering? How do they equip you to endure until God restores you?
2. Drawing inspiration from Jeremiah 29, think about another biblical passage where individuals struggled to comprehend and follow God's will. How did their experiences resonate with the challenges highlighted in Jeremiah 29?

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Reflecting on the sermon's key points about God's will and the different aspects of it, share a personal experience where you felt you were either in alignment with God's perfect will, operating in God's permissive will, prohibited will, or perhaps even facing God's punitive will. How did that experience impact your faith and relationship with God?
2. Pastor Wesley refers to the two prophets, Ahab and Zedekiah, that were not sent by God. He says false prophets may not know they are false; they may believe deeply in what they bring to you. How do you respond to false prophets, particularly if the person is someone with whom you wish to maintain a relationship?
3. God's will allow adversity into our lives to transform us. Is there a moment of being in the middle of the storm that called you into a deeper relationship with God and transformed you? How are you a better Christian because of this experience? How do you discipline yourself to obey what you know is God's will?
4. We learn in this sermon that the will of God might require anonymity instead of celebrity, leaving money on the table, walking away from relationships, or changing our habits. Has the will of God in your life ever required something of you that you found **DIFFICULT** to relinquish? What did you do? How did that all work for you?
5. In light of the principles shared in the sermon about discerning and obeying God's will, consider your own life. How can you actively seek and align yourself with God's will in your daily decisions, relationships, and challenges? Share specific ways in which you can apply these principles to navigate your unique journey and draw closer to God's intended plan for your life.
6. Some argue that relying on personal interpretations of God's may lead to divisiveness and misinterpretation. How can we navigate differing opinions about what God desires for our collective will without causing division within the community of believers?

“CAN I PUSH IT?” QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Wesley notes false prophets are not false because they do not believe their words. They are false because God did not send them. As we listen to candidates for the upcoming presidential election, what wisdom can you take from this sermon to guide you in discerning God’s will for your vote?
2. Pastor Wesley provides examples of Babylonian exile. As you live in a world where some operate from a base of hate, confusing the cross with the flag, banning books, oppressing women and the LGBTQIA Community, funding genocide against the Palestinian people, denying immigrants access to the country, how do you reconcile your own spiritual ideologies while simultaneously praying for their well-being?

FOR INDIVIDUAL OR VILLAGE STUDY

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

1. Hebrews 5:10b describe Jesus as the great high priest in the form of Melchizedek. In the Bible, **Melchizedek** (/mɛl'kɪzədɛk/my king is righteousness), was the king of Salem and priest of *El Elyon*. He is first mentioned in Genesis 14:18–20, where he brings out bread and wine and then blesses Abram and El Elyon. Jesus is the one who blesses us through bread and wine, His body and blood, and by doing so, opens the way for us to come to God directly. How have you opened yourself to hear directly from God (e.g. prayer, fasting, Bible Study, etc.)?
2. Have you ever found yourself in the punitive will of God? How did you get there? What were the costs to you of ending up in the punitive will of God?
3. Pastor Wesley reminds us that obeying God’s will is not easy **and** there are things God wills for all humanity. God wills that humanity will worship God in spirit and truth, be compassionate and kind, offer forgiveness to others, and be good stewards of the blessings in our lives. When you think of these three universal aspects of God’s will, which one is hardest for you?

4. Pastor Wesley posits that God uses other people to confirm, not reveal, His will. Have you experienced a time where you sought out someone other than God to discern God's will? If so, what was the outcome?

ACTIVITY:

1. Pastor Wesley notes, while the will of God is not easy, God allows what is not easy to help prepare us for what is evil. Given this, fill in the blank and finish this sentence. When (fill in the blank with a difficult situation) happened, I did not understand it. But when I encountered my next challenge, I realized my prior experience taught me these lessons _____.
2. Create a "Journey Map" outlining the major events in your life that include milestones, challenges, and moments of clarity related to understanding God's will. Identify periods when you felt aligned with God's perfect will, times of operating in God's permissive, prohibited will, and any experiences resembling God's punitive will. Can you identify any patterns? How can you use these experiences to guide you going forward? How have you worked yourself back to God's perfect will in situation

SPIRIT WORK:

Inevitably we will be faced with life decisions. In the midst of this, it will be important to recall the principles from the sermon about discerning God's will and how it prepares you for evil. Consider what steps you will need to take in order to draw closer to God, so that you better discern His will.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Summary of the Book of Jeremiah: <https://youtu.be/RSK36cHbrk0?si=5wnXbtxfIFCwMNzs>
2. Historical Black figure of the Global Position System (GPS): <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/nov/19/gladys-west-the-hidden-figure-who-helped-invent-gps>
3. If you have not registered, consider joining the Alfred Street Baptist Church's annual corporate fast, SEEK2024/iThirst for the very last week. One week of fasting and focusing on prayer is better than no weeks. Come on, join us: <https://www.alfredstreet.org/seek/>
4. To receive daily encouraging messages during SEEK, text 'iThirstSEEK' to 571-977-4525
5. To join the daily 7a and 7p EST prayer call, click on the photo below, or use this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81246227565#success>



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Includes a QR code, a Zoom logo, and an image of a laptop displaying the Zoom interface.