

## 2 Timothy

### I. Introduction

A. **2 Timothy 1:1-4** . . . Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus, [2] to Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. [3] I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, [4] longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.

### B. Prayer

### II. The will of God; The threat of mindless Christianity

A. [1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,

#### 1. **Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God**

a. The will of God is an interesting subject because it comes to us in more than one form. For Paul, the will of God concerning his work as an apostle, a missionary, a church planter, a teacher, and as one who disciplined others to continue the work he started, was very specific, and was told to him by God directly and through Ananias – whom God sent to him.

b. Though the experience Paul had on the road to Damascus was unique, receiving a specific calling from God for ministry has been experienced by many Christians down through the ages – with the more obvious examples being pastors and missionaries. But like Moses as compared to the rest of the Israelites, this kind of clear calling or direction from God is not the common experience of most Christians.

(1) Most Christians come to know God's will for forms of Christian service through what is known as the general will of God – as made known in the Bible and through church leaders as they help those under their leadership use their gifts and abilities for the greater good of the church and the people they touch outside the church.

(2) In other words, in relation to serving God and building God's kingdom in some capacity, some Christians receive a clear and direct calling from God, while most Christians discern

God's will through the study of His word and the help of church leaders.

- c. There is, however, another and equally important aspect of God's will – and that is God's will for living a godly life in the daily and even mundane affairs of life.
    - (1) This part of God's will is mostly made know in the Bible or determined by the leaders of a church – as instructed by Christ in **Matthew 16:19; 18:18**.
    - (2) Paul's letters contain numerous examples of a church leader determining the best ways to live according to God's will in very personal, practical, and specific ways – yet always in ways that agree with and are supported by the word of God.
  - d. The important point here is that we are all to live according to the will of God – be it a specific calling from God to a specific form of service or ministry, or the more general will of God for Christian service and Christian living. One is not better than the other, for even if you have a direct and clear call from God concerning ministry, you still need to live according to God's will in the daily affairs of life.
2. Returning to the example of God's clear and specific will for Paul, he told the story in **Acts 22:6-16**, “But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, [7] and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ [8] And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.’ [9] And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. [10] And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.’ [11] But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. [12] A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, [13] came to me, and standing near said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very time I looked up at him. [14] And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. [15] For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. [16] Now why do

- you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”
3. Few of us are likely to get such a clear and specific call from God concerning His will – be it for ministry or daily living. Yet all of us have access to the Holy Scriptures – which are filled with clear statements, exhortations, and stories about God’s will for living the Christian life day in and day out. And many of us are in church settings where we can trust the church leaders to determine and explain God’s will in relation to godly living where God has not clearly made His will known.
  4. Therefore, may we make it our aim to learn and discern God’s will, and may we make it our aim to live accordingly.
- B. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, **according to (or because of) the promise of life (that is) in Christ Jesus.**
1. As you may recall, Paul began 1 Timothy with a similar statement. **1 Timothy 1:1**, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to (or because of) the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus.”
  2. Paul’s statement that the promise of life is in Christ Jesus brings to mind several other scriptures that clarify what we have in Christ.
    - a. **John 10:10** . . . In Christ Jesus we have life – abundantly;
    - b. **Romans 3:24** . . . In Christ Jesus we are justified through the redemption which He purchased with His life;
    - c. **Romans 6:23** . . . In Christ Jesus we have eternal life with God;
    - d. **Romans 8:38-39** . . . In Christ Jesus we become recipients of the love of God.
    - e. **Romans 12:4-5** . . . In Christ Jesus, all believers become one body, one organism, even though this body is made up of many individuals.
    - f. **2 Corinthians 2:14** . . . Because we are in Christ, God enables us to be triumphant in resisting evil and to be a sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him wherever we go.
    - g. **2 Corinthians 5:17** . . . It is in Christ Jesus that we are able to become new creatures – whereby our old way of life passes away and a new way of life comes.
    - h. **2 Corinthians 5:19** . . . In Christ Jesus we are reconciled to God.
    - i. **Galatians 3:13-14** . . . In Christ Jesus we receive the promise of the Spirit.

- j. **1 Peter 5:10** . . . Because we are in Christ Jesus, God perfects, confirms, strengthens and establishes us.
    3. May we cherish all that we have in Christ Jesus. May we repeatedly give thanks for all that He gives and does for us. And may we honor Him and the marvelous gifts He gives by living accordingly.
- C. [2] **to Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.**
  1. Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
    - a. This was a familiar greeting in the early church, and it expresses a desire for good to be experienced by the one being greeted.
    - b. Because this greeting was extended to believers, it seems obvious they didn't need God's grace for initial salvation. But they did need **God's grace** in its various forms for working out their salvation, that is, for growing in the faith, and for living a godly life – especially in the face of opposition, and even persecution.
    - c. They needed **God's mercy** for their moments of carelessness, for those times when they allowed their faith to be overpowered by discouragement or despair, for lack of zeal in the pursuit of spiritual growth or Christian service, and for giving in to temptation.
    - d. And they needed **God's peace**: inwardly, among the believers in the church, and between themselves and God.
  2. As you can see, Paul's greeting is a meaningful, spiritually rich greeting. Yet when repeated over and over, when used numerous times in various settings, it can become a greeting that neither the greeter nor the one being greeted gives any more thought to than we give to our most familiar greeting, "Hi! How are you?"
    - a. And when this happens, the greeting, for all the good it intends, becomes rote, or in other words, it becomes mindless.
    - b. To become rote means that whatever is spoken or heard is spoken and heard without much, or even any, attention given to its meaning or significance.
    - c. For example, the words, "Hi! How are you?" has become a familiar greeting whose meaning is rarely taken seriously. Most often, it is our way of simply saying "Hello."
      - (1) This is verified by the fact that in most cases, we have neither the time nor the inclination nor the interest in

hearing how the other person is doing. Hearing the customary answer “good” is all we are really looking for.

- (2) Of course, the same is true on the other side. It is rare that the one greeted wants to talk about how they **REALLY** are. They, too, for various reasons want to move on from the greeting to other, less personal or more important things, which is why they mindlessly respond with the customary “good” – even if it’s far from the truth.
3. My purpose here is not to criticize a cultural tradition that slips from our lips or enters our ears without much thought, but rather to demonstrate how easily we allow the repeating of things that are important and meaningful to become rote, and therefore mindless.
  - a. This may not matter that much in relation to our customary greeting, but it does matter in things pertaining to God, love, humility, and truth.
  - b. For example, within Christianity, a phrase or truth or spiritual practice becomes rote, and therefore mindless, when we repeatedly say it or hear it or do it to the point of no longer giving thoughtful attention to the meaning of the words or the significance of the practice.
  - c. To me, this is a serious problem within churches and among Christians in general. And it has been and continues to be one of my serious concerns for us. Let me give you an example.
4. Recently, Barb and I attended two funerals – one was a Lutheran funeral and the other a Catholic funeral.
  - a. In both cases, most of what the minister and priest said was good truth worthy of being given serious thought and consideration.
  - b. Yet in both cases, when the minister and priest read the liturgy part of the funeral service – which would have been familiar to the Lutherans and the Catholics, and which was very good and worth thinking about – they sped up.
  - c. In other words, they began talking faster which significantly reduced the time available to absorb the truth and consider the meaning of what was being said. Now imagine speaking or hearing those truths at that speed on a repeated basis. How long would it be until the speaking and/or hearing became mindless?

### III. So how does this apply to us?

- A. We sing familiar songs. We read familiar scriptures. We worship in a familiar way. We hear familiar testimonies of God’s goodness, provision,

protection, grace, and mercy. We share in communion and eat a potluck meal together on a repeated basis. We celebrate Advent each December and we celebrate Easter with its own rituals. We even repeat certain prayers.

- B. For all the good that comes from these activities and truths – and they provide a great good to us – their repetition brings with it the threat of participating in them mindlessly – that is, without thinking seriously about the meaning of what we are doing or singing or saying or hearing.
- C. I have made it my goal to do my part in working against mindless worship, singing, Bible reading, prayer, and times of communion. But I cannot eliminate this threat. You have to do your part – which requires making it your aim to think about the words we sing, to consider what God is saying as we read scripture, and to be thoughtful and serious when eating the bread and drinking the cup of communion – and that is just a few of our repeated activities.
- D. Mindless participation in the things of God is a serious threat to our spiritual well-being and a deterrent to knowing, loving, and living for God. Therefore, may we choose to remain mindful even as we sing familiar songs and read familiar scriptures and hear familiar truths – whether in our private lives or when gathered together with other believers.