

Seeking God'S Will (Part Seven): Conclusion

All the Gifts We Need

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As we come to the end of this series of sermons that I have been doing on “Seeking God’s Will,” I thought it would be good to return to where I began in Ephesians 5 to rehearse the foundational verses that provide the purpose for this whole series.

If you will remember, I read verse 17 just about every sermon.

Ephesians 5:8-10 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:15-17 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore (a concluding statement) do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Now, take your thoughts back to verse 8, because we are going to go through this in a detailed way so that we understand what Paul is getting at here.

The apostle Paul, in verse 8, begins with what appears to be a simple statement of fact. “You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” This is something that to us, as Christians, we consider self-evident. We were once very bad. We once did not know God. But now, we do. Now we have, because of what God has done for us, the ability to see the truth. We have the ability to do the truth.

Before our calling by the Father to His truth, we were essentially clueless. We stumbled about in spiritual blindness. We may have had some education in the scripture from having good parents that taught us things. Or, we went to church, and we applied ourselves.

But before God opens the mind, we really do not understand it. There is something missing. We cannot put it all together. So, for all intents and purposes, then, before God called us and opened our mind, we lived in darkness, not knowing, not realizing that a better way—a better life... (it is not just the after-life I am talking about...every religious

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system talks about the next life things will be so much better). But, God is not cheating us out of *this* life either. He says that if we know His truth and abide in His truth, then we will have a better life now, as well as in the future.

So, there are blessings that are to come to us, that are bestowed upon us as His children even now. And it makes our lives so much better than what they were before.

As I brought out in that first sermon, what is said in Ephesians 5:8 is not that we were in darkness, but rather we were darkness! It was in us. We were part of that darkness. We were so imbued with the ways and beliefs of this world, inspired by Satan and his attitudes, so full of sin and rebellion against God, that we embodied that darkness. It is like the darkness of Satan and this world acted as a cloud that swallowed us up. You could not distinguish us from that cloud of darkness. We were the darkness, too. We were part of it. We were, as Jesus said, spiritually dead, as though we were not alive, even though we were physically alive. To Him, it was as if we were dead, totally cut off from God. We were cut off from the light. We see this picture back in Genesis 3, where the sword came out against the man to keep the way to the tree of life—the way to God. That is how we were. That is how the whole world still is.

But now, we have been given a great gift by being called by the Father.

And so we find in the middle of verse 8, “Now we are light in the Lord.” A big change has happened. Our calling by the Father to Jesus Christ was a radical transformation. It is something that we do not even understand. We can appreciate it to a certain degree, but the difference between what we were to what we are now is monumental—astronomical. If we would look back and be truly honest with ourselves, we would be shocked at what we were.

But, what has happened in this radical transformation is like a flipping of poles from negative to positive, a switch from evil to good. We are working with extremes of the spectrum that we have gone from very bad to very good.

We have made a movement in our lives—actually, I will put it this way—there has occurred a movement in our lives from earthly and demonic, to heavenly and divine—from one extreme to the other just as darkness is to light.

The reason I changed my phraseology is because we had nothing to do with this! We did not do it. We did not flip from bad to good. We did not go from evil to godly. We did not go from demonic and earthly to heavenly and divine. This conversion took place because the Father called us, and upon our redemption His Son's righteousness was

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imputed to us.

And so, Paul says here very simply and lays it right out, "We are light in the Lord." It is not anything that we did. Our light is not our own. It is given to us by the Father and the Son, and it is Their light that shines out from us, if indeed any light does shine from us. Our glory in this is totally reflected, because He has taught us, imbued us with His Spirit, and has given us whatever goodness that we might have. But in His eyes, we are lights, because He sees His Son in us.

So, because the Father and the Son dwell in us, Their light makes us light. And so we can truly be said to be light, just as Paul put it there in verse 8. So God's grace makes this all possible. Otherwise, we would still be darkness.

So, because of this fact that we have been transferred from darkness to light in Christ, Paul goes on and says to act like it. "Walk as children of light." To put it into today's vernacular, "Go ahead and live like it." We are to live our lives reflecting the light that the Father and the Son have given to us by Their presence in us. And because we have been so highly favored by Their presence in us, we are obligated, then, to live up to the high standard of conduct that light represents, which is the spotless sterling character of Almighty God.

So, it gives us a great deal to do and a high goal to live up to. They do not just give us their light, and that is it. There is an obligation there, too. We are to take what we have learned—what we have been given—and begin conforming to it—being transformed to it, so that we are, at the end of the sanctification process, light—that we have light in ourselves; that we have the light of God's character shining out from us, because we have developed it with His help over a long period of time.

So, living as children of light is not just an obligation because of what they have done, but also it is an exercise. We call it "sanctification." It is an exercise in doing what is right and good, so that we grow in God's character and become more like Them until the process is finished.

There is another thing that happens here, and that is when we live and walk as children of light, we also give a witness that others see—that light from us. We represent (truly and hopefully) God in His glory. Now, that is a hard thing to do, but we see Paul laying things out here very simply. It is very easy to understand what our lives are supposed to be about.

And then, we have verse 9. This is a parenthetical statement that gives us an idea of

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what kind of light is supposed to come from us. So he says, “The fruit of the spirit.” See? It is the Spirit of God in us that has made us so different—has made us light. The fruit of the spirit—what that spirit produces—is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. These are very broad areas, and so they cover a lot. These broad traits of God define how we are to be. They define how we are to think, act, and speak. So, all of our thoughts, speech, and actions are supposed to be good, righteous, and truthful.

Maybe we can look at it negatively only to help what they are. When we are children of light, and walk as children of light, we repudiate all that is evil, lawless, and false. These are the opposites of goodness, righteousness, and truth. We are to live these traits in our lives, and represent God properly.

If we remove the parenthetical statement in verse 9, we will have, “Walk as children of light proving what is acceptable to the Lord.” What we have is a cause and effect statement. If we walk in the light as children of the light, then the result will be that we prove what is acceptable to the Lord. In other words, “the proof is in the pudding.” The proof is in the doing. And putting God’s way of life into practice and putting it to the test by enacting it—living it—we will come to know over time what pleases God. And the reason it takes time is because of the time it takes to consider and to see the results thereof. It takes time to see the blessings that come from it.

As we heard in Ronny’s sermonette today (though not in these exact words), as part of the process of producing fruit, things take time. It is not just planting something in the soil, giving it some water, and suddenly the fruit is there. It takes a period of time for those things to be produced. And so, it takes time for this proving process to take place. And over time, in a certain amount of time, when we see the blessings come in, the good relationships we have with one another, we see lives of joy and thanksgiving (as we heard in the commentary), then that proves to us which way produces the best and the most from life—God’s way.

But we have to walk as children of light to really prove it to ourselves. And of course, walking in the light over a period of time should prove it to other people as well. So, our example, our doing of it, not only helps us become more and more convicted of the right way and the true way, but other people who might be watching us (this is the witness) see that our lives produce the various fruits—our children are obedient; our children do what is right; they make the most of their lives; we are successful; happy; joyful. These and various other fruits that people can see to show that the way of life that we lead is the one that is going to produce the best.

So, the understanding of God’s will comes as the result of doing what He commands us

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to do. So, we have to put these things into practice, and over time the understanding comes. And what is more, when we continue to do this, when we continue to do what is right, and these actions are compounded upon us, we get a pretty good record of proof about what the right decisions are as we go through life. We begin to grow in the wisdom of God, because we know what works. We know when we have failed and did not produce the right things, and we know when it worked, succeeded, and joy was produced.

So, the proof is in the pudding. The proof is in the doing. You must put it into practice.

Those people out there who say, "You do not have to keep the Sabbath! It has been done away with!" are not obeying the commandment—"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy!" But if they did keep it, even being unconverted, if they try (this is a principle of life here) to keep it sincerely, they would learn that it is good. God's way produces good for whoever does it. They would reap blessings from it.

And it is the same way with anything out in the world that they say we do not have to do anymore or God's way does not work. The real reason it does not seem to work for them is because they never really tried it. And because they do not have God's spirit, they cannot put everything together. But, the principle holds true. A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. The understanding will come over time, and soon you will have a good record behind you so that you can say with confidence that God's way is best.

If we believe Him—what He says—and step out in faith to do it, His reasons for requiring it of us will become abundantly clear over time. Remember in the first sermon that I used Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's example of not understanding the holy days at first, but he kept them anyway. Over time, God revealed the reasons for it. And, over time, if we keep on doing what God says, we will be convicted that God's way is the only right and true way of life. We will know.

Remember a sermon I gave years ago titled, "These Things We Know" (Tape 368, 1998). This was based in the book of I John, and all the times that he said, "We know such and such." We know this other thing. We know this. There is just a confidence that is brimming out of I John, because (think about it!) the man was almost 100 years old, and he had lived his Christian life beginning with the calling of Jesus Christ, and he had gone nearly 70 years in the faith. And so, because of his practice of the truth, he knew that these things were so! He, then, could confidently write in I John, "We know this; we know that; we know that God is love; we know that His Son's blood covers us," and on and on it goes. This is the outworking of what Paul is teaching in Ephesians 5:10. John

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had walked in the light for such a long time that he had proved without a shadow of a doubt what is acceptable to the Lord. So he could truly say, "We know that this is going to work out. We know that this is the way it is. We know that we are children of God."

And do you know what it says in John 16:10 in the Passover service? Jesus told His disciples that it was good that He was going to go away and send the Helper. And in John 16:10, He gives them a reason. He said that the Holy Spirit, our Helper, convicts us of righteousness. It convicts us of right-doing. This is just another way of saying that if we make use of God's spirit in us, by living God's way of life, we will know that it is the right way and that it is superior to all others. That Holy Spirit within us is going to convict us of that righteousness.

It also says that it will convict us of truth and of judgment. But, it convicts us of so many things because over time we come to realize that we have proved by doing that it all works.

Now, his next exhortation found in verses 15 through 17 is very similar. But he switches tactics a little bit. And instead of using light to describe our walk with God, he speaks of walking in wisdom.

Ephesians 5:15-17 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Wisdom is the right application of knowledge and understanding. That is, it is taking what we have come to know, what we have experienced, what we have come to understand; and then with that knowledge and understanding, we make proper Godly decisions about the things that we do or allow in our lives. And so, if something comes up, and we have had some experience with it, we have had instruction on it, we can then make a decision—wisdom—to do something or not do something whatever it is that comes up.

And if we decide to do the right thing, then that is wisdom. If we decide to do a wrong thing, then that is folly—foolishness.

And so, he is saying, "Make sure that your walk through life is accompanied by your being aware of what is going on around you. Walk circumspectly. Keep your eyes open. Know what is happening around you, so that you walk as a wise person, and not as a fool. Remember your lessons. Remember your experiences. Remember your studies.

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Remember all the things that God has taught you and put them to work so that you can walk wisely, because (verse 16) time is fleeting. We do not know when we are going to die.”

We could die tomorrow and be run over by a bus, or train. We hate to think about that, but God has all of those in hand. And so we need to make use of the time that we are given and overcome these evil days. We have to overcome in the days that we have been given.

What Paul has done, here in verses 15-17, is expand the scope of our Christian walk compared to verses 8 through 10. What he has done is state that we are not simply to do what God says—some people would cynically call this “blind obedience”—because if it says it in God’s word, then we do it. Of course, this is right, but we do not just follow as they are in there to the letter. Paul is bringing us one step higher when he talks about walking in wisdom. So we are not to just simply blindly obey God, but we must learn to use wisdom to make decisions that God would approve of, that are not written specifically in His word. There are a lot of things that we come across in our lives that may not have an exact command in His word to follow. So, we must begin applying wisdom. We have to understand the principle and experiences we have in God’s word from the people who have lived it, as well as things we have gone through in our own lives and in the church’s history through the ages that have been recorded for us so that we can make right and proper decisions.

So, Paul is moving us forward in verses 15 through 17. Learn to evaluate your circumstances—be circumspect. And, with an understanding of God’s will, make the wisest choice for your situation. Not everything we run across in our lives is going to have a, “Thus saith the Lord,” instruction to go with it.

Paul is describing a higher level of our walk with God, moving past rote obedience to acting independently within the bounds of God’s standards. This is like comparing high school or college level with grade school. It is not grade school anymore where we simply learn things by rote. This is where we put things into practice, learning to think on our own. But, as I said, it must be within God’s standards.

Paul is talking about our taking responsibility for living righteously, making distinctions in applying God’s law in wisdom. It is real growth in God’s way of life.

Think about it this way. Let me give you an example. The Jews in Jesus’ day, particularly the Scribes and the Pharisees, hedged themselves in by their persnickety law keeping. They seemed to have a rule or law for everything, supposedly covering

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every aspect of life. They are still doing that today. Rabbinical Jews are the descendants of the Pharisees, essentially. They have to, when something new happens such as new technology, come up with either an analogy to an existing law or rule, or they make up a new one in order to cover this situation, so that they do not sin.

We have heard that in Israel, in the orthodox areas, they run the elevators on the Sabbath continuously, stopping at each floor rising and lowering, because you would not want anybody to push a button on the Sabbath—that would be “work.” So, they had to come up with a way to hedge themselves in so that they would not break the Sabbath. To them, pushing a button in the elevator would do that. They have to practice patience, because if they need to get to the sixth floor of some building, they will stop and wait at each intervening floor in the process. That is the way they did it. They are in the stage of rote obedience to the letter of the law. They have no freedom of thought or freedom of action within the law.

But then, you see Jesus who was to them a radical. Look into Matthew 12 where He let His disciples go out into the fields on the Sabbath to pick some heads of grain, rub the kernels out, and eat them. All of that was taboo to them—it was work.

But Jesus was wiser. He had graduated a long time ago into the Ephesians 5:15-17 way of thinking. He was on that higher plane, that higher level of living by God’s way of life. He was able to make a decision—a distinction—that allowing His disciples to enter the field, pick some heads of grain, rub them together, and eat the kernels was a more merciful act than denying it to them, letting them go hungry until evening. He made the decision that the mercy He was showing to them was more important to God than the strict letter of the law approach. They must have been pretty hungry and in a fairly unusual circumstance. We do not know exactly what it was, but for some reason they were in a situation where this was necessary. And He determined within the freedom of God’s law that it was okay for them to go out and eat some grain out of the field to take the edge off their hunger.

But the Pharisees condemned Him for it, because they could not see beyond the strict application of the law, doing no work on the Sabbath day.

Do you see the difference?

David did a similar thing when he made the decision that he could eat the old show bread that had been taken off the table of show bread and feed his men with it. He understood this principle that it was more merciful and better that these men eat a bit than that old show bread to go to waste. It had been “used.” It had been sitting there for

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a week. The priests had made new show bread and had replaced the old with the new, taking the old away. And, the priests were normally the only ones to eat it. But, between the two of them—the high priest and David—they determined that this was allowable, because it was an act of mercy. It was not something that was going to be happening all the time.

See? That is the ability to work within the law that God is trying to teach us. It does, indeed, in these two examples, break the letter of the law. But, the application of the spirit was much more important. It met a higher need. And that higher need was the welfare of the lives of these men.

That is what we are getting to, here. Walking in wisdom—walking circumspectly is what we are aiming for; that we could take any situation that is thrown at us and be able to figure out what is the right response to make within the law of God.

So, in verse 17, we have Paul advising us not to be unwise—do not be without sense, do not be without understanding, do not lose your head over this. Make sure that you use your head. Use those little gray matter cells to reflect deeply on what is going on around us. Think matters through based on what God has revealed to us about His way of life, and then determine what His will is in the matter at hand. Now, this calls for thinking Christians. We have to learn to think through and apply what we know.

After all this time, about 40 minutes, this is how we began this series back in July. I have expanded it out just a little bit, but this is essentially how it started. And the point is that God has given us what we need so that we can know what the will of the Lord, is. He has not left us without the tools, the power to do the job. We can, as he says here, understand what the will of the Lord is. It may not be easy, but we can know it. He has revealed to us enough about Himself, His law, and His purpose for us to work out with a little bit of thought, maybe some study, and of course, some prayer, what His will is in any matter. It is not beyond us.

And even so, if there is something we feel that we cannot quite grasp, He has given us help to come to a decision. We will get to those helps in a few minutes.

In this series of sermons, we keyed in on six aspects of God's perfect character to use as models for our interactions with each other. These were: Holiness; Faithfulness; Patience; Sacrifice; Goodness; and Forethought—six Godly character traits. In no way (I want to make sure that you understand this) is that list complete. That is only six. There are probably dozens of Godly character traits that we could have gone into. These six are only a sampling of God's traits that we can employ when dealing with one another.

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But these six that I chose are foundational, and will go a long way in helping us to know how to act and respond in Godly manner. If we seek to emulate God's character—and this was the whole point—we will be well on our way to falling in line with His will, because God never goes against His own character. His will is tied to His character. And so, if we put His character on, then we are going to be like Him in what we do and what we allow.

Quickly, let us summarize these traits.

Holiness was the first trait. It is the foundation for all His other characteristics. Holiness is at the base of things, and it shines through the other characteristics. So, holiness is a massive under girding principle of superior quality and purity in everything. God does everything at the highest level of quality and purity. There is no stain or mark on God.

What we find, then, is that holiness makes a person or a thing different, because everything else is stained, and its use not good. Well, at most it is common. Holiness comes to imply separateness, distinctness, and of being of a higher quality—a cut above. So, we are to be holy, not just by imputation from God, but by living lives of moral purity and unswerving loyal devotion to God. We are to live holy lives in spite of all the ungodliness going on around us, which will set us apart.

The next is Faithfulness. We found that throughout God's word, He is shown to be faithful. He never wavers. He never goes back on His word. He never drifts off course. He never gives up. He is the definition of steadiness, reliability, and trustworthiness.

Of course, then, we are to be faithful as well. We are to be totally loyal to God, trustworthy to anyone that we meet, and true to our friends and brethren. We are supposed to be absolutely reliable in everything just like God is.

The third trait is Patience. We saw that no one is more patient, enduring, longsuffering, and forbearing than God. He does not expect things to happen right away. He allows matters to work out over time. And sometimes these stretches of time are not just years, but maybe centuries and millennia. He is very patient. He is the master of time.

We cannot be quite that patient, because our lives are only three-score and ten, or a bit longer by reason of strength. But, we can be patient with one another. We tend to be very impatient. We want immediate answers and immediate perfection from everyone, because we have only got so much time. And the world that we live in is just a flurry of activity, and we think we have to keep up. But, we must learn to take it easy, to be patient, to endure, and bear with one another. We must show patience, especially with

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our brethren, as they work on their weaknesses, because overcoming weaknesses takes time.

The fourth trait we looked at was Sacrifice. God, we saw, has made many sacrifices to bring us to this point. The Father gave the Son as a sacrifice for sin. And the Son sacrificed His divine prerogatives. He made many sacrifices, too, while He was here on this earth. And, He wore Himself down, becoming very tired and weary, staying to the last one who needed help, making sure that they got what they needed.

We are called to a similar sacrifice because sacrifice is the essence of Godly love. Is this not the first thing we are to do?—to love God, and to love neighbor? And so, if we are to fulfill this, we need to be sacrificing our time and energies so that we can give to others the help that they need.

The fifth trait was Goodness—God is great; God is good! This is one of the first things we think about when we think about the character of God. We covered the various Greek words for goodness in the New Testament—“calos,” tends to highlight the inner intrinsic goodness of a thing. God made things very good. And, He has given us good traits to follow. “Agathos,” emphasizes being beneficial in effect. So, this covers not the goodness of being, but the goodness that is produced because of some word or deed. It is goodness and beneficial in effect. And then touched on “agathosune,” the action taken with pure motives for another’s good no matter how kindly or unkindly it appears to be done in. Remember that we went to the incident where Jesus cleaned out the moneychangers, an act done out of goodness, though it was not done with a meek and mild smile on His face. He did a good act, but He did not do it kindly. And so, agathosune describes an action with a good result, eventually, although first appearances seem otherwise.

We are called upon to learn to discern what is good, to do it, and to pursue it despite what others may say or do.

Finally, in the last sermon, we considered the sixth trait of Forethought. This was probably the one that came out of “left-field” to most of you. But, I thought it was an important one to put into this series, because it is very important that we be like God, learning to think ahead, considering consequences, figuring out results and outcomes from our actions.

We get better at this over time. We are usually not very good at looking ahead and seeing what is going to happen, because our minds are just too finite to look at all the things that might happen. But as we become more and more in tune with God, our

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ability to predict the end result of a course of action, or words, should get better, mostly because of experience. We have said things in the past, and we have seen how they have turned out. But, understanding more about God, His ways, and His purpose will give us a hand up in helping others in a proper way that would produce good results and not produce any unwanted or unintended consequences. This is something we develop over a great deal of time and practice.

Now, as I said, this is no exhaustive list of traits. There are plenty of other character traits of God that we can study and put on over time, but I felt that these were the most basic ones to help in our dealings with each other. Remember? That is the real point of all these sermons—to help us get a good grasp of what God's will is as we interact with each other; as we come across problems in our relationships.

So, if we strive to be holy and faithful to God and to each other, we can learn to be patient sacrificing our time and energy to help with forethought doing what is truly good for each other.

This is God's will for us.

Did you see that I put all six of those in that one sentence?—Holiness; Faithfulness; Patience; Sacrifice; Goodness; and Forethought. These are the ways that God wants us to act and interact with each other.

Perhaps, the most common feedback that I have received during this series is an implied complaint. They may not have come right out and said it, but it lingers through the way that they have expressed themselves. It is implied that while all this is well and good, it is beyond our abilities. It is too hard. There is too much thought needed. Things come up quickly, and we cannot take the time to do all this that I seem to be implying that we need to be doing. In a way the people are also saying that we are not smart enough, advanced enough, or righteousness enough to do this sort of thing.

So, what I would like to do for the remainder of this sermon is to show that our level of intelligence or righteousness makes no difference. We can, with a bit of thought, prayer, and determination, discover God's will for us in whatever situation we find ourselves in. In fact, we already have what it takes! God will supply our lack for any specific situation.

For some reassurance and the first point, turn to I Corinthians 10. We should know what this is if it is not at least a memory scripture. This is very reassuring in each and any kind of trial that might occur. Paul writes:

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I Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

I find this very reassuring! There are three things that he says that should help us to be calm, collected, and cool when a trial comes or some other sticky situation appears before us.

Now, the first thing is in the first part. “No temptation has overtaken you, except as is common to man.” Whatever we are facing, others have faced it before—many times—many people—and, they have conquered it. Whatever it is, it is a common trial—something that most human beings have probably faced at one time or another in their lives. The trial, whatever it is, is not unique. And, if others have endured it and have overcome it, so can we! Do not despair! Whatever it is, it is manageable.

The second point is found in, “But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.” God is aware of your situation. And, He will not let it grow beyond what we can handle. This is the simple truth of it. He is watching over you. And, He is keeping things in your life within bounds. He is hedging you in! And so, if the situation that you find yourself facing is too big, He has a way figured out to make it bounce off, if you are not ready to handle it yet. But, if He allows you to go into this situation and try to solve it, then you can solve it. You can handle it. He is making sure that it is contained within your abilities. So, again, the problem is manageable. We can overcome it. It is not beyond what you are able to handle.

Now, the third point is found in, “But with the temptation (He) will also make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it.” There is always a way out! There is no problem that does not have a solution to it. There is no situation that is impossible to deal with. In fact, the way that this reads, here, Paul says that God provides the way out. God will make the way of escape. It is not that it is there, but that He has given it to you already. He has made it available. So, what we have, here, is that not only is it there, but that God reveals the way of escape! He makes it clear to us if we are paying attention.

Of course, just because the way of escape is there and the way of escape is known does not mean that we are going to take it. Sometimes that “off-ramp” looks mighty tricky. So, we must exercise faith to take the escape route. We can do it! It is the escape route that He has made for us. It is the one that He has revealed to us. And, we can understand that His escape route is always the best way out of the problem.

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Our problem is having the faith to take it because, usually, the way of escape is the hardest way. Well, maybe I should say that many times the way of escape is the hardest way. If it were easy, we would do it, right? But, usually it is not easy; it is something that we have to really take in faith. "Okay, God. This is what you have said in your word. This is what you have taught. I am going to do it!" And, then you step into the abyss.

And then you find, just like in the movies, that there is something there under you when you put your foot down. You might have not seen it before, but God is there.

Now, this verse, I think, is one of the first things that we should think of when we become aware of a trial. We can go over these points in our minds, and it should calm us to know that God has our back; that this is our problem, but others have faced it and conquered. We know that God is there, and He will not let it grow beyond what we are able to handle. He has already provided the way of escape. We just need to take it.

So, our problem is manageable; God is in control; and He has the solution. Is that not comforting?

We can also turn to Romans 8:28, where "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are **the called** according to His purpose." This should also reassure us. If we fit these criteria—if we love God, and we are the called—then everything is going to work out. Trust Him! He is there.

Turn to John 14 and the Passover sermon that He gave to His disciples. Consider the reassurance that we have here.

John 14:12-23 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. Judas (not Iscariot)

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said to Him, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

So, we are never alone! Is that not reassuring? He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). By the Holy Spirit we have both the Father and the Son dwelling in us all the time! They are always there! And if we love Them and strive to do as His word commands, They (as He says here) will make Their home in us. They will dwell in us; They will live in us. But, I think that the word "home" is very significant. Home represents the feelings of family, of closeness, of acceptance, of comfort, of security, and of help. I think these ideas are all wrapped up in this, because, think of it, the disciples were there, and He was telling them that He was going away. But, He was trying to comfort them and reassure them that it was only for a little while. And when this little while is over, "It is going to be even better, because, now, I will not be just walking beside you, I will be living in you. And I will be home, there, with you, because (Amos 3) we are walking together in body, one mind, and one spirit. And so, it is going to be that much better."

So, the Father, and the Son are there for us at all times; not just with us, but in us! And, what this means is that we do not have very far to go when we have a need. Did you notice how He scattered throughout this passage, "That if you have anything that you need, all you have to do is ask in My Name and it will be done for you"?

If you will go through chapter 14, 15, and 16, you will see that this is continually repeated. "I am going away, but all you need to do is ask of the Father, and I will do it for you."

John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

We have ready help in time of need. It is in us through God's Spirit. We need to aware of this more often and make use of this awesome resource that we have been given.

I do not want you to get the idea that He is a "genie-in-the-bottle" and if we say, "God, I need my house payment this month," that He will suddenly (bing!) put \$1000 in our hands. But rather, it is through that developing relationship with Him that we take on the mind of Christ, and that gives us great wisdom in dealing with our situations we face.

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And then, if we ask anything in His name, according to His will, according to His purpose, He is going to come through for us, because that is what He wants, too. He is going to follow God's will. And if we are in sync with Him, we are going to be following God's will too, and so He will supply what we need. This is an incredible promise!

If we know, as we saw in I Corinthians 10, that He has the solution to the problem, and if we ask Him to reveal it to us, He will, because He wants us to overcome the problem. So, He will then, give us the way out! We just have to have the faith to implement it, which is where the rubber meets the road.

Often we fail. But, He, through His Spirit, provides the right help for every need. And it is right there. He is right in us.

Jesus was preaching this at the beginning of His ministry!

Matthew 7:7-11 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

See? He is willing to give us. Do you believe verse 8? "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." Do we really believe that? We should! God is willing to give us what we ask for. He is not miserly with His gifts, but abundant and effusive. He says in Luke 6:38 that He would give, "Pressed down, shaken together, and running over!" Every good and perfect gift is comes down from the Father above! (James 1:17). Each one of us has been given spiritual gifts for the profit of all (I Corinthians 12:7). And, Ronny Graham read earlier today Ephesians 1:3 that we have been given every spiritual blessing.

We have what it takes! And we have access to the Giver of all that is good if we need anything more.

So, what holds us back? In us is a mighty Spirit! And, if we are willing to cooperate with Him—God the Father—we will have all we need to face the trials of life.

I Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

This is another gift that we have been given. He has given us examples both in the Bible, and in the flesh within the church to observe and follow as models. For instance, we have the historic example of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong and some of the things that he has done. There is a two-volume autobiography that tells of the decisions that he made early on. And we can follow them and get wisdom from them. There are also other ministers and faithful brethren to draw from. Many among us have been plugging away for many decades and are fine examples of faith, patience, endurance, and wisdom. We need to make use of them. We need to get their counsel. We need to watch how they live; watch them make decisions and learn from their experiences.

Conversely, unfortunately, there are bad examples that we can learn from, too, so that we can avoid their mistakes. But, God has given us a family in the church so that we can have examples of the right way to live.

Let us conclude in Hebrews 10. We need to remember that Paul is talking to a group of Jews—Hebrews—and they were in danger of drifting away. And so, he has to buck them up to give them confidence to continue on. And so he says as he is getting toward the end of his exhortation:

Hebrews 10:35-39 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

So Paul advises these Hebrews who were in danger of drifting away to trust God, to fight the good fight all the way to the end, because as a reward for seeking and doing God's will, they will receive the promises God has made to us. Christ will return and will not tarry. And, He will usher us into the fullness of eternal life in His kingdom.

So, remember that we already have what is necessary to do the will of God. Press forward and finish strong!