

Do The Will Of God

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Introduction

This article concerns doing the will of God – a facet of a saving faith – a qualification God established that must be met by those who will be saved. We know that all those who will be saved must satisfy this qualification because Jesus said:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).¹

Only those who do the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven. The warning is clear and without ambiguity.

Facets Of a Saving Faith

A facet of a saving faith is easy to recognize because it establishes a requirement for salvation, just as we find above. There are several facets of a saving faith. Each facet is part of a saving faith, not separate from it. We know that because Scripture says we are saved by grace, through faith, not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). We are not saved through faith plus multiple requirements in addition to faith. We are saved through faith. Period. Thus all the requirements we find in Scripture that must be satisfied by those who will be saved must necessarily be part of a saving faith.

I chose the term facets to define these various requirements because of the parallel to a diamond. The diamond after it is cut and polished has many facets. We can see and examine each facet separately, yet each facet is inseparable from the diamond – it is part of it. So it is with the facets of a saving faith.

Any valid description of a saving faith must include the facets that God has made part of a saving faith or the description is seriously flawed. The flaw is so serious it can deprive those of salvation who accept the flawed definition. That is because each person who will be saved must satisfy each facet of a saving faith or that person will not be saved.

Doing the Will of God Is a Salvation Issue

Is doing the will of God a salvation issue? Of course it is. Jesus made this clear when he taught, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). The right to enter heaven became very exclusive when Jesus used the term “only.” That excludes from heaven all those who do not do the will of God.

Religiosity Without Obedience

America is called a Christian nation. It has a high percentage – some polls find as high as 82% of the populace claim to be Christians. Of those, a substantial percentage attend church. The airways are filled with sermons and religious programs. At the time of judgment none of that will matter. God’s word says that only those who do his will may enter the kingdom of heaven.

This apparently is hard for 21st century professing Christians to comprehend because most seem far from doing the will of God. Surveys by Gallup and Barna conclude that most professing Christians are not distinguishable from people who are not Christians. Such people cannot be doing the will of God. They often engage in the same wicked activities as do pagans.

Jesus addressed this type of religiosity without obedience when he said: “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out

¹*The Holy Bible : New International Version.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:22-23).

“That day” is the last judgment when Jesus will preside as judge. How did those people address Jesus? They called him “Lord, Lord.” But Jesus had said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 7:21). These people also said they prophesied in his name and in his name drove out demons and performed many miracles. Surely Jesus would be pleased with people doing such things in his name. NO! God’s word stands; he is faithful to his word. These people did not do the will of God. Jesus called them evildoers! Jesus, the judge, sent these people away from his presence saying he never knew them.

Those people must have been confident of their salvation. Likely they followed the teachings of their churches. Some may have said, “Once you’ve said this prayer, you’re eternally secure. You are now saved and can never be lost.” Others may have taught that it is only what you believe that counts, actions don’t matter because if they did you would be earning your salvation (that claim is a form of antinomianism). When the last judgment takes place, the question will be, “Did you do God’s will?”

What Is God’s Will For a New Testament Believer?

We’ve just seen that Scripture says whether or not we do the will of God is a salvation issue. Those who do the will of God enter heaven; those who don’t do the will of God will not enter heaven. Thus it is extremely important to learn what God’s will is so we can obey it. It should be obvious that if you don’t know what God’s will is, it will be impossible to obey it.

A misunderstanding of what is God’s will for the New Testament believer has caused innumerable cults to arise and splinters within the church. Yet the answer is very simple.

Jesus came to earth and showed us what God is like, demonstrating for us the character of God. But more than that, he told us what God’s will is for New Testament believers – those who will place their trust and faith in Christ Jesus as their Lord. Do you remember what Jesus said about what he said and did? Jesus said that everything he did and said while on earth was what his Father told him to do and say (John 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:10, 14:24, 14:31).

Because Jesus was totally obedient to his Father, everything Jesus did and said is the will of God because Jesus did and said only what God his father told him to do and say. What should the New Testament believer obey in order to do the will of God? Everything Jesus did and said! Everything Jesus taught and commanded! Everything Jesus did and said, taught and commanded is the will of God.

What about the Old Testament? Should we obey that? The short answer is no, we shouldn’t obey that. Would you like to go to the book of Leviticus and learn how you should cook according to Old Testament Law, and learn there what you can eat and what you can’t? Paul and Peter made it clear that we are not bound by Old Testament law. Are all males to be circumcised? Paul argued that point with the Judaizers who insisted that the Gentiles should also be circumcised. Paul insisted that was not true. The Judaizers insisted the new Gentile believers should observe the feast days and Sabbaths set forth for the Jews in the Old Testament. Paul emphatically disagreed. He called their claims a different gospel – which is

really no gospel at all (Galatians 1:6-7). Paul condemned such false teachers and called their teaching a perversion of the Gospel of Christ:

Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! (Galatians 1:7-9).

The Judaizers were attempting to impose Old Testament law and regulations upon the New Testament believers. They were trying to add to the finished work of the Lord Jesus on the cross by saying, “Yes, you are saved by faith in Jesus as Lord, but in addition you must follow this and that rule and regulation from the Law.”

A New Law

Let’s examine a short proof that there is a new law in effect after Jesus died for our sins on the cross. Jesus became our high priest, showing a change of the priesthood, offering his own blood as a sacrifice for our sins (Hebrews 7:26-9:15). The writer to the Hebrews states, “For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law” (Hebrews 7:12). Paul called the teachings and commands of Jesus the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). Paul said of himself, “I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law” (1 Corinthians 9:21). Paul equated God’s law with Christ’s law. All New Testament believers are under Christ’s law.

Each of us must ask ourselves whether we obey the teachings and commands of Jesus. Jesus asked, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). Apparently Jesus expected to be obeyed. He rebuked those who called him Lord but didn’t obey what he taught and commanded. Sadly, isn’t that the exact condition of much of the church today? Don’t we call Jesus Lord, sing praise songs extolling him as Lord, yet neither teach nor obey his teachings and commands? Sadly, I fear the answer is “yes” to both those questions.

The Old Testament Law has been superceded by Christ’s Law. For a thorough discussion, go to: www.bereanpublishers.com | Important Issues | “Which Law Does the Christian Obey?”

Many Scriptures Teach Us To Obey the Lord Jesus

Are there other reasons to believe we should obey the teachings and commands of Jesus – all of which are the will of God? There are many. We’ll examine several.

Loving God Means To Obey His Commands

Jesus taught the first and greatest commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” ; and, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, and Luke 10:27).

Jesus said: “If you love me, you will obey me” (John 14:15). This was not stated as an option or that you should obey me or that you’ll want to obey me. No, if you love me you will obey me. He continued, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me” (John 14:21) and “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching” (John 14:23). Obey who? Jesus. Obey what? Jesus’ commands and his teaching.

John defined love for God: “This is love for God: to obey his commands” (1 John 5:3). God’s commands for the New Testament believer are the teachings and commands of Jesus. If we love God we will obey his commands. There is no salvation for those who do not love God.

The Great Commission

Just before Jesus left the earth, he gave his church their marching orders for the centuries ahead:

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to **obey everything I have commanded** you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

We are to **obey everything Jesus** commanded! We are to teach new disciples to obey everything Jesus commanded as we go throughout the world making disciples in obedience to his command.

Did Jesus say anything about teaching the disciples the Old Testament Law and that they should obey it? No, though some of his teachings included commands from the Old Testament Law. During his earthly ministry, Jesus taught and commanded all that was necessary for our salvation under the New Covenant. The writer to the Hebrews explained:

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant (Hebrews 9:15).

This is not to say that the Old Testament has no value to us. The Old Testament prophets revealed the coming of Jesus and prophesied about much that is yet unfulfilled about his second coming and his millennial rule here upon earth. The Old Testament revealed how God deals with mankind, even Israel who he specially called to be his own. The Old Testament shows how God punishes those who rebel against him and disobey his commands.

Salvation For All Who Obey Jesus

Jesus became the source of salvation **for all who obey him** (Hebrews 5:9). We have seen that everything Jesus said and did is the will of God. Thus those who obey him are those who do the will of God.

Scripture presents both sides, salvation for those who obey, condemnation for those who do not. We see here that Jesus is the source of salvation for those who obey him. Below we will see there is condemnation for those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. It should become clear to all that obedience to the teachings and commands of Jesus (the will of God) is essential for those who will be saved.

Punishment for Failing to Obey Jesus’ Commands

The Gospel (translated “Good News”) is all that Jesus taught us about being redeemed by his blood through a saving faith in him as Lord. As we study the facets of a saving faith, we see there is much more to a saving faith than claiming we believe in Jesus. To believe in Jesus as Lord is to believe in him, in all that he is, and to obey all that he taught and commanded. It is an oxymoron to claim Jesus as Lord and then not obey him.

Unfortunately in the 20th and 21st century church, the prevailing mantra is to say that we are only to believe in Jesus as our Savior and we will have eternal life (that can never be lost). The statement is false in two ways. Nowhere in Scripture do we read that we can have salvation by believing in Jesus as Savior. Jesus is Savior only of those for whom he is Lord. And all through Scripture salvation is taught as conditional, as something that can be lost. Please go to the website www.bereanpublishers.com | Salvation Issues | “Proofs of Conditional Salvation” for a more complete discussion of that issue. For a substantial discussion of the need for Jesus to be Lord in order to be saved, go to Salvation Issues | Jesus Is Lord.

What about those who do not obey the Lord Jesus? Paul warned the Thessalonians:

“He [God] will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thessalonians 1:8)

What is it these people do not obey who are punished by God? They fail (or refuse) to obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus – the will of God (all Jesus taught and commanded).

Just how serious will this punishment be? Is God only disciplining his children out of love for them? No, the punishment is damnation. Paul continued, “They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). If the person continues in sin, contrary to the will of God, the result is the same, but stated even more fearfully: If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God (Hebrews 10:26-27).

Do you know what it means to obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus? Based on what you’ve read so far, does it seem important to know it and to obey it? It seems incredibly important to me; salvation depends on it.

How are you to learn what the Gospel of our Lord Jesus is? Jesus told us how he intended you learn it in his great commission to the church. He told us that we, his disciples, are to go into all the world and make disciples (not converts). He told us to do two things with these disciples:

- (1) Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and
- (2) Teach them to obey all that I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20).

Jesus intended that as you studied his Gospel you would learn what he commanded and to obey his commands. Have you been taught by your church to obey all that Jesus commanded? Do you know what Jesus’ commands are? If you don’t, how are you to obey? Will you be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord because you didn’t know and therefore could not obey? Was this because you relied on the teachers in your church, but they did not obey Jesus’ commands?

The responsibility is yours and mine, individually, to meet God’s criteria for salvation. We don’t need others to accomplish that. Scripture is written at about the 6th grade level – a level

almost all of us can understand. We must simply pore over the Gospels to see what our Master and Lord commands us to do and what he teaches us about how to live and then do it.

If you would like to learn Jesus' commands and how to obey them, I have written a Bible study on that subject that can be found on the internet at www.bereanpublishers.com | Bible Studies | "Teachings and Commands of Jesus." It is free.

Remain In Christ's Love If We Obey

After discussing the relationship of the vine (Jesus) and the branches (believers), Jesus said, "If you obey **my** commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (John 15: 10).

Naturally Jesus' statements have little or no meaning if the opposite is not true. We can therefore rightfully assume he is also saying that if you do not obey his commands you will not remain in his love.

Friends of Jesus If We Obey

Being a friend of Jesus is conditional upon our obedience to Jesus and his commands. Jesus stated: "You are my friends if you do what **I** command" (John 15:14).

Remember the song "What a Friend We Have In Jesus"? We're a friend of Jesus only if we do what he commands.

Holy Spirit Is Given to Those Who Obey

Jesus said he would ask the Father to give the Holy Spirit to those who obey him (John 14:15-16). Peter corroborated that fact as he defended the Apostles before the Sanhedrin. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, he said: "the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him" (Acts 5:32). We have learned that when we obey the teachings and commands of Jesus, we are obeying God.

What of those who do not obey, who do not have the Holy Spirit? Paul said, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Romans 8:9). No one can have salvation who does not belong to Christ.

Special Love Relationship With God For Those Who Obey

Jesus went on to say, "Whoever has **my** commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him" (John 14:21). God the Father and the Lord Jesus specially love those who have Jesus' commands and obey them. The first part of that is "Whoever has **my** commands." Are you seeing how important it is that we have and know Jesus' commands? If we don't know, how can we obey?

Jesus followed up by adding: "If anyone loves me he will obey **my** teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23). This time Jesus included his teaching as well as his commands. He also taught that both God the Father and the Lord Jesus will come to the obedient believer and make their home with him. We believe that is through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The reverse was also true. Jesus said, “He who does not love me will not obey my teaching” (John 14:24).

Are these teachings of Jesus truly the will of God? Jesus assured us: “These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me” (John 14:24). If they are God’s words, they are surely his will.

Really His Disciples; Know the Truth

Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

It is interesting how often the last sentence is quoted: “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” But there was a condition to that statement that seems rarely given. Jesus didn’t say all professing disciples would know the truth and be set free by the truth. No, his statement was very limited. It was only those who “hold to **my teaching**” who will know the truth. For them, and them only, the truth will set them free. “Hold” means keeping and/or observance. It means to know and obey.

Never See Death

Jesus assured his followers, “I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death” (John 8:51). “Keeps” denotes to watch over, preserve, and watch. This would have the sense of persevering in knowledge of and obedience to Jesus’ word.

Remembering that whatever Jesus said, taught, and commanded is the will of God, consider John’s assurance:

“The man who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:17).

Doing the will of God is obedience to the teachings and commands of Jesus. Anyone who keeps Jesus’ word is doing the will of God.

Put Jesus’ Words Into Practice

Jesus warned, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash” (Matthew 7:24-27).

Jesus taught that hearing his words are only useful to the person who puts them into practice. When the storms of life come, the man who built his life on Jesus’ words has his life built on the rock. Just the opposite for the person who hears but does not put Jesus’ words into practice. He will neither persevere nor overcome – both requirements for salvation.

Jesus Modeled Doing the Will of God

Did Jesus do the will of God? Jesus said that everything he did and said while on earth was what his Father told him to do and say (John 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:10, 14:24, 14:31). Imagine Jesus doing the will of God so perfectly that every word and every action was just what his Father

told him to do and say. Jesus didn't interject his own thoughts or opinions, nor did he engage in activities that he thought would be fun or useful. He did only what his Father told him to do. Jesus modeled perfect obedience to the will of God.

Another facet of a saving faith says that all those who will be saved will be conformed to Jesus' likeness. Thus those who will be saved will also do the will of God, just as Jesus did.

Jesus' Words

Were you struck by the language in the Scriptures we examined in the previous sections. They used words like obey me" (John 14:15), my commands (John 14:21), my teaching" (John 14:23), obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20), for all who obey him (Hebrews 5:9), Gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thessalonians 1:8), all that I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20), obey my commands (John 15: 10), do what I command" (John 15:14), to those who obey him (John 14:15-16), those who obey him" (Acts 5:32), my commands and obeys them (John 14:21), obey my teaching (John 14:23), my teaching (John 14:24), my teaching (John 8:31-32), these words of mine (Matthew 7:24), and keeps my word (John 8:51).

The overwhelming message from the prior paragraph is that it is Jesus' words and commands that are the basis for everything that is of importance to the New Testament believer. Salvation, blessings, and relationships with Jesus are all dependent upon obedience to his teachings and commands.

Conclusion

There seems no more basic need for those who would be saved than to do the will of God. The will of God includes all that is necessary for a saving faith, including all the facets of a saving faith. Those who do the will of God will be saved; they will have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will confess him before men; they will live lives characterized by righteousness and love for God and each other; they will fulfill each facet of a saving faith; and they will be conformed to the likeness of our Lord Jesus.

Those who refuse to do God's will are in rebellion against him. They deserve the condemnation they will receive.

The far sadder situation concerns the fate of those who fail to do the will of God because they don't know it. They will be condemned for their ignorance, not overt rebellion. Yet most will be without excuse because God's will is easily seen in the teachings and commands of Jesus as presented in the Gospels. The Scriptures are freely available to most in the developed world today and much of the rest of the world.

It is critical that those who would be saved understand what the will of God is. From the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, God's will is expressed in a new law because there is a new high priest (the Lord Jesus) and a new covenant. Repeatedly we saw Jesus emphasize that we must obey his teachings and his commands and his words – what Paul referred to as "Christ's Law" that Paul said he followed. All believers are subject to Christ's law. It is the will of God.
