

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	90		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	Romans 12:1, 2; Ephesians 5:17; I Thessalonians 4:3; 5:18		
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Thy Will Be Done (Part II)

Lords Day 49

Question 124. Which is the third petition?

Answer: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"; that is, grant that we and all men may renounce our own will, (a) and without murmuring obey thy will, which is only good; (b) that every one may attend to, and perform the duties of his station and calling, (c) as willingly and faithfully as the angels do in heaven. (d)

(a) Matt.16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Tit.2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Tit.2:12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; (b) Luke 22:42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. Eph.5:10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. Rom.12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (c) 1 Cor.7:24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. (d) Ps.103:20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Ps.103:21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

Bruce Waltke, one of my professors at Westminster Theological Seminary writes, "The New Testament gives no explicit command to 'find God's will,' nor can you find any particular instructions on how to go about finding God's will. There isn't a magic formula offered Christians that will open some mysterious door of wonder, allowing us to get a glimpse of the mind of the Almighty. The Bible forbids pagan divination (Deuteronomy 18:10) and invokes severe penalties for those who resort to magic for determining the will of God in this way. Simon Magus was severely rebuked in Acts 8 for seeking supernatural powers, and Christ criticized the perverse generation that always asks for a sign from God.

"God is not a magic genie. The use of promise boxes, or flipping open your Bible and pointing your finger, or relying on the first thought to enter your mind after a prayer are unwarranted forms of Christian divination.

"The reliance on special signs from God is the mark of an immature person – someone who cannot simply believe the truth as presented, but must have a special, miraculous sign as the symbol of authority from God.

"It is no surprise that we desire to know the mind of God in our specific circumstances. Every person craves wisdom, particularly divine wisdom in the great issues of his or her life. Every person on earth is looking for authority to guide him or her. That is why we talk through tough decisions with friends, colleagues, or parents. We seek assurances – someone to tell us that we are good people, making the right decisions. We want to be seen as not only valuable (something the psychology craze

has popularized in recent years) but also competent. I want to know that I'm good at something, that I'm recognized as knowing something important, and that perhaps through my competency I can leave an impact on my world.

"Above all that, we fear making a mistake. For you see, a mistake suggests that I am not a competent, worthwhile person. Therefore I will go to extreme measures to make sure that any major decision I make will be a good one. Also, I truly want to please God, so I will seek to discover His mind on the matter at hand."¹ This is true wisdom.²

James Boice tells us that there are two parts to this wisdom: (1) its content, centered in the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, and (2) the application of that content practically.³ Paul's words in Romans 12:1-2 underscore this same theme. A transformed mind is contrasted with one that is controlled and shaped by worldly thinking. Haldane, in his masterful work, described it this way: "We know," says the Apostle John, "that we are of God, and *the whole world* lieth in wickedness." By conformity to the world is meant assimilation to the people of the world; or the sentiments, conduct, and customs by which they are distinguished. It is the character of those who are dead in trespasses and sins, that they walk "according to the course of this world," acting conformably to those maxims which regard only the present life; and they "who mind earthly things" are described as the enemies of the cross of Christ; but the conversation of believers, as being pilgrims and strangers is in heaven. This prohibition, however, respects those things only that are sinful, and does not require singularity in the Christian in anything that is not contrary to the law of Christ. Pride may be indulged in the singularities of austerity, as well as in the imitation of fashionable folly. A sound Christian mind will have no difficulty in making the necessary discrimination on this subject."⁴

I. THE CAUTION

"Be very careful", BLEPETE, present tense imperative, lit. keep on being on the alert, take heed, be aware (comp. Colossians 4:7; Philippians 3:2; I Corinthians 3:10); AKRIBOS, lit. accurately, carefully (cf. Matthew 2:8; Luke 1:3). Paul groups these two very strong words together to re-enforce the urgent necessity for caution. There is need for precise or strict calculating in how we live. The stakes are high and carelessness and neglect must be avoided. "...how you live", PERIPATEITE, lit. to walk. The word trans. "how" is POS, meaning "in what manner." "This can only be obeyed if believers take care that their conduct is characterized by wisdom. The mere exhortation is not simply 'walk/live as wise people' but its importance and urgency are reinforced by the use of both BLEPETE 'watch' and AKRIBOS 'carefully'."⁵

II. THE CONTRAST

"...not as unwise", ASOPHOI, lit. no wisdom, lacking understanding and insight, "but as wise", SOPHOI, just the opposite of unwise. "Paul often uses the word SOPHIA for divine truth. The SOPHOI are those who possess this truth, which he had called light, and the ASOPHOI are those who have it not."⁶ The believer has as a result of the new birth the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He has an entirely different "world-view", a different attitude towards life (cf. II Corinthians 5:17).

III. THE CALCULATION

"...making the most of every opportunity", EXAGORAZOMENOI, present tense participle, used in the imperative sense. Related to the EXAGORAZO (cf. Galatians 3:13; 4:4; Colossians 4:5), to buy up in the market place, used here in the sense of seizing the opportunity; "redeeming the time" is a good lit. trans., "but not in the sense of making up for lost time, as in the words 'Redeem thy misspent time that's past.'"⁷ The word speaks to things that come our way, i.e., snap up every opportunity that comes along.

IV. THE CAUSE

“...because the days are evil.” Simply read Paul’s description in Romans 1:18-32 to see how evil the day was, and things haven’t gotten any better. The nature of man and the schemes of the devil haven’t changed for the better. The Apostle expressly warned about the evil of the days to come in II Timothy 3:1-7.

V. THE COMMAND

“Therefore do not be foolish.” This expression in the text lit. reads, “Stop becoming foolish.” The word “foolish” is APHRON, without sense, lacking the ability to think. “...but understand what the Lord’s will is.” The word “understand” is SUNIETE, present imperative. It refers to the ability to bring things together and see them in relation to one another. In other words, it stresses the role of “sanctified” reasoning! What are they to “understand”? “The Lord’s will.” What does this refer to? The secret decree? No. The will of God for me as an individual: that is, where am I to live, what job am I to do and related questions? Is this what Paul had in mind? No. The Apostle has exhorted his readers to “walk as children of light...and to find out what pleases the Lord.” It is the MORAL will of God as revealed in Scripture that Paul has in mind (comp. Hebrews 5:14).

CONCLUSION: Adolphe Monod was one of the great Reformed ministers of the 19th Century. He was, in fact, the foremost preacher in all of France. Stricken with a fatal illness while a relatively young man, he penned on his deathbed a remarkable little book simply titled *Adolphe Monod’s Farewell*. Five of 25 chapters dealt with the theme ‘A Dying Man’s Regrets’ – one of which addresses the use of time. “One of the things which trouble the Christian who thinks his end is near, or would trouble him if he were not at the foot of the cross, is the manner in which he has employed his time.” Monod then proceeds to give the following three important considerations. (1) We must be pervaded by the thought that we do not belong to ourselves, and therefore our time is not ours, anymore than the rest of what we have. (2) Since our time belongs to God, we must always be diligent in seizing the opportunities which God holds out to us. In order to do this, we must have our eyes constantly opened and turned towards God – if our attention is diverted, we will become preoccupied with our own petty interests. (3) We must go about our lives methodically and thoughtfully, in other words, our minds must be sanctified and we must serve God acceptably.⁸ This is what it means to walk in wisdom.

ENDNOTES

¹ B.K. Waltke, *Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?* (Eerdmans, 1999), p. 12.

² “Proverbs is a book about wisdom and its application to human life. The Hebrew word *hokma*, ‘wisdom,’ refers broadly to some skill or expertise, a natural endowment that one may possess intelligence of a most general kind. It seems, moreover, to be used more technically in the Book of Proverbs for what can be acquired by instruction (see 21:11) or by observation of one’s world (see 6:6-8).” W.J. Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel: Its Expression in the Books of the Old Testament* (Baker, 1988), p. 223.

³ J.M. Boice, *Ephesians: An Expository Commentary* (Baker, 1988), p. 185.

⁴ R. Haldane, *An Exposition of Romans* (rpt. MacDonald, 1958) p. 556.

⁵ A.T. Lincoln, *Ephesians: Word Biblical Commentary* (Word, 1990), p. 341.

⁶ C. Hodge, *Commentary On the Epistle to the Ephesians* (rpt. Revell, 1978), p. 299.

⁷ J.A. Robinson, *Commentary On Ephesians: Exposition of the Greek Text* (rpt. Kregel, 1979), p. 120.

⁸ *Adolphe Monod’s Farewell* trans, Owen Thomas (rpt. The Banner of Truth, 1962), pp. 70-74.