

Doing the Will of God

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"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." Hebrews 10:36

Man's ways and God's ways differ in well nigh every respect. Man's ways are hastily planned, and for the most part imperfectly executed: God's ways are designed with infinite wisdom, and performed with infinite power. Man's aim is the aggrandisement of self in some shape or form; pleasure or profit, of some kind or other, is the main-spring of all his actions: the aim of God is his own eternal glory. Man, when bent upon any particular object, leaps hastily towards it, and cannot brook the slightest obstacle: God slowly brings about his own eternal purposes, in the face of every obstacle, and in spite of all opposition or contradiction from earth or hell. Man's purpose is to bring things to a rapid conclusion; no sooner does he scatter the seed, than he wants to reap the harvest: God's plans are carried out through a series of years; and, as they are planned with infinite wisdom, so they are brought to pass by a succession of apparently opposing and contradictory events.

The reason, then, why the Apostle plainly intimated to his believing brethren that they had "need of patience, that after they had done the will of God, they might receive the promise," was, to remind them that God's ways were not as their ways, nor God's thoughts as their thoughts: but that, in the execution of his own eternal purposes, there would be such obstacles and apparent contradictions, that it needed on their part "patience" to wait the result. It is, therefore, as if he bade them stand still, and see the salvation of God; to put

themselves into his hands, and lie with submission at his feet.

By way of bringing out, as the Lord may enable, the mind and meaning of the Spirit in our text with greater distinctness and clearness, I shall adopt three leading divisions of my subject, and show,

First, what it is to do "the will of God."

Secondly, Why we have "need of patience" after we have done his will. And,

Thirdly, In what way we "receive the promise" when patience has had its perfect work.

I.—But, at the very beginning, it will be necessary to settle certain points. If the beginning of our sermons be wrong, as in religion, the whole will be wrong; and, if we set out with false premises, the conclusion must needs be vitiated. I like, therefore, at the very outset of my discourses, to lay down my points clearly, that, with God's blessing, we may start fair; that there be no obscurity, haziness, mist, or fog upon the mind; but that, by laying down my positions with clearness and distinctness at the beginning, there may be no mistake in my meaning, except a man will mistake wilfully.

i. Let me then, first, settle from the Scriptures of truth what is meant here by "*the will of God.*" "The will of God" may be divided into two branches: there is *the revealed will of God*, and there is *the secret will of God*; and these two are often contradictory. I will explain my meaning by a few instances selected from God's own inspired record.

1. It was *the revealed will* of God that Adam should not touch

the forbidden fruit, God specially commanded him not to eat it; therefore *that* was the revealed will of God. But it was *the secret will* of God that Adam should eat of it; because by the bringing in of sin into the world through Adam's transgression, the glorious plan of redemption, which was in the mind of God from all eternity, was brought to light.

2. It was *the revealed will* of God that Abraham should slay his son; and Abraham, acting upon the revealed will of God, took the knife for that purpose, so that but one moment intervened betwixt the blade being drawn and being sheathed in Isaac's heart. But *the secret will* of God was, that Isaac should not be slain, but that the ram should be caught in the thicket, and be offered up in Isaac's stead.

3. It was *the revealed will* of God that Saul should slay Agag, root and branch. But it was *the secret will* of God that he should not; for it was by means of Saul's transgression in this matter that he was put away, and David set upon the throne.

4. It was God's *revealed will* that David should not commit adultery; for God has said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" and that revealed will of God David was bound to look to. But it was *the secret will* of God that David should fall; for it was God's secret purpose to give him Solomon from the wife of Uriah.

5. It was *the revealed will* of God that the Jews should not put the Lord to death; for God has said, "Thou shalt do no murder." But it was *the secret will* of God that Jesus should be crucified; as we read, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (Acts 2:23.)

6. It was *the revealed will* of God that Peter should not deny his Master; but it was *the secret will* of God that he should deny him, to teach him experimentally his weakness.

Thus, I have endeavoured to show, in a variety of scriptural instances, how *the revealed will* of God often clashes with *the secret will* of God.

ii. But what is "the will of God" that we are to do—God's *revealed will*, or God's *secret will*? There cannot be a shadow of a doubt which will we are to do. To say we must do the secret will of God is bare-faced antinomianism. To steer our course by the secret will of God would be as much a delusion, as if the mariner were to steer his course upon the trackless ocean by the newly discovered planet, invisible to the naked eye. Shipwreck would alike terminate his voyage and ours. No; it is *the revealed will* of God we must obey. It is that which God has designed us to walk by: and he will take care if we walk by any other rule than this revealed will that we shall smart for it, in time or in eternity. "*Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.*" (Deut. 29:29.)

"The will of God" in our text, then, is *the revealed will* of God—the mind of God, as declared in the inspired writings.

But what is it *to do* "the will of God?" Here we must be equally clear, if the Lord enable. Our trumpet here, too, must give a certain sound. What is it *to do* "the will of God?" Now observe, *to do* "the will of God," is to do it in the way in which God would have it done; and three things are absolutely needful, in order that we should do "the will of God" as God would have that will to be done. "Thy will be

done on earth, as it is in heaven." We must do it from right *motives*, from right *ends*, and under right *influences*. But what are right motives, right ends, and right influences? Are they to be found in fallen man? Are they the product of nature? They are not. Right motives are spiritual motives; right ends are spiritual ends; right influences are spiritual influences. And therefore, only so far as our motives are of grace, our ends are of grace, and our influences are of grace, do we "the will of God" as God would have it done.

There is a great deal of talk about doing "the will of God;" and the precept is much insisted upon by those who never felt the power of God's truth in their souls. Men think that "the will of God" can be done by the creature; and so long as "the will of God" is done, it matters not *how* it is done. But a man may do "the will of God" from a mere selfish feeling, to gain heaven thereby. Yes a man may do what he calls "the will of God," and yet self be his end, self his motive, and self his influence.

iii. But having, as the Lord enabled, laid down, I hope, in accordance with divine truth, *what* "the will of God" is, and what it is *to do* "the will of God," let us enter into some particulars wherein "the will of God" consists, and whereby "the will of God" is done. And observe, the Apostle in [is?] writing to gracious characters; not to sinners dead in trespasses and sins, not to professors dead in a graceless profession; but to living souls, to those who have ears to hear, hearts to feel, and consciences to tremble at God's word.

There is, then, a variety of particulars wherein we have *to do* "the will of God;" but it is only so far as God is pleased to work in us "to will and to do of his good pleasure," that we do "the will of God" at all. For instance,

1. It is one part of the *revealed will* of God, that his people *should repent of their sins*. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3:19.) Now, when the Lord is pleased to pierce the heart, to lay conviction upon our conscience, to work sorrow and distress in our mind on account of sin, then we are doing that branch of God's revealed will, by repenting of our sins, and confessing them before God; and not only so, but forsaking, as well as confessing. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Prov. 28:13.) Every poor, sorrowing, child of God, that is grieved and troubled on account of sin, is *doing* "the will of God," by groaning and sighing under sin as a burden upon his conscience.

2. Again. *To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ* is the *revealed will* of God. What said the Lord Jesus, when they asked him, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28, 29.) "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 3:23.) Thus, when the jailor fearing he should perish, and his soul filled with horror, cried out, in the agony of despair, "What must I do to be saved?"—what was the answer? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:31.) Faith was given him to believe; and thus he did "the will of God." Not that the creature was able to put forth this mighty act of faith; but with the word, power came into his soul, and the Holy Ghost raised up faith in his heart to see Jesus, and to believe in his precious name. To believe, then, in Jesus is *to do* "the will of God"—to do it from the heart; "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:10.)

3. *To come out of the world*,—to forsake it utterly, and never more to walk in its alluring paths—this is the revealed will of God; as he says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separated, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:17, 18.) To forsake the world, all its vanities, pleasures, and charms; and, like Ruth of old, to cleave to the people of God saying, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:"—thus to feel, and thus to act, is *to do the revealed will* of God, under the Spirit's secret influence in the soul.

4. *To come out, and be separated from professing churches*, which have a name to live while dead—is *to do "the will of God;"* for we read, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." (2 Tim. 3:5.) Therefore, to come boldly out of all letter churches, be they ever so high or over so low in doctrine, if the Holy Ghost is not in their midst, if the power of godliness is denied, or the things of God are not vitally felt by them,—to come and turn away from them, is *to do "the will of God."*

5. *To forsake the ministry of letter preachers*; heady, notional Calvinists, with the doctrines in the head, and enmity against the power of vital godliness and the living experience of God's children in the heart—to flee from such a ministry is *to do "the will of God;"* for the Lord commends the church in Ephesus, for "trying those who said they were apostles, and were not, and found them liars." (Rev. 2:2.) And if any of you who fear God, are sitting under letter ministers, sound in the head, but devoid of experience in the heart, you are to do what God praises the Ephesian church for doing—to try them by the word of God and your own

experience and if you find them liars, lying against the truth of God in any of its blessed branches, you are to come out from among them, and forsake the tents of those wicked men. This is *to do "the will of God."*—to turn your back on the false apostles, and cast your lot among his poor, despised, and persecuted family.

6. *To seek the Lord's face;* to pour out your heart before him; to wrestle with him for spiritual blessings, as Jacob wrestled with the angel; to give him no rest until he manifest himself in your soul, and shed abroad his pardoning love in your heart—this is *doing "the will of God;"* for the Lord says, "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." (Psa. 62:8.) "Seek the Lord while he may be found: call upon him while he is near." (Isa. 55:6.) "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:22.) The Lord has given these invitations as a part of his revealed will; and when we are enabled to seek his face, to cry, sigh, long, pant, and pour out our hearts before him, it is *doing* a part of God's *revealed will*.

7. *To wait at his feet;* to take no denial; to persevere; to press through the throng of doubts and fears, like the woman with the issue of blood, and not to rest till we touch the hem of the Redeemer's garment, and find virtue flowing out of the blessed Immanuel into our souls—is *to do "the will of God."* What said God himself from heaven? (and I remember once how sweet those words were to my soul!) "This is my beloved Son! hear ye him." As though God said, 'Turn away your eyes from every one else; listen not to the breath of the creature—"*This* is my beloved Son! hear ye *him*.'" He has the words of eternal life.' His words are not the words of man that shall die, of a creature that shall come to nought; but the words that he speaks, "they are spirit, and they are life."

To wait, then, upon the Lord till he be gracious; to beg of him to manifest himself to our souls, and keep pleading with him, as Job said, "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments," (Job 23:4,)—to do this continually and unceasingly, as he enables, is *to do God's revealed will*.

8. *To endure afflictions*; to wade up to the very neck, at times, through a sea of trouble, is *to do God's will*. He has left a "poor and an afflicted people," and they are "to trust in the name of the Lord." It is "through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom." Afflictions are our appointed portion, if our names are in the book of life. We have to be conformed to the image of a suffering Saviour below, if we are to be conformed to his glorified image above. And therefore to endure a great fight of afflictions; to be buffeted by Satan, hated by the world, and troubled, daily troubled by a body of sin and death, is *to do God's revealed will*.

9. *To bear whatever God may lay upon us*; when one cheek is smitten, to turn the other also; not to render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; to submit to every stroke that God may lay upon us in providence or in grace; to see the rod, and him who hath appointed it; and to know that every rod is the mouth of God to us,—thus to endure "the will of God," (for "the will of God" is done by *suffering* as well as by acting), is *to do "the will of God."*

10. *To resist even unto blood, striving against sin*; not to give way to it, but to fight against it with every power of our soul; to cry and sigh, to grieve and groan, to wrestle and plead with the Lord that sin may not drag us down into open shame—thus to sigh and cry is *to do "the will of God."* And there is a special promise to those who resist unto blood, resist Satan, take up the cross, deny self, put off the old

man, and crucify the flesh with the lusts thereof. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. 10:13.)

11. *"To endure to the end; not to give up, not to yield the fight; but though all weakness, all helplessness, and exercised within and without, as Hart says,*

*"Still to maintain the battle,
With soldier-like behaviour,
To keep the field,
And never yield,
But firmly eye the Saviour."*

—this patient continuance in well-doing is *to do "the will of God."*

II.—But why have we *"need of patience"* after we have done "the will of God?" which is the second part of my subject. Because we may *do "the will of God"* (though we can only do it under divine influence) and yet the promise be delayed. We may sow in tears, and yet be very long before we reap in joy. We may have years of painful exercise before the Lord comes into our soul in the rich manifestations of his glory and love. And therefore, we need patience; as James says, "Let patience have her perfect work" (1:4); and he quotes to us (5:7), the instance of the husbandman, who "has long patience," and does not expect a harvest to be reaped in the same week that the seed was committed to the furrow. Is it not so in nature? Winds and storms, nipping frosts, blight, mildew—all these things pass over the corn; and yet, when harvest comes, it is ripened and reaped in spite of, and

through every contrary influence. And so with the grace of God in the soul. God has no mushroom Christians in his family; no Jonah's gourds, that spring up in a night, and wither in a night; soon ripe, and soon rotten. The oak is the growth of a century; the mushroom the growth of a single night: and so, if we are to be oaks, "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified," we shall not grow very fast. Parents, you know, do not like to see their children run up too quickly. 'O,' they say, 'I am afraid by my child's shooting up so tall, he is growing beyond his strength.' And parents never like to see the heads of their children grow very large, in disproportion to their bodies. 'Ah,' says the anxious parent, 'I fear lest there be disease in the head, lest there be water upon the brain.' And is it not so with professors? I never like to see people's heads grow faster than their hearts; it is sure to be at the expense of their bodies. Their spindle shanks show that the vital fluids of the body are being exhausted by this morbid growth. Many professors you may find in this day, with large heads, but small hearts; active tongues, but their limbs trembling, and their hands and feet so weak, that they can scarcely move a step in God's way. God keep you and me from resembling them.

Thus, we have "need of patience." But what does "*patience*" imply?

1. It implies, first, *endurance*. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a throne, as my Father hath appointed unto me." Contrast the disciples that endured with those that fell away. When the Lord told them, they must "eat his flesh, and drink his blood," 'Oh,' said they, "this is a hard saying: who can hear it?" (John 6:60.) And when he told them, "Ye shall know the truth, and

the truth shall make you free," their pride rose to resent it, and they said, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." And what was the end? "Then took they up stones to cast at him." Oh, it is a mercy to endure! When we look around, and see those who started with us in the Christian race—where are they? It is almost with us like those who came to Job: "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Some have gone into the world; others, fallen into sin; others, drunk down deadly draughts of heresy and error; so that like a shipwrecked sailor, we almost seem to have escaped with our lives in our hands. But if we endure for a single year, or a single day, it is only by the grace of God. It is now ten years since I first preached in this metropolis; and what has kept me in the truth to this day? The grace of God, I hope. But it has been through exercises and trials, temptations and afflictions; and therefore I must preach them, because I feel them; and though my coward flesh shrinks from them, I can see what need there is for this heavy ballast, that the vessel may sail safely. It is to bring us low, and keep us low. By the pressure of sin, temptation, sorrows, and exercises, we are kept fast by the truth of God; for when we are brought into these painful places, we are made to feel that nothing short of the truth of God can save or bless our souls. We lean upon error, and it cannot hold us up; we lean upon self, and it is a lying refuge; we lean upon the truth, and find the truth to be that which supports our hearts. And thus, having bought the truth in the furnace of affliction, we love the truth, and we cleave to the truth, because the truth, through affliction and exercise, is the only thing which can comfort and support us in the trying hour.

But we have "need of patience" when the Lord does not appear, does not bless our souls, does not come into our hearts, does not visit us with his gracious presence, withholds his smiling countenance, and leaves us to grope for

the wall like the blind, and to grope as if we had no eyes. But what makes us *endure!* A sense of the consequences of not enduring. Can I go into the *world?* I cannot; my heart will often go there, but I get stung with guilt if my heart goes after the world, and my body follows it. Can I go into *sin?* If I do, it makes my conscience bleed. Can I go into *error?* I cannot; it is hateful to my soul. Can I drink down deadly draughts of *heresy?* I cannot; there is poison in it; no sweetness, no power, no savour, no life, no unction. Shall I go into dry doctrines; and a graceless profession? That will leave my heart like the blasted heath; no heavenly dew, no rain, no fertilizing showers, no divine down-comings or inshinings. No; I must cleave to the truth, let men say what they will; by it I must abide, for I know, well know, there is none other. Nay, I would sooner give up all my religion, go into the world, and be as I was some twenty-five years ago—a carnal, proud, self-conceited man altogether, than have a name to live, entrench myself in crude notions, or lose myself in a labyrinth of dry doctrines. No; if I have not the grace of God in my soul, and the power of his truth in my heart, I would sooner make no profession at all. And if I preach, I must (God enable me ever to do it!) "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and for the power of vital godliness; for I know nothing but the power of it can do for me, or save my soul from the bottomless pit. And yet we "need patience." When sin presses and Satan harasses, when clouds lower, when all is darkness within and gloom without, when God hides his face, when we have to wade through a sea of trials, we "need patience." But he who has begun the work in the souls of his people will carry it on for his great Name's sake, and will make them endure, that he may crown his grace with eternal glory.

2. But "patience," also, implies *submission*. And what makes

us submit? Seeing "it is the will of God;" *that* is our resting-place. For instance. Do I see it is "the will of God "that I should endure afflictions? I can submit. Do I see it is "the will of God" to lead me through sufferings to inherit his glorious kingdom? I can submit. Do I see that to call upon his name, seek his face, pour out my heart before him, is to do "the will of God? "I can submit. When I can see *what* "the will of God" is, and when I can see that I am doing, or desiring to do, "the will of God," then I can submit; not otherwise. Rebellion; enmity, hardness, all work, when we cannot see that we are doing "the will of God." But when, with a measure of singleness of eye to God's glory, we can see that we are doing "the will of God," then submission is wrought with divine power in our soul.

Thus these two things, *endurance* and *submission*, make up divine "patience." It is not a man being very quiet, very meek, very contented, and very amiable; a man may be all these, and not have divine patience. We read of "the patience of Job:" but if we examine the book of Job, we shall not find much patience in the usual sense of the word; as though Job were all meekness, amiability, quietness, and resignation. No; but we find *endurance*; Job did not "curse God and die," as his wife would have persuaded him. And we find too, *submission*; for we find that Job loathed and abhorred himself in dust and ashes. And so you and I may find much murmuring, much repining, much hardness of heart, much darkness of mind, and much working up of the sea of rebellion; yet we may have "patience"—patience in the new man of grace, and yet rebellion in the old man of sin and death—patience as the work of the Spirit, enabling us to endure and submit to "the will of God," and yet many secret murmurs from that old nature which is ever enmity against God and godliness.

III.—But we pass on to consider what is intended by the expression, "*receive the promise.*" Here is a deep vein of experimental truth; God enable you and me to feel that we know it. Now, it does not say "Ye have need of patience, that *before* ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise;" but "Ye have need of patience, that *after* ye have done the will of God, ye might *receive the promise.*"

1. But let us see what is meant by "the promise?" The grand promise is, *Jesus Christ*; "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Cor. 1:20.) He is the promised seed. He is the sum and substance of every Scripture promise. Now, there is "a receiving of the promise;" and what is that but receiving Christ into the heart, in all his fulness, preciousness, blood, obedience, and divine suitability; feeling him precious to the soul, enjoying his presence, tasting his love, and having a sense of acceptance in him? But do you not see, we have, first, *to do* "the will of God;" and not only so, but to have "patience" *before* we receive this promise? How men mistake this! 'Believe in Christ; all you have to do is to believe in Christ!'—how this sounds from a thousand pulpits! How, too, these worse than Egyptian taskmasters, will lay on their scourge on God's poor tried and tempted family, and try to whip them out of their doubts and fears! 'Why do you not believe in Christ? Away with doubts and fears!' This is worse than Egyptian oppression! These are worse tyrants than the taskmasters; for they could only scourge the body, while these scourge the soul; they could only wound the back, but these wound the conscience: and inasmuch as the soul is more valuable than the body, and the conscience than the back, so are these worse taskmasters and tyrants than the Egyptians of old. Believing in Christ is no such easy matter. A letter faith is easy enough: to say, 'I believe in Christ,' is no hard matter,—except for an honest conscience—hard work

then. But for a seared conscience, and a dead professor, nothing is so easy as to say, 'My Lord and my God!' or 'my dear Jesus!' He can sing at the top of his voice, 'My Jesus and my God,' when God has never dropt one taste of his love into his heart. But it is no such easy matter to believe in Jesus; no such easy matter to receive the promise; no such easy matter to know our sins are pardoned through atoning blood; no such easy matter to bring the kingdom of God, with divine power, savour, and blessedness, into the soul. This the Lord's people well know, and they alone. They are doing "the will of God" in their mourning, seeking, crying, praying, and waiting. But they have "need of patience;" for the Lord long delays; the promise does not come; the smiles are withheld; the sweet manifestations do not drop into their hearts. But yet, in due time, they will, "receive the promise." They have done "the will of God," in seeking his face, calling upon his name, and groaning after the whispers of his love. They have endured many storms of inward temptation, and many gusts of outward persecution; many a hard blow from letter ministers, and many a thrust with side and shoulder from the rams and he-goats of the flock. Yet they have endured, have not given it up, though Satan has often suggested, 'Your religion is vain, your faith a delusion, your hope a lie; I shall have you at last; you will die in despair, and lie under the wrath of God to all eternity.' Still they are doing "the will of God," and cannot give it up; still they cry, sigh, groan, pray, and endure patiently and submissively till morning break in upon the soul, and dispel the long night of darkness.

2. But there are many promises connected with the grand promise. There is *the pardon of sin* revealed to the soul. Many of the Lord's dear family are doing "the will of God," in seeking his face, crying for the manifestations of his pardoning love, and enduring a great fight of afflictions in

their conscience, because forgiveness is not sealed home upon their hearts. Well, you shall "receive the promise" in due time. "Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins;" (Acts 5:31); and he will give you them both. If he has given you repentance, he will also give you remission: it is a twofold blessing in the hand of Immanuel; and if he has given you the one, he will not withhold the other.

3. *The love of God shed abroad in the heart.* Is there not a "promise" that the Lord will make known his love to the soul? "I have loved thee," he says, with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3.) Has God drawn thee? Has your heart been softened by a sense of his mercy? Has your heart been melted and broken down in an approach to the footstool of grace, and a sweet hope sprung up in your soul that the Lord would soon appear for you? Have you come out of the world under the light of divine teaching, and come needy and naked to a Saviour's feet? What are these but the drawings of God in the soul? "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44.) Every desire, every cry, and every longing petition that Christ would come into your soul in his blood and love, is a drawing of the Father; and if he has drawn you to his footstool, it is because he has loved you with an everlasting love, and means to shed abroad that love in your soul; and then you will "receive the promise."

4. *That all things work together for the good of God's family*—for you and me, if we are of the royal seed—is also a part of "the promise." What, *all* things? Yes, *all* things. It is a large word, the largest that could be used, and yet not too large. 'Well,' say you, 'but how will *this* temptation or *this* trial, or *this* affliction, or *this* exercise, work together for my

good?' God has said "*all* things" shall work together for your good. Do not make God a liar—do not add to his word, nor diminish it either, "lest he reprove thee, and thou be found unto him a liar." (Prov. 30:6.) The temptation shall work for thy good; the affliction shall work for thy good; the trial shall work for thy good; whatever be laid upon thee, in providence or in grace, it shall work together for thy good. You cannot see the secret springs; but they are all working, one within another, like some curious machine, and your good is to be the divine result. But you must, first, *do* "the will of God" in endurance and submission, in putting your mouth in the dust, and in seeking his face; and then will you "receive the promise," "that all things work together for good to those who love God."

5. Then, at the last, *a crown of glory*, immortal bliss, unfading joys,—is not this part of "the promise" that God has given to them that love him? "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2.) "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (17:14.) But we must do "the will of God" first. Did not Jesus do "the will of God" perfectly, we imperfectly? Did not he endure a great "fight of affliction," and "the contradiction of sinners against Himself?" How he suffered! how he was persecuted! how he was tempted, hated, scorned, abhorred! Yet in all things he did "the will of God;" and now he sits at the right hand of God in glory, "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." But whilst here, we must do "the will of God;" and to do "the will of God," is to patiently suffer all things that may come upon us, from without and from within—to exercise ourselves unto godliness—to endure the hidings of God's face, darkness of mind, temptations

from Satan, the evils of our hearts, the scorn of man, and everything God may lay upon us—sickness, poverty, disease, and death. We have to do "the will of God" in all these things, he—never be it forgotten—working in us those things which are well-pleasing in his sight, and making us what he would have us to be; we the clay, he the Potter, and all we spiritually are and have the work of his hands.

None but God's people can do "the will of God." Others may do it legally, outwardly, in the letter, in the performance of the precept as it stands. But they are not doing "the will of God," because they are not doing it from the heart. Their eye is not single to the glory of God, nor their whole body full of light. They do not act from spiritual motives, for spiritual ends, and under spiritual influences. They are "children in whom is no faith;" and "without faith it is impossible to please God;" (Heb. 11:6); therefore, they cannot do "the will of God." But his obedient family, his trembling children, his little ones, whom he is leading into the footsteps of the flock—these are doing "the will of God." 'Oh, but,' say you, 'this is my great trial, that I am not doing "the will of God;" so rebellious, so worldly, so proud, so inconsistent, so stumbling, halting, slipping, failing, falling am I. I cannot see I do "the will of God" in any one thing: I cannot see, when I take a review of my spiritual life, that I have done "the will of God" in any one point.' No, you cannot see it; because your eye is single to the glory of God, and your body full of light; the light in your body shows the sins of your path. Therefore, while proud, painted hypocrites are congratulating themselves in doing "the will of God," and are making a mighty noise and bluster about doing "the will of God," as though none but they did "the will of God" at all; (though with all their loud profession it is all in the letter, from legal motives, and in a self-righteous spirit)—the poor, needy, tried, tempted, exercised, cast down, and distressed children

of the Most High are doing "the will of God," because they are lying where God would have them lie, at his feet, as passive as the moist clay in which the potter works, doing "the will of God" inwardly, from their hearts, because they are of the "true circumcision."

Now, these have "need of patience." Others, who are not thus exercised, have no want of it. But the people of God, who have right views of God and of themselves, who know what "the will of God" is, and desire to do that will, are always coming short. Yet their very mourning because they do come short, is doing "the will of God;" their very lamenting over their infirmities is doing "the will of God;" their very hating and abhorring themselves in dust and ashes, is doing "the will of God;" their very putting their mouth in the dust, feeling themselves to be the vilest of the vile, is doing "the will of God," for God would have them humble, and he makes them what he would have them to be. God would bring down proud looks; and he does bring them down by these exercises. God would have them filled with shame and confusion of face; and he does thus fill them with shame and confusion of face. Thus these are all the time doing "the will of God," by his secret power and influence upon their souls; when others, who think how much they are doing "the will of God" are not doing "the will of God" at all. Look at the two brothers—the prodigal and the elder brother. Which did "the will of God?"—the mourning, broken-hearted, confessing penitent, or the stubborn-hearted, self-righteous brother? Why, every heart that knows God and truth will reply, 'Surely, surely, the returning prodigal.' He was doing "the will of God;" and God blessed him by putting shoes upon his feet, a robe upon his back, and the ring of eternal love upon his hand. But, my friends, if you and I are doing "the will of God," we have great "need of patience." Heaven is not so easily gained: the battlements of Zion are not to be taken

by storm: the harvest is not reaped in a day. Many trials, many exercises, many castings down; many afflictions we shall have to endure. But *after* we have endured them, *after* we have done "the will of God," we shall "receive the promise." And every affliction through which the promise comes, and every patient endurance of suffering and sorrow, makes the promise more sweet when it does come. Christ in the heart, the love of God in the soul, the manifestations of his favour, "all things working together for our good," and heaven and glory at the last—who would not wade through a sea of trouble to reach that happy shore? Who would not be all his days up to his neck in afflictions, if glory and honour and immortality is to fire his ravished soul with bliss at last? Yes, if we are to "receive the promise"—Christ here and Christ hereafter; the love of God in our soul now, and the love of God to all eternity—we must do "the will of God;" and in doing "the will of God," we must endure to the end, submit to God's will, fight the good fight of faith, and, with God's help, resist even unto blood, striving against sin, till in due time we "receive the promise" to our comfort and God's eternal glory!