

When God Speaks...

Can We Know the Will of God?



That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:2).

It is certain from Romans 12:2 that God has a perfect will for every believer. But how can we know what that will is? That same verse declares that we can “prove or know” the will of God.

God has a place—not every place—not just any place . . . but a place for us to be and to serve. It has been said, “There is not any place like this place, anywhere near this place, so this must be—the place.”

1. The **Opportunity** is not the call. There is plenty of opportunity and many open doors.
2. The **Ability** is not the call.
3. The **Invitation** is not the call.
4. The **Need** of the world is not the call. The whole world cries out for light.
5. The **Desire** is not the call.

All of the above are factors and some or all of these things combine together to bring us to the point of decision. These factors weigh heavily on our hearts and the burden grows until one day we come to a decision—a

conclusion—that God is leading us to do a work in a place. Francis Dixon, my English friend and fellow minister, defined the call and will of God in these words: “The call of God is that deep inward conviction accompanied by peace in the heart and confirmed by the Word of God that God would have us do a certain work in a certain place.”

Isaiah put it this way: “*And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left*” (Isaiah 30:21).

It was in 1840 that David Livingstone heard missionary Robert Moffat say: “In the vast plain to the north I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been.”

That seemed to have been the deciding moment when David Livingstone set his heart on Africa. On the other hand, perhaps that moment might have served as the platform on which the opportunity, the ability, the invitation, the need, the desire would bring conclusion to the call.

Sometimes the call is clear, crisp, and sudden. Usually, however, God uses building blocks to bring us to that





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trail through Africa was a trail of tears, sickness, and many times despair, but still he plodded on, driven by the will of God to open up Africa for the Gospel

Standing in the Abbey, gazing down at the inscription on his grave, I thought of all that he went through in Africa. I thought of his wife dying there and his hardships. She had been in Scotland for a year with the children. A set time had been arranged for her to return to Africa to be with David. In great loneliness for her husband, she pleaded with him to allow her to come early. After only three months of being back in Africa, Mary Livingstone became very ill and then she died. The will of God is not always without a price.

That day in the Abbey, one question loomed in my mind: “WHY?” Why would a man go through all of that?

Livingstone later wrote: “I loved Mary when we married and the longer I lived with her, the more I loved her.” Then he added these words in his journal, “I am left alone in the world—Mary, Mary, I feel like I could die.”

Leaving Mary’s grave, David Livingstone plodded on exploring for Christ. It was May 1, 1873, when he died in a distant village at Ilala in Zambia. In the early hours of the morning, his two servants, Chuma and Susi, entered his tent, found him on his knees—but lifeless. They buried his heart on the spot, dried his body in the sun, and transported his body over a thousand miles to the coast. That body was returned to Britain for burial in Westminster Abbey.

That day in the Abbey, one question loomed in my mind: “Why?” Why would a man go through all of that? What could possibly motivate a life of suffering like that? What could generate such COURAGE?

Several years later, I found the answer to that question in Scotland. I was visiting the homeplace of Livingstone. I saw the bed he slept in as a boy. I looked at the tools he worked with in a nearby mill from early morning until after dark. I read the actual letters that he had written. Then I saw it—his motto as a young man—the theme of his life. As a young man Livingstone had picked up a pen and had written, ***“I will place no value on anything that I have or possess except in relation to the kingdom of Christ.”***

fantastic point of certainty—when we hear the Holy Spirit say, *“This is the way . . . walk ye in it.”*

Some years ago on my first trip to London, I visited Westminster Abbey. In the center of the Cathedral, buried beneath the stone floor, lies the body of David Livingstone.

It seemed impossible to me that I could actually be so near a man like that. Just inches away . . . just beneath my feet was the body of a man who was described by Florence Nightingale in these words:

“God has taken away the greatest man of our generation, for Dr. Livingstone stood alone.”

Dr. Livingstone did stand alone. He literally opened up dark Africa for other missionaries. He plodded more than 29,000 miles through Africa and everywhere he went, he left his mark. He administered medicine (he was a medical doctor) and he gave out the message of Jesus Christ. David Livingstone spent his life exploring the Dark Continent, plodding deep into the interior where no white man had ever been and even crossing the continent. His goal was to open up the continent for the Gospel of Christ.

Livingstone saw much of death during his life. He witnessed the murder of hundreds of Africans by the slave traders. The

Here was the answer to my question at Westminster Abbey. This was the reason he had gone so far and had done so much. It was his personal estimation of Jesus. "I will place no value on ANYTHING I have...except in relation to the Kingdom of Christ."

His commitment to the will of God had led him from Scotland to Africa...to Westminster Abbey.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:17).

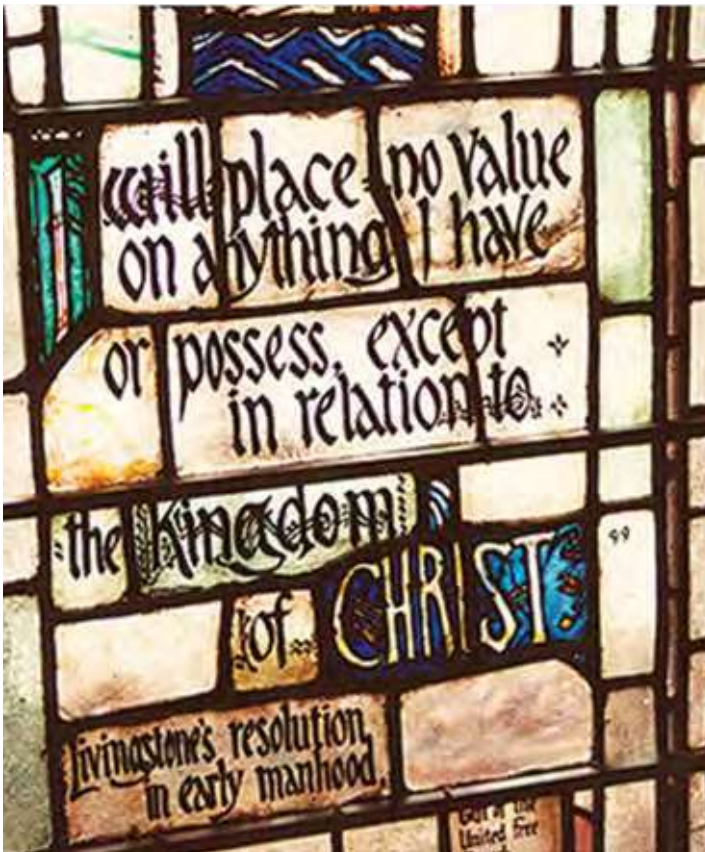


Emily Dickinson wrote:

"If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain."

And may we add:

If I can dry one tear of sorrow
And brighten one tomorrow
And point one in darkness
To the skies;
To hope in God before he dies,
I shall not have lived in vain.



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