

## A Short Theology on Christian Wisdom : S. Swartz

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### Selected Scriptures

1. **What is Wisdom?** Prov. 1:7, “The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; Ignorant fools despise wisdom and discipline.” Some elements of wisdom:
  - i. Fear of God: worldly wisdom is pointless because God isn’t worshipped by it. You cannot be wise outside the fear of God. Prov. 4:6, wisdom is personified as a woman, but knowledge revealed by God is wisdom. God is a very present help in the time of need.
  - ii. Skillful Life: the word “wisdom” is also translated as “skill” or “aptitude,” (see the word used to do something: Ex. 31:6, 35:26, 35:35, 1 Chron. 28:21). Wisdom is skill. In Prov. 18:13, wisdom ponders and thinks. Prov. 31:30, the fear of the Lord brings blessing showing wisdom and skill.
  - iii. Learner’s Heart: “Ignorant fools despise...” an unbeliever won’t obey God. Prov. 17:10, a rebuke to a man of understanding is more effective than a hundred blows to a fool. Prov. 12:1, those who love discipline love knowledge.

➤ Wisdom is knowledge revealed by God to those who fear God and humbly hunger for the ability to live a God-pleasing, skillful life.
2. **What is Freedom in Christ?** In Gal. 1:6, after a short introduction of Paul’s authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ, he rebukes the churches of Galatia for requiring circumcision of Gentile believers who came to faith in Christ. The apostles already declared faith in Christ alone for salvation in Acts 15:13-35. Gal. 2:16, man is not justified by the works of the Law, but through faith in Christ. Gal. 3:1-3, Paul declares the foolishness of those who were born in faith but now teaching works to keep salvation. In Gal. 3:23-24, Paul describes the Law as a tutor to show us the need and purpose for Christ to come. Gal. 4:3-7, Christ was sent to free us from being slaves of sin and redeemed by Christ. Gal. 5:1-4, the Law is a yoke of slavery. Man cannot be justified by keeping the Law, that is a fall from grace.

➤ Freedom in Christ is freedom from the faulty notion I can be righteous by works, like through the Law of Moses without Christ (See also Paul’s argument of a Jew trying to be justified by the Law in Rom. 7). Being in Christ isn’t being lawless but now under the New Covenant, with new standards, and a change in loyalty to Jesus and His Word. Gal. 6:1-2, bearing one another’s burdens fulfills the law of Christ.

➤ Preaching that there is grace for everything or to do anything I want is a false gospel. If you love Christ, you keep His commandments, John 14:15, 1 John 2:3.

➤ Freedom in Christ is no longer being a slave to sin, but one who confess sin, serves and obeys the Lord.
3. **How do I know the will of God?** Here are some popular contemporary ways that people use:
  - i. Direct Revelation: They say, “The Lord spoke to me.” Because of this everyone thinks they should hear directly from the Lord about what to do, rather than to seek and learn His word.
    - a. What about the still small voice that people refer to? 1 Kings 19:9-12, the context is Elijah having defeated the prophets of Baal, now wonders if he is the last faithful one of Israel. God promised that with His own voice and word He would rescue Israel. There were 7,000 men of Israel that had not bowed to Baal. God confirms that He will keep His word, and His word (Jesus) would fulfill the promise to save Israel (See also Romans 9-11).
  - ii. Subjective Impressions: “I felt led to do this.” The problem with this => This doesn’t allow others to challenge or question the person’s position.
    - a. The conviction of the Holy Spirit calls us to obey Scripture. We are not authorized to violate Scripture based upon our feelings.
  - iii. Mystical Signs: these are people who “receive confirmation from the Lord” by something that happens to them or around them. It leads one to see what they want to see.
  - iv. Putting out a fleece: this is a test to see if God will confirm what they want to happen. The context of Judges 6 is that Gideon was told by God to assemble an army to fight the Midianites. Gideon lacked courage being the least of his family, whose family was the least in Israel. He was asking for God’s help in this battle.

v. How do I know His will?

1. Is this situation addressed directly by a New Covenant command? Examine Ephesians chapters 4-6. Search the Scriptures. Don't pray about whether to obey God.
2. Which direction would bring the most glory to God and how? Psalms 115:1, not unto me, but unto the Lord do we give glory and honor. Consider how your direction honors Christ.
3. Which direction allows me to be the most useful servant of Christ on earth. Do nothing from selfish ambition...look out for the interests of others, Phil. 2:3-4.
4. Have circumstances that God has providentially given led to only one option to follow? We grow to understand God's will as we obey Him and keep His commandments.
5. Am I delighting in the Lord? Psalm 37:4, delighting in the Lord is to refresh oneself, to take pleasure in Him. We rejoice in the Lord, Phil. 4:4. Job 22:21-26, repentance brings delight. Psalm 42:1, we pant and thirst for Him as a deer for water. Psalm 37:3, we trust in Him and do good.
  - a. What does Psalm 37:4 mean? "And He will give you the desires of your heart?" The word "give" also means to "put" or "set." So it means that God will "set in place" or set in your heart His desires and you will desire what God wants you to have.
    - God keeps and protects His children by satisfying their hearts (Ps. 37:4) and placing in them desires that bring peace (V8-9) and contentment (V5-6). He protects them and gives them strength (V39-40).

### **Further Discussion and Application**

To know the will of God it is always best to make a list of the things that you know you should be doing. What should believers be doing? What is the Scripture that establishes the command from the Lord to do what we are wanting to do? Make a list, use the Gospels, Romans 12, Eph. 4-6, Philippians, and other epistles to guide you. As you go through the pages of Scripture, how many of these deal with our responsibility to God? How many of these deal with your responsibility to others?

In trying to determine the will of God, as you ask the 5 questions above, how can you use the lengthy list from the first question to determine if what you are deciding keeps you from obeying those commands or allows you greater obedience? Which one should you choose?

Why do believers choose to believe in mysticism or hearing from an inner voice instead of reading and obeying Scripture? What is easier, to learn and be disciplined in the word of God and make wise choices or to choose based upon subjective feelings and chance circumstance? Why is there a strong likelihood of being unsure of God's love and of His Word after we make bad choices? Why does spiritual growth in our Christian life take time, obedience, and practice to see maturity and fruit of righteousness?