

PROVE GOD'S WILL (Two Conditions)

1. **Romans 12:1** Present your bodies . . . **alive** . . . a **living sacrifice**
2. **Romans 12:2** Be transformed . . . by the **renewing** of . . . your mind

NOTE: To prove God's will requires two conditions: 1) **alive** (God's Zoe life) . . . **living sacrifice** 2) **renewing** . . . of your mind

3. **Ephesians 4:21** If you heard Him and have been taught by Him . . . as the truth . . . is in Jesus; that you (v. 22) put off your **former conduct** , the **old man** and be (v.23) . . . **renewed** . . . in the . . . spirit of your mind

NOTE: In the past we have been taught from the word in Romans (Paul's gospel) concerning presenting our . . . **bodies** . . . as a **living sacrifice**. The second thing . . . renewing of our **minds**. Renewing our mind does not mean a change of subject matters . . . from historical matters, current events and etc., nor bible truths – the law and old testament and new testament. Renewing does not mean a change of subject matters . . . but a change of the mind. The very mind must be renewed – **not subjects in the mind**.

Our minds are renewed by . . . having the mind of Christ. We **have** (1 Corinthians 2:16) . . . the mind of Christ. The anointing (1 John 2:27) . . . abides in us . . . and the anointing teaches us all things.

NOTE: **Ephesians 1:22-23** The church . . . **which is His body, the fullness of** . . . Him . . . His **body** . . . His **life** . . . His **mind**. **The new man** (Ephesians 4:24) . . . **One** (Ephesians 2:15) . . . **new man**.

Two Principles of Conduct

By Watchman Nee

2 Corinthians 5:7; Matthew 17:3, 5, 8; 1 Corinthians 4:3, 4; Genesis 2:8, 9, 16, 17.

God created man, and He who created man made provision for the sustenance of the man He had created. Man derived his existence from God, and it was God's intention that man should be dependent on Him for his life throughout its entire course. The life He had given was to be nourished by means of suitable food which He Himself supplied.

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; and the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:8, 9). Through these two trees God has shown us in figure two different ways in which people may spend their days on earth: the principle that governs the conduct of some is the knowledge of good and evil, while others are governed by the principle of life.

Let us spend a little time together considering these two different principles as they affect the lives of God’s children: and let us note at the outset that while Christians may be governed mainly by the one principle or the other, not all the actions of the same Christian are invariably regulated by the same principle.

What is the Principle of Good and Evil?

If our conduct is controlled by the principle of good and evil, then whenever we have to make a decision we first inquire: Is this right, or is it wrong? Would it be good to do this, or would it be evil? Many Christians hesitate before doing anything and turn such questions round and round in their minds. They are bent on doing the right thing: they wish to avoid all evil: they want to live a life in keeping with what they consider to be Christianity: so they scrupulously weigh all their actions. They carefully examine each situation they meet, and not until they are persuaded that a certain course of action is good will they go ahead. They seek to act in a way that befits a Christian, so they are always on the alert to select the right from the wrong and to do only what they consider to be right.

But God’s Word says: “The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” To act according to the seemingly lofty standard of rejecting all that is bad and choosing only the good is not Christianity. That is living under the law: it is acting according to the Old Covenant, not the New. To act in this way is to conform to religious or ethical standards: it falls altogether short of the Christian standard.

Christianity is Based on Life

What is Christianity? Christianity is a matter of life. If you are a Christian, then you possess a new life; and when you have to decide on a course of action, you do not ask, Would it be right to do this? You ask, If I do this, how will it affect my inner life? How will that new life within me react to this? It is a most amazing thing that the objective of so many Christians is only conformity to an external standard, though what God has given us by new birth is not a lot of new rules and regulations to which we are required to conform. He has not brought us to a new Sinai and given us a new set of

commandments with their “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not.” Christianity does not require that we investigate the rights and wrongs of alternative courses of action, but that we test the reaction of the divine life to any proposed course. As a Christian you now possess the life of Christ, and it is the reactions of His life that you have to consider. If, when you contemplate any move, there is a rise of life within you to make that move; if there is a positive response from the inner life; if there is “the anointing” within (1 John 2:20, 27); then you can confidently pursue the proposed course. The inner life has indicated that. But if, when you contemplate a certain move, the inner life begins to languish, then you may know that the move you contemplated should be avoided, however commendable it may seem to be.

Do you realize that the conduct of many a non-Christian is governed by the principle of right and wrong? Wherein does the Christian differ from the non-Christian if the same principle governs both? God’s Word shows us plainly that the Christian is controlled by the life of Christ, not by any external code of ethics. There is something vital within the Christian that responds to what is of God and reacts against what is not of Him; so we must take heed to our inner reactions. When the living spring within us wells up in response to any suggestion, we should follow that; but when it declines, we should repudiate the idea. We dare not be governed by externalities, nor by reasonings, our own or other people’s. Others may approve a certain thing, and when we weigh up the pros and cons we too may think it right; but what is the inner life saying about it?

The Transcendent Standard of Life

Once you realize that the determining factor in all Christian conduct is life, then you know that you must not only avoid all that is evil, but also all that is just externally good. Only what issues from the Christian life is Christian conduct; therefore we cannot consent to any action that does not spring from life. Let us remember God’s Word: “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Note that “good and evil” are set together here, and over against “good and evil” is set “life.” The standard of life is a transcendent standard.

In my early Christian days I sedulously sought to avoid all that was evil and deliberately set myself to do what was good. And I seemed to be making splendid progress. At that time I had a fellow-worker who was two years older than I, and we two were always disagreeing. The differences that arose between us were not concerning our own personal affairs: our disagreements were about public matters and our disputes were public too. I used to say to myself: If he wants to do that bit of work in such-and-such a way I shall protest, for it is not right. But no matter how I protested, he always refused to give way. I had one line of argument—right and wrong: he also had one line

of argument—his seniority. No matter how I might reason in support of my views, he invariably reasoned that he was two years older than I. However many irrefutable evidences I might produce to prove that he was wrong and I was right, he produced his one unvarying evidence to justify every course of action he adopted—he was two years older than I. How could I refute that fact? So he always won the day. He gained his point outwardly, but inwardly I never gave way. I resented his unreasonableness and still clung firmly to my contention that he was wrong and I was right. One day I brought my grievance to an elderly sister in the Lord who had a wealth of spiritual experience. I explained the case, brought forth my arguments, then appealed to her to arbitrate. Was he right or was I?—that was what I wanted to know. She seemed to ignore all the rights and wrongs of the situation, and looking me straight in the face, just answered quietly, “You’d better do as he says.” I was thoroughly dissatisfied with her answer and thought to myself: If I’m right, why not acknowledge that I’m right? If I’m wrong, why not tell me I’m wrong? Why tell me to do what he says? So I asked, “Why?” “Because,” she said, “in the Lord the younger should submit to the older.” “But,” I retorted, “in the Lord, if the younger is right and the older wrong, must the younger still submit?” At that time I was a college student and had learned nothing of discipline, so I gave free vent to my annoyance. She simply smiled and said once more: “You’d better do as he says.”

At a later date there was to be a baptismal service and three of us were to bear responsibility together—the brother who was two years older than I, a brother who was seven years older than he, and myself. Now let’s see what will happen, I thought. I always have to do what you, who are my senior by two years, tell me; will you always do what this brother, who is your senior by seven years, tells you? Together we three discussed the work, but he refused to accept any suggestion put forward by his senior: at every point he insisted on having his own way. Finally he dismissed us both with the remark: “You two just leave things to me; I can manage quite well alone.” I thought, What kind of logic is this? You insist that I always obey you because you are my senior, but you need never obey your senior. Forthwith I sought out the elderly sister, spread the matter before her, and asked for her verdict on the case. “The thing that annoys me,” I said, “is that the brother has no place for right and wrong.” She rose to her feet and asked: “Have you, right up to this present day, never seen what the life of Christ is? These past few months you keep asserting that you are right and your brother is wrong. Do you not know the meaning of the Cross?” Since the one issue I raised was the issue of right or wrong, she met me on my own ground and asked: “Do you think it right for you to behave as you have been doing? Do you think it right for you to talk as you have been talking? Do you think it right for you to come and report these matters to me? You may be acting reasonably and rightly; but even if you are, what about your inner registrations? Does the life within you not protest against your own behavior?” I had to admit that even when I was right by human standards, the inner life pronounced me wrong.

The Christian standard not only passes its verdict on what is not good, but also on that which is mere external goodness. Many things are right according to human standards, but the divine standard pronounces them wrong because they lack the divine life. On the day to which I have just referred I saw for the first time that if I was to live in the presence of God, then all my conduct must be governed by the principle of life, not by the principle of right and wrong. From that day I began to see more and more clearly that in relation to any course of action, even if others pronounced it right, and every aspect of the case indicated that it was right, I must still be very sensitive to the reactions of the life of Christ within me. As we advance in the approved course, does the inner life grow stronger or weaker? Does the inner “anointing” confirm the rightness of the course, or does an absence of the “anointing” indicate that the divine approval is withheld? God’s way for us is not known by external indications, but by internal registrations. It is peace and joy in the spirit that indicate the Christian’s path.

When I was visiting a certain place, a brother who was exceedingly critical of the place was a guest there too. He knew the place had much to offer spiritually, but he disapproved of very much that was done there and was constantly making adverse comparisons with the place from which he came. During the two or three months we were there together his criticisms exceeded those of everyone else. One day he went altogether too far, so I said to him: “Why ever do you remain here? Why not pack up and leave?” “The reason lies here,” he answered, pointing to his heart. “Every time I prepare to go, my peace of heart goes. Once I actually departed, and I stayed away for a fortnight, but I had to ask to be allowed to return.” “Brother,” I said, “can’t you see these two different lines of conduct—that which is determined by life and that which is determined by right and wrong?” “Oh!” he said, “not once or twice merely, but a number of times I have sought to leave here, and every time my experience has been the same; as soon as I prepare to go there is an inner forbidding. Even if much that is done here is wrong, for me to leave is also wrong.” This brother saw that if there was much spiritual help to be gained in that place, then his only way was to remain there and meet God.