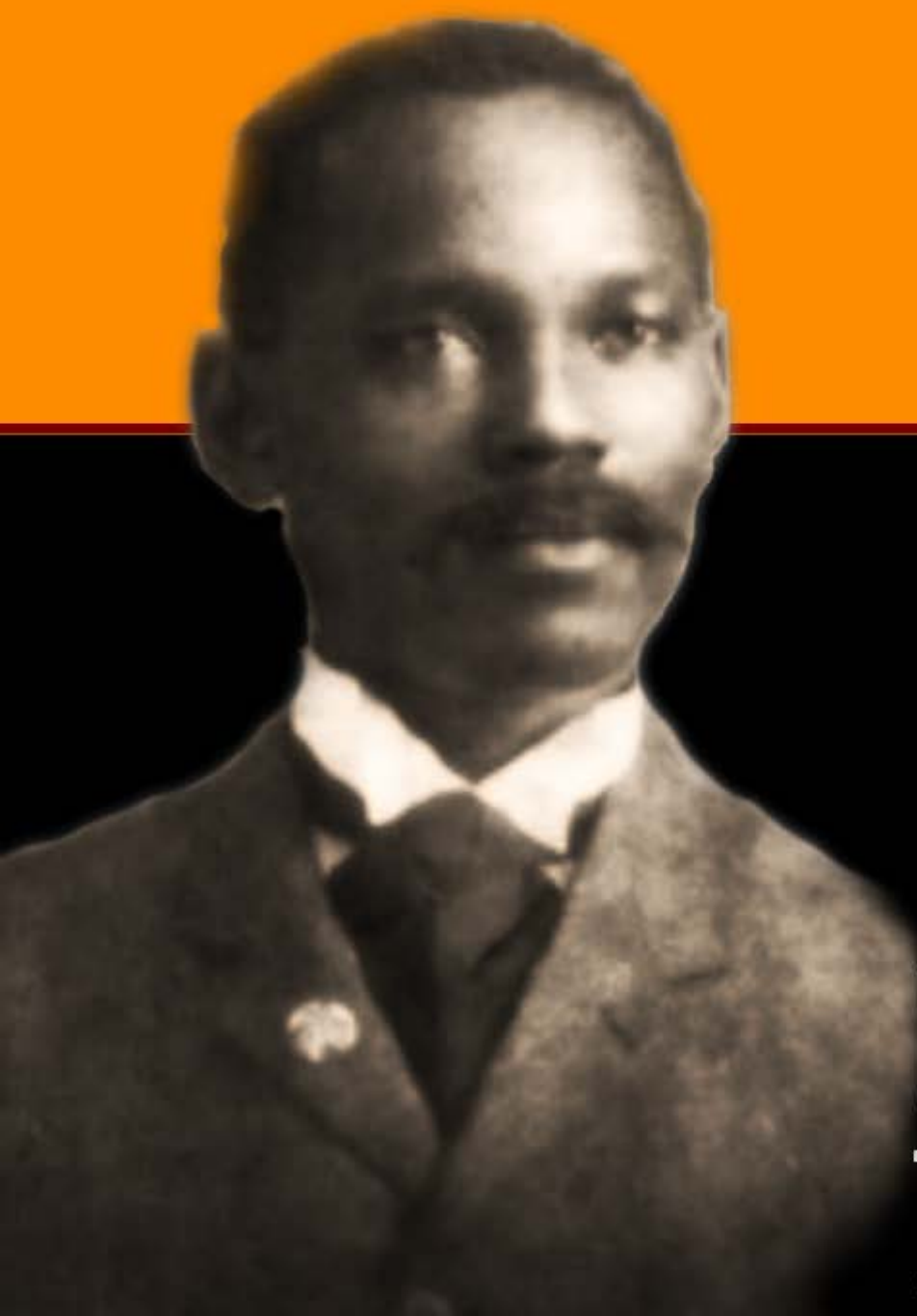


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Rev. Hargrave's Sermons



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IN
APPALACHIA

I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart. Psalms 40:8.

Delight in doing God's will.

In the Psalms we find observations noted, and experiences testified to that will have the sanction of all Christians in all ages of the world. And this universality of Christian experience and testimony is one of the outstanding biblical facts corroborative of all divine revelation. God not only reveals Himself, that he also reveals His will-as that will relates to man's personal duties, obligations and responsibilities.

From this text it is quite evident that the Psalmist recognized the important fact that God has a will; that we can know that will; that we can find delight in doing that will; and, that God lays on man the supreme obligation of keeping his law in man's heart.

But what is meant by the will of God?" The will of God," says a great theologian, "is the intimately and eternally wise, powerful, and righteous essence of God willing." "In our conception it is that attribute of the Deity to which we refer his purposes and decrees as their principle."

There are two aspects of His will which it is well for us to note the distinction between. I refer to what is called God's decretive and perceptive will. "The decretive will of God is God efficaciously purposing the certain futuration of events. The perceptive will of God is God, as moral governor, commanding his moral creatures to do that which he sees is right and wise that they in their circumstances should do."

Without being tedious in trying to make clear to you, my hearers, the distinction between what is called God's secret and revealed will; I will only say as to the latter, that "The revealed will of God is his perceptive will, which is always clearly set forth as the rule of our duty." Moses has a long while ago said: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed becoming unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." –Deut. 29:29.

Some would excuse their failure to do what God requires on the ground of ignorance as to what is required; or because of the element of mysticism which the Bible contains. But, "The mystery of the Gospel mainly rests on four facts: Christ's sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection. The Old Testament contained these enigmas in prophesy and history, symbol and sacrament. Bengal says it was like a clock moving in silence and in darkness. The machinery was there-the hands were moving on the dial; but few heard clearly or saw clearly the wondrous things of God. But the new Testament is God's clock of the ages with an illumined dial plate, and a grand apparatus that strikes the hours." Throwing this Fenelon's prayer should be ours; "O Lord, I know not what I should ask of Thee. Thou only knowest what I want, and thou lovest

me, if I am thy friend, more than I can love myself. O Lord, give to me, Thy child, what is proper, whatsoever it be. I dare not ask either crosses or comforts, I only present myself before Thee. I open my heart to thee. Behold my wants, of which I am ignorant, but do thou behold and do according to Thy mercy. Smite or heal, depress or raise me up. I adore all thy purposes without knowing them. I am silent. I offer myself in sacrifice. I abandon myself to Thee.

I have no more any desire but to accomplish Thy will. Lord, teach me to pray. I beseech Thee, dwell thou thyself in me by Thy Holy Spirit. Amen.” One who can pray such a prayer has entered fully upon the consecrated life.

The following story told by Rev. G. P. Eckman illustrated the significance of the Master’s command, “Follow Me”: “Epictetus regarded a genuine disciple of the Cynic School of philosophy was one of the noblest of being. He said to a young student.

If you think that you can be a Cynic by merely wearing an old cloak and sleeping on a hard bed, using a wallet and staff, and rebuking every one whom you see effeminately dressed, or wearing purple, you don’t know what you are about. Get you gone!” Then he follows with a true description of a Cynic, couched in terms so refined and charming that one cannot help wishing certain ineffective Christians would embody its elements in their own unfruitful lives. So we can imagine Jesus saying to some prospective disciple who is timidly balancing the expediency of following Him: “If you think you can be a Christian by merely receiving baptism, reciting a confession, absorbing a catechism, attending public worship, paying for the support of a church, and maintaining a decent moral character, you do not suspect what a Christian actually is. Go your way!” Something of this sort was doubles in His thought when He said to the rich youth: “Go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven, and come and follow Me.” For the rich young ruler to have done what the Master commanded, would have enabled him to join with the multiplied thousands since his day, in saying: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

As we said in the outset, God has a will,” which is from eternity absolutely independent of all his creatures and all their actions, yet man cannot regard with indifference the eternal will of God. It was the going contrary to the will of God that brought sin into the world with all its evil consequences. And only as man conforms to the will of God is he wise with the wisdom that leads to his eternal salvation. God has left a record in which His will is contained; and to which all have access. Revelations have been made through priest and prophet, but a love all through the Son of God who let it be known that he came to do the will of the Father. And today, there are multiplied thousands in houses of worship, out upon the mountains, in the valleys, among

civilized and uncivilized the people who are talking great delight declaring the will of God to the world.

One has said and truly that, "obedience to God is the crowning grace of the religious life."

There are many problems in the world of a varied nature that are calling for a solution.

"The only way to solve our problems, be they individual, local, national or international, is for men to find out God's will and do it. "In his will is our peace." Christ shows us the way. He delighted to do God's will. It was the master passion of his life. At the age of twelve he said, "Wilt ye not that I must be about my Father's business." To him God's will was imperative. Later he said; "It is my meat and drink to do the will of him that sent me."

Jesus did really delight to do God's will. He had a will of his own, as we have but he came not to do his own will, but the will of his own, as we have but he came not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him. Jesus calls us to follow in the way of the surrendered will.

"Give us, O God, this mind, Which waits for thy command; And doth its highest pleasure find-

In thy great work to stand."

Those who are constantly striving to do the Father's will, Look up to Him and cry out: "Thou wilt not leave us in the dust." And his revelations assures: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Jo. 11:25.

I lose with the following story told by Dean C. R. Brown in Living Again:

"There was once an Arab Sheik who became convinced that the terrible deity he worshipped had commanded him to bury his daughter alive. He made known this conviction to the girl, and with that extravagant filial respect Characteristic of the Orient she consented to be sacrificed.

He dug the grave with his own hands. He took the fair young girl in his arms to thrust her down into the pit to be buried alive. But at that moment she noticed that in digging the grave a piece of moist earth had clung to his long white beard, which is the pride of the Arab heart; and she stretched forth her hand to remove it as a final act of affection. Her deed of love so touched the heart of the old fanatic that he spared her life and carried her back to his home. Deity or no deity, he could not thrust away love like that!

"What then shall we say as to the feelings of the infinite Father, were he ceaselessly engaged in wiping off the slate of existence the children of his care in the very hour when they were looking up into his face in faith, and hope and love!"

No, for Isaac whom Abraham had been commanded to offer up as a sacrifice, there was a ram prepared. And for you and me, who are doing His will day by day, a lamb has been slain from the foundation of the world.

Knowing this glorious consummation of our labors, may we not all cry out as did David; I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea thy law is within my heart. –Amen.

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