

THE WILL OF GOD

Part 2

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1.0 Overview

Whenever I have had discussions concerning 'God's will', two questions seem to invariably rise.

- 1) Does man have a free will to choose God?
- 2) How can I know God's will for me and my life? Those who are earnest in their

- person desires or wants.
- Will is the power of making a reasoned choice or decision or of controlling one's own particular desire, purpose, pleasure, choice, etc. of a certain person or group: what is your *will*?
- To control or influence by the power of the will: to *will* oneself into an action, to *will* others into submission



Christian faith and want to live in obedience to Him desire to know what God wants them to do. And this is good.

To answer these questions we must dissect what is God's will and what's man's will

A quick glance at a dictionary shows hundreds of usage and definition of the word 'will.' But the more relevant definitions are listed below.

- Will means to desire, want or to choose. If you have free *will*, you are allowed to choose what you want. If you make a *will*, you've written down what you choose to have happen to your belongings.
- Will is your ability to make decisions or restrain yourself from doing something or something that a

- to wish, desire, prefer, or choose: to do as one *wills*
- The mental faculty by which one deliberately chooses or decides upon a course of action: *championed freedom of will against a doctrine of predestination.*
- A desire, purpose, or determination, especially of one in authority: *It is the sovereign's will that the prisoner be spared.*
- To decree, dictate, or order: *believed that the outcome was willed by God.*
- One's independent faculty of choice; the ability to be able to exercise one's choice or intention.
- The act of choosing to do something; a person's conscious intent or volition.

2.0 The Hidden Will of God

Basically, dictionaries define the will as making decisions in the realm of your ability to enforce, carry through to completion, or authority allowed you for execution. Since God Almighty has all power, all authority, and all purpose, whatever He wills, must surely come to pass.

Whenever we find ourselves trying to understand God's will, it is best to first visit *Deuteronomy 29:29* "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

According to Dr. RC Sproul, author of *Everybody's a Theologian*, "The location of that verse in Scripture is important. The book of Deuteronomy is the second book of the law; its title means "second law". It contains a summary of the entire law that Moses deliv-

ered from God to the people. Near the conclusion of this account of the giving of the law, we find verse 29 makes a distinction between the hidden will of God and the revealed will of God.

There are limits to our knowledge of God because as finite creatures we do not have the ability or the comprehensive knowledge to understand an infinite God. God has chosen not to reveal to us everything that could possibly be known of Him or His intentions.

The hidden will of God is called the *Deus absconditus* and *Deus revelatus* refers to that part of God that He has revealed.

Within *Deus revelatus* there are two types of revealed wills discussed within Scripture.

We need to know whether it is (1) The "**Declared Will of God**" that is his sovereign will that always comes to pass without fail, or whether it is, (2) The "**Command Will of God**" which is his command to do what is right, which is often disobeyed and doesn't come to pass. The Bible uses the term "will of God" in both ways.

God's Sovereign Will



That which God has hidden
from us.
(*Deus absconditus*)

That which God has revealed
to us.
(*Deus revelatus*)

Deuteronomy 29:29

God's Sovereign Will

Deuteronomy 29:29



That which God has hidden
from us.
(Deus absconditus)

That which God has revealed
to us.
(Deus revelatus)



The 'Decreed' will of God. The
will of God that is his
sovereign will that always
comes to pass without fail

The will of God which is His
command to do what is right,
which is often disobeyed and
doesn't come to pass.

3.0 Declared Will of God

The second will to examine is the what I call the "Declared Will of God," but is also referred to as the decree, or decretive will of God. The more 'reformed' name for this is the "Decretive Will of God". This sovereign will is that which will always come to pass — no matter what. Whatever God decrees or declares happens. The declared will of God refers to the fact God sovereignly brings to pass whatsoever His will declares. Sometimes this is called the absolute will of God, fore-counsel of God, the sovereign will of God, or the efficacious will of God.

When God decrees or declares that something should come to pass, it must indeed come to pass. For example, all prophecy falls under the Declared will of God.

Another example is the birth of Christ. It was irresistible, God's will declared it had to happen. Like-

wise when God spoke and decreed the world into existence, it came into existence. There was no alternative.

In *Matthew 26:39* where Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is crying out to his Father *And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."*

What does that mean? Your will be done? That means God's sovereign declared plan, must inevitably happen. There was no other reality. Jesus was going to die. And He did. And Jesus in His human nature is simply saying, "In my human nature, I don't relish the thought of painfully dying. So if the plan could be adjusted, that would please my flesh, because I am just an ordinary person who doesn't like the idea of dying a horrible physical death." That is not sin to talk like that. But notice what else Jesus says, "Your will be done," meaning, Jesus trusted God's plan. So God executed His son in accordance with His declared plan.

In Acts 4:27-28 the new church is praying in wonder to the sovereign God that has just ordained the death of his Son, they pray like this: *“Truly in this city, Jerusalem, there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed both Herod, Pontius Pilate, all the Gentiles, the peoples of Israel to do what your hand and plan had declared to take place.”*

So Herod did what God declared must take place. Pilate did what God declared must take place. The shouting crowds — *crucify him, crucify him* — did what God declared would take place and the soldiers, the Gentile soldiers who drove the nails did what God had declared would take place and the sovereign will of God was accomplished at nine o'clock on that black Friday morning. And it was all sin. Pilate's expediency, Herod's mockery, the soldiers gambling for his clothes. The hatred of the mobs stirred up by the Pharisees: *“Crucify him.”* That is all sin foreknown in eternity and declared in the bible by God.

This is why verses 27-28, are a light on a theological jumble of problems. God's sovereign **declared** will always comes to pass and may include sin. Yes. If God could not declare the atoning death of His Son we could not be saved. Nor could Jesus just jump up on the cross and die. God had declared that the Messiah would be crucified and therefore He was crucified.

Another example. *1 Peter 3:17 says, For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.* Let's apply this declared will of God in real life.

My daughter spent around 15 years as a professional carpenter working for a large home restoration company. She had a crew manager who issued a few, new “policies” on how work was to be done on site that was

not up to state code and used inferior materials. The housing inspector had to inspect the work and materials at several intervals throughout the restoration projects.

The housing inspector held the crew chief and each person accountable for their own work.

All members of the crew were discussing the ramifications. Some of the policies the crew chief issued were illegal. The crew chief and carpenters knew the policies were illegal (therefore sinful). It would involve her and other employees to commit sin. She know if she protested or said anything derogatory about the policies or the crew chief, there would be serious repercussions, possibly even the loss of her employment. What a quandary. Morally, she was required to expose the crew chief's issuance of these new work guidelines. Saying anything would trigger retaliation by the crew chief and possibly some of his superiors. She chose to do the moral good, to do the right thing, to do good. She spoke up to the crew chief, building inspector and upper management. She did good. She was repaid with being good with evil by being fired.

Now apply 1 Peter 3:17 to this situation. *“It is better to suffer for doing good if that should be God's will.”* When she spoke out, the crew chief was exposed, questioned and under intense scrutiny by his own superiors and the building inspector. Because she exposed the evil of the new building guidelines with what would/could happen, while morally correct, she became the enemy of her crew chief and company. Sure, the crew chief could have been hindered by God from firing her, but 1 Peter says it is better to suffer for doing good if that be God's will.

By firing my daughter, did the manager do good? No, he sinned. And it was God's will that permitted the crew chief to sin.

God can permit sin to come to pass without Himself sinning. God is not a sinner. God is not evil. God is holy, just, true, and good. And in the same way He governs and runs the world. 1 Peter says: *It may be God's will that you suffer for doing good — which always involves somebody sinning against you.*

Ephesians 1:11 is the most sweeping statement of all in this regard to the sovereign will of God. It says, *“also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined [declared] according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,*

The “will of God” means “all things God does.” All things. He works all things according to the counsel of His will. This extends to the details of all existence. *Matthew 10:29, Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.*

4.0 Command Will of God

There is also the Command (perceptive) Will of God. Whereas the declared will of God cannot be resisted, we not only can resist the command will of God, but mankind largely resists it all the time. The command will of God refers to God's law, to all of His commandments revealed in God's Word. In the New Testament, in the new covenant, the command is to believe in Jesus Christ, to realize we are lost and cannot earn our way to God and spend eternity in Heaven. We are to repent, to confess Jesus as Lord and to ask Him to be our Savior which propitiates Jesus' payment for sin on the cross to us.

An example of the command will of God can be seen in The first commandment, *“You shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:3),*. How many people do you know who have made someone, something, some ideology their god rather than God. In this respect people can defy God's will.

Sometimes this will is called the will of perceptive. For example, Jesus said in *Matthew 7:21*, ²¹ *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.*

What does that mean? *“Only those who do the will of my Father enter my presence”* — which means some do and some don't. Therefore the will of God is done by some and not by others, which means this will of God doesn't have the same meaning as the hidden or declared will of God, because that will is always done without fail and this one can be disobeyed, even ignored. So clearly “the will of God” here isn't the same. Man has a choice regarding God's Command Will.

Another example of God's command will is found in *1 Thessalonians 4:3* which says, *For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; Have you? No. Some of us have not, which means we broke the will of God. We disobeyed, contradicted, did not fulfill the will of God for our lives.*

The will of God for our life is sanctification. Abstain from all sexual immorality. Each day, untold number of people broke that will. They contradicted it, cancelled it. The will of God did not happen in their lives, because they chose contrary actions.

1 John 2:17 says, The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Therefore, we have three meanings of the will of God in the Bible.

- One that is hidden.
- One is his sovereign (**Declared**) will and
- One is his (**Command**) moral will.

Now here is the \$64,000 question. Does God decide who will be saved and who will be lost? Would this fall under the Declared or Command will of God? The Declared Will is always done — for He is sovereign. The Command Will allows a choice.

So man does have a free will choice when coming to the matters of God's Command will. The answer is "Yes," and the key is because God commands us. Wherever God commands us, there is a choice. We are lost because of our disobedience to God throughout our lives. However man does not have free will when it comes to either God's hidden will or His declared will. It is only through the command Will of God can we exercise our free will or choice to believe by faith in Jesus Christ. We are commanded to love God, to worship God, to be partakers of Christ, to choose God.

For by faith we are saved. We are commanded to have faith. We can resist commands and this is an indicator that Salvation falls into the Command Will of God. Yes, man does have a free moral agent to choose.

5.0 Determining God's Will For Your Life

The other most frequently asked question is

how can one know the will of God for their lives. So naturally, we have to ask which will are they referencing – The hidden, declared, or command will of God.

If they are talking about God's Hidden Will, then they need to realize that it is hidden. *The hidden will of God is none of our business, That is why it is hidden (John Calvin). We will not know it.*

In most cases, those who are asking this question have a choice they're facing and are looking for guidance from God to make the right choice.

None of us can read God's mind, but we do have the Bible, which reveals His Deus revelatus, or revealed Will.

It is indeed a virtue to desire to know what God wants you to do. He has a secret plan for your life that is absolutely none of your business, but He may lead you and direct your paths. So there is nothing wrong with seeking the illumination of the Holy Spirit, or the leading of God, in our lives, and that is usually what people are concerned with when they ask about God's will. However, we tend to have an ungodly desire to know the future. We want to know the end from the beginning, which is indeed none of our business. It is God's business which is why He is so severe in His warnings in Scripture against those who try to find out the future through illicit means such as Ouija boards, fortune tellers, and tarot cards. Those things are off-limits for Christians. (Dr. R.C. Sproul)

"Look to the Gospel for direction in making decisions" (Dr. Travis Bond, Pastor of Medway Community Church)

God's Sovereign Will



God says He wants us to learn the will of God for our lives. *Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.*

We learn God's will for our lives by focusing our attention on the Command Will of God. We cannot resist the Declared Will of God, that has been fore-ordained or prophesied, if you will. Therefore to know God's will for your life, the Bible says ... *For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 1The-salonians 4:3*

When people wonder whether to take a job in Cleveland or in San Francisco, or whether to marry Dawn or Adriana, they should study closely the Preceptive [Command] will of God. They should study the law of God to learn the

principles by which they are to live their lives from day to day. The psalmist writes, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." (Psa1m:1-2). The godly man's delight is in the Preceptive [Command] will of God and one so focused will be like "a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season (v3). The ungodly, however, are not like that but "are like chaff that the wind drives away" (v4). (Dr. R.C. Sproul, Everyone's A Theologian)

Determining God's Will For Your Life

Q1. Which Will of God?

It is not
Deus Absconditus.
This is the hidden will
of God and it is hidden

Hidden Will

It is not the Decretive
Will of God since what
is decreed must surely
come to pass.

Prophecy

It is the Preceptive
Will of God

God's Law

God wants you to know His will. Which will is Paul referencing? It is the Command will of God, not the sovereign [Declared] will of God. He is not saying: "Get your mind renewed so that you can discern what is going to happen tomorrow." He is saying: "Get your mind renewed so that you can discern what ought to happen tomorrow and throughout your life." See the difference?

4.1 The "Will of God" in Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2.

4.2 Look for God's Command Will

According to the Bible, God is not bent on bringing you into an increasing awareness of his hidden will for tomorrow. Nor does He want you to focus on what is declared to happen tomorrow. That would be tantamount to using a crystal ball rather than a renewed mind to learn God's will for you. There is no virtue in seeing tomorrow's events in a satanical crystal ball.

To prepare yourself for understanding and discerning God's will, you will need to do three things:

- Stage number one: Immerse yourself in God's Word. Burn God's laws into your heart.
- Stage number two: Seek to apply the Scriptures and pray for a renewed mind.
- Stage number three: Having your unconscious life transformed.

The will of command is revealed in the Bible decisively, authoritatively, and infallibly. If you want to discern what is the will of God, you need to first immerse yourself in the Bible. This is the first stage. Know God's laws. In order to know His will, you must first know God's laws. So stay in the word.

Step number two is you have got to have a new mind shaped by the reading and application of Scripture to your life so that when you come to those decisions, there is a readiness, a renewed mind to desire, see and do the will of God.

The implication is: we must ingrain the precious Word of God into ourselves, so that we instinctively live a life consistent with His Word. In other words, we obey God by having His Word second nature to us.

As a young artist I focused a lot on learning the techniques of painting. I would study how to make a mountain, a tree, rocks, a cabin, etc... When I tackled a painting, I thought about how to paint each of these elements. As the years went by and I practiced over and over, these techniques became second nature to me. My mind went from focusing on the "how" of painting components to the overall composition of the painting. Just like driving. At first I focused on acceleration, braking, shifting, safe operations and so forth. As my driving skills grew my focus shifted to where I was going and how best to arrive. The latter is not possible without the former. To know God's will, constantly stay in the Word. You cannot be a disciple nor grow in your Christian walk unless you stay in the Bible consistently.

When I paint now, I'm focused not on the techniques, rather on the scene. The passion, the story, the message, the composition. The techniques are now second nature to me. In the same way, the Bible should be so ingrained within us that we have a renewed mind. Until then you cannot discern God's Will for your life.

To know the Law of God, you must know the Bible. That means spending time each day reading and meditating on his words. What does He approve of? What does He delight in? What is good, acceptable and perfect in His view for you to do this afternoon?

So start there and ask the Lord for a renewed mind that when it reads the Bible can understand its meanings. Pray for a renewed mind that knows how to discern and enables you to make Godly decision.

Q2. How To Determine The Will of God?



1 Thess 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from [a]sexual immorality;

Psalm 1:1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the [a]path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night

As for which job to accept, you will have to master God's principle's for living. It is God's will that you make a sober analysis of your gifts and talents. Will either job continue to keep you with your gifts? If not, decline the offer. It will then be God's will that you continue looking at more job opportunities. The will of God is that you match your vocation – your calling – with the right job opportunity. We do this by

applying the law of God to all the various things in life. God gives us all different talents, interests and skill sets. Consider these as well.

When it comes to deciding whom to marry, Dr. RC Sproul makes an excellent observation.

Scripture says we must look at everything with respect to God's blessing on marriage.

Having done that, you might discover that there are several prospects who meet the biblical requirements. So which one do you marry? The answer to that is easy: whichever one you want to marry. As long as the one you choose falls within the parameters of the preceptive [Command} will of God, you have complete liberty to act according to whatever pleases you, and you do not need to lose sleep wondering whether you're outside the hidden or [declared] will of God. First, you cannot be outside the [declared] will of God. Second, the only way you are going to know the hidden will of God for you today is to wait until tomorrow, and tomorrow will make it clear to you because you can look back on the past and know that whatever happened in the past is the outworking of the hidden will of God. In other words, we only know God's hidden will after the fact. We usually want to know the will of God in terms of the future, whereas the emphasis in Scripture is on the will of God for us in the present, and that has to do with His commands. (Dr. RC Sproul, Everyone's a Theologian)

It is interesting to note (and many Christian writers have observed this peculiarity as well) that whereas many have asked how they can ascertain God's will for their lives, no one asks how they can know the law of God.

The answer is clear and we already know anyone can find God's laws in the Bible. They can study the law of God in order to know it, then they will need to do it. Most who inquire about the will of God are seeking knowledge of the future. If we want to know God's will in terms of what God authorizes, or what pleases Him, and what will receive blessings from God, then study God's law. One of the values of the Old Testament law for today's Christian is it reveals the character of God and what is pleasing to Him.

That's our job. Study, know, do.

