

The Wills of God

"Great is the work of God, exquisite in all he wills! so that, in a manner wondrous and ineffable, that is not done without his will which is done contrary to it, because it could not be done if he did not permit; nor does he permit it unwillingly, but willingly; nor would He who is good permit evil to be done, were he not omnipotent to bring good out of evil," ¹John Calvin

- One of the most common questions a Christians ask today is: What is God's will for my life? How do I know where to live, who to marry, where to work? The list goes on.
 - i. The will of God is a complicated thing to understand without diligent intentional study. When we look at Scripture, we find that there is more than one will type that God has.
- What does it mean that God has different types of will or we could say more than one will?
- ❖ We are distinguishing the way in which God interacts with mankind by what is found on the pages of Scripture. There are a few different ways in which we see God's will manifested in very distinguishable ways.

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.*

- In this verse we can see that there are two wills of God: both a hidden will and a revealed will.
 - i. The hidden will of God or *the secret things* is what we call the decretive will of God.
 - ii. The *revealed* will of God or *that which we may observe*, we call the preceptive will of God.

The Decretive will of God

- This is sometimes called the active will of God.
 - i. It is something revealed after it happens, but not before and not always.
- What do we mean by God's decretive will?

¹ John Calvin. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Chapter 18

- ❖ The will of God in which God sovereignly brings to pass whatever that He wills by His own good and perfect council.
- Gods decreed will cannot be resisted. It shall come to pass.
 - i. An example would be Jesus's sacrifice on the cross for us.

Acts:2:22–23 22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— 23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

- There was an ordained year, month, day, and hour in which Jesus was to be crucified and it was planned before the earth was created by God's decretive will.
 - i. The sacrifice of Christ was revealed at a point in time while the date which He would come was hidden.
 - a. Gods decreed will was revealed to us at a certain point. But remember, this isn't always the case.
- Creation itself was spoken into existence by the decretive will of God.
 - i. That is obvious because no one was around to reveal His will to, yet it was witnessed later by Adam and all of Adam's offspring.
- The decretive will of God shall come to pass in the lives of individuals as well.
 - i. In asking the question: what is the will of God for my life? We need to understand that there are things that are simply hidden and will not be revealed until they come to pass.

“Let us, I say, allow the Christian to unlock his mind and ears to all the words of God which are addressed to him, provided he do it with this moderation—viz. that whenever the Lord shuts His sacred mouth, He also desists from inquiry. The best rule of sobriety is, not only in learning to follow wherever God leads, but also when He makes an end of teaching, to cease also from wishing to be wise.” John Calvin²

- There are charlatans that have made a great amount of money, that we call psychics, because people so desperately want to know the future. But where God has shut His holy mouth, we better be careful. God has given us great warning in Scripture to stay away from trying to pry His mouth open, to stay away from fortune telling, psychics and other occultic practices.

² Calvin. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Chapter 21.3

- i. God warns us to stay away from these things because ultimately it is a sign of unbelief. We must be careful in seeking what tomorrow will bring.
 - a. Jesus said, “Give us today our daily bread.” **Matthew 6:11**
 - ii. Should we plan? Yes, we should. Should we seek to know things that will happen tomorrow outside of what Scripture teaches that involves some kind of mysticism? No.
- Why is actively seeking to know the decreed will of God a sin?
- The decreed will of God is the way we describe God actively involving Himself in the affairs of people that is unknown until revealed by its occurrence.
 - i. It is not our duty to discover the hidden will of God. It is our duty to discover the preceptive will of God.

The Preceptive Will and Passive Will of God

- God’s preceptive will is sometimes called God’s revealed will.
- What do we mean by God’s preceptive will?
 - ❖ God’s will that is prescribed to us on the pages of Scripture that we are called to obey.
- God’s preceptive will can be resisted and is resisted all of the time.
 - i. This gets into another type of God’s will that we should understand.
- How we can resist God’s preceptive will is called God’s passive will or permissive will, because there is nothing that happens outside of the will of God.
 - i. So, these really go hand in hand.
- When God gave the Ten Commandments it was His will that we obey them. But this is different from His will for the earth to exist or for there to be an animal we call an elephant.
 - i. This is one of the reasons we distinguish between His decreed will and preceptive will.
- God made the command to not steal, but we can steal. If the Ten Commandments were God’s decreed will, it would be impossible for us to steal.

- i. God is passive in allowing people to steal.
 - a. This gets into the sovereignty of God, which we will go much more in-depth later in this study. But here is a preview: God must ordain that you have the freedom to disobey Him.
 - b. This also gets into the providence of God in which He is causing all things to work together for the good of His children. We will also go in-depth on the providence of God later in this study.
- If you’re planning on doing something sinister, can God stop you?
 - ❖ Yes.
 - i. It is only by God’s will that our lungs expand, and our hearts beat. At any moment God could will your heart to stop and it would. *In Him we live and move and have our being.*³ But does God always stop people from disobeying Him? No.
 - a. In this way God must be passive and must ordain that you may do something sinister though He is not the One that caused you to do it. He chooses to be passive.
- Undoubtedly this will lead some people to ask the question, why?
 - Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?
 - i. There are a few things we must understand to answer this question. I hope by the end of this study on the attributes of God you will never ask this question again.
 - ❖ First, we must understand that there is only One good person. A better question to ask is why does anything good happen to wicked people?
- By nature, we are all wicked people. The idea that man is born naturally good is a failure to understand the biblical doctrine of total depravity.

Romans 5:12 *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—*
- Total depravity, better stated as radical corruption, is a doctrine that will take a couple of weeks to unpack, so we will save it for another study. But for now, understand that all people were imputed the sin of Adam at birth and *by nature are children of wrath* according to **Ephesians 2:3**.

³ Acts 17:28

- i. The doctrine of total depravity or radical corruption works hand in hand with the doctrine of general or common grace. There is a grace that God gives every person ever born that holds back the wickedness that they would be without common grace.
 - a. We can see that when we read **Romans 1**. In **Romans 1** God peels back, so to speak, common grace. Without common grace, the world could not exist because we would all destroy each other.⁴
- Total depravity doesn't mean that we are as evil as we can be (there is still common grace). It means that every part of our being is depraved or corrupted— mind, soul, and body.
 - i. Why do bad things happen? Because God created a perfect world in which there was nothing bad. God gave Adam the freedom to choose to disobey or obey Him. He chose insurrection.
 - a. His treason shattered not only his perfect relationship with God, but everyone's and everything's.
- Let's get back to God's preceptive will.
 - How does God's preceptive will help answer the question: what is the will of God for my life?
 - ❖ This should be a very easy answer: by reading and understanding God's Word.
 - We understand that God's preceptive will teaches us on the pages of Scripture how to live a pleasing life before God and not sin against Him, but what about where should I work, whom should I marry, where should I live, etc.?
 - ❖ God's will for your personal life is for you to be sanctified. . . Is that a satisfactory answer? To most people the answer is no.

Psalm 1:1–6 *1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the 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. 3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.*

- God sets parameters in which you have freedom to choose what job you take, what person you marry, what city you live in, etc. We have liberty in Christ.

⁴ James 1:17

- i. Studying the law of God and what is pleasing to Him will help you determine these details that concern you.

1 Thessalonians 4:1–8 *1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.*

- Let's talk about the sufficiency of Scripture for a moment because people get confused here.
 - Is the Bible sufficient or not sufficient for everything we need in this life?
- There is a dispute today in the church that has only been a dispute for around one hundred fifty years, over what is called continuationism vs cessationism.
 - i. Continuationism is a new idea that has been around for about one hundred fifty years.
 - ii. Cessationism is the view held throughout church history.

The following is taken from *Huskey's Study Notes on Historical Theology*. I highly recommend reading this book if you have questions in this area, especially the chapter on the charismatic movement.

Continuationism, Cessationism, and Restorationism

- *What is Continuationism?*
 - ❖ *The supernatural miraculous gifts of the Spirit as recorded in the New Testament are still available to believers today.*
 - i. *These gifts include speaking in tongues, prophecy, raising the dead, and healing.*
 - ii. *In some cases, continuationists believe in modern apostles, interpretation of dreams, and reading minds. Some also believe in miraculous signs and wonders such as barking like dogs, being slain in the Spirit, and sucking the anointing out of dead saints' graves.*

- iii. *Scholarly Continuationist will argue that miraculous gifts were given to edify the church and that is what they still are for today. They will argue that there is no scriptural evidence to support Cessationism.*
- *What is Cessationism?*
 - ❖ *The supernatural miraculous gifts of the Spirit were for the pre-canonical Christians only and have ceased; not being available today.*
 - i. *These supernatural gifts were to authenticate the message until we had a completed canon of Scripture at which time they stopped because no other message needed to be authenticated. Jesus performed supernatural signs and wonders not only to authenticate His message, but Himself as being God.*
 - a. *Like today, there were many false teachers running around; how would you know who to believe?*
- *Today we have a measuring stick to measure the teacher or preachers message called what?*
 - ❖ *The canon of Scripture. (canon means measuring stick).*
- *Cessationists still believe that God performs miraculous things through providence*
 - i. *He still heals, but there is not a gift of healing that someone wields around like a sword.*
 - ii. *He still answers prayer.*
 - iii. *If He chooses to work miraculously through the Holy Spirit in a supernatural way He can, however this isn't in any way the norm.*
- *Concentric Cessationists believe that the miraculous gifts have ceased in the mainstream church but appear in unreached areas as an aid to spreading the gospel.*
- *There is no argument from church history that satisfies the continuation of supernatural gifts, the office of prophet, the office of apostle, or any other claim made by so called continuationists. They claim that these things ceased in the fourth century because the church went apostate. They claim that these gifts were restored during the sixteenth or nineteenth century — depending on who you ask.*
- *The understanding of what they claim does not place them in the category of continuationists but the category of what? Restorationists*

Belfast News Letter Oct 28, 1831 “He [James Irving] commenced by observing that manifestations of the Spirit in the gifts of prophecy and of tongues, had been the subject of

*historical record during the first three centuries, but from that period up to the present time, they had **ceased** to be the subject of historical record. It has, however, been the opinion of himself and of others that these manifestations might be renewed, and accordingly they had prayed to the Lord to **restore them** . . .*

i. James Irving and his followers called the Irvingites were a gnostic cult.

– What is restorationism?

❖ A movement in the early 1800s that attempted to restore the church to the patterns of the New Testament.

Alexander Campbell (1788–1866) and **Barton Stone** (1772–1844).

• The Restorationist Movement was pioneered by Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone.

i. This is what started the Church of Christ.

• They believed creeds divided Christianity.

i. They believed confessions, creeds, and church history had corrupted the church. They wanted to get back to the first-century church.

– Do creeds and confessions divide the church? Yes and no

i. Doctrine will always divide, why? Because we are all sinners.

– Should we throw out doctrine?

❖ To throw out doctrine would be impossible, but to get away from historical biblical doctrine is probably heresy. In other words, if you get away from creeds and confessions you will still be teaching your own doctrine and when left unchecked by the thousands of Christians who came before you, you will be prone to heresy.

• This is the platform that Satan used to start many cult movements: Getting back to the first-century church by using prophets or prophetesses to bypass eighteen hundred years of church history. In reality, they got back to early church heresies.

i. Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Charismatics all belong to the restorationist movement. There is really no such thing as a continuationist.

– **How can we get past a person's experience if the person's experience is not biblical?**

• The controversy between continuationism vs cessationism boils down to whether or not the Bible is sufficient.

- i. If the Bible is sufficient, we need no continued revelation. If the Bible isn't sufficient, we need to be adding pages from everyone who receives revelation from God, because God's truth is timeless and for generation to generation.
- In most cases, people who believe that God speaks directly to them are guilty of Gnosticism, whether they understand this or not. This may be unintentional, but this is gnostic, nonetheless.
 - i. One of the views the Gnostics hold to is a secret knowledge. If God is revealing things to you that are outside of His Word, you have a secret knowledge.
- There is no place in Scripture that teaches that God speaks to us in a still small voice.
 - i. Jesus is who taught us how to pray. If ever there were a time to teach that God speaks to us in a still small voice, it would have been in **Luke 11**.

Luke 11:1-13 *1 It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." 2 And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. 3 'Give us each day our daily bread. 4 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.' "* 5 Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; 7 and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' 8 "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. 9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 "For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. 11 "Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? 12 "Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? 13 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

- Where does the teaching of a still small voice come from?

❖ 1 Kings 19:12 King James Version.

¹¹ And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: ¹² And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. ¹³ And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in

the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

- Was this still small voice something internal or external?
- What about John 10:27: *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;*
 - What are the three most important rules of Bible interpretation? Context, context, context.

John 10:26–29 26 *“But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. 27 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.*

- What is the context of this verse?
 - ❖ Salvation. This is talking about the internal (effectual) call of God.
 - i. There is what is called the external call of God, which is the gospel proclaimed. There is also what is called the internal (effectual) call of God that only those who believe hear and obey.

1689 Baptist Confession of Faith: Of the Holy Scriptures

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible a rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, although the light b of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto d writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased. ⁵

- The number one reason to believe cessationism is that the Bible is sufficient. Let’s look at the second reason.
- What were the sign gifts for?

⁵ 2Ti 3:15-17; Isa 8:20; Luk 16:29,31; Eph 2:20; b Rom 1:19-21; 2:14-15; Psalms 19:1-3; c Heb 1:1; d Pro 22:19-21; Rom 15:4; 2Pe 1:19-20

- ❖ So that the gospel could be proclaimed in the language of the people.
- ❖ To set aside the messenger of God as an authority that is speaking directly for God Himself to the people.

Ephesians 2:19–20 *19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

- How many times do you lay the foundation of a building?
- If all you do is lay a foundation, then lay another foundation on that, then lay a foundation on that, so on and so forth, the building will never progress in being built.
 - i. The Apostles were given these gifts until the foundation of the church was built, which is the Bible.
- This one foundation was given to the church, laid by the Apostles through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for the church to be built on. There will never be another foundation placed on the building.
 - i. God did not forget to tell us something and assigned new Apostles to give us this information today. The foundation was established two thousand years ago, and it was a perfect foundation to build the church of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 2:3–4 *3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.*

- There are three groups here: Jesus (*the Lord*), the Apostles (*those who heard*), and everyone else (*us*).
 - i. The writer of Hebrews is putting himself outside of the ones who heard directly from Christ.
- God testified with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.
- The writer of Hebrews does not include himself as one who performed signs and wonders and gifts. He places those gifts on the ones who had laid the foundation, the Apostles.
- He also speaks as if these were past tense.

- i. There is no mention of miraculous gifts after the year 57 or 58 AD. The sign gifts were the strongest during the ministry of Christ.
 - a. There were an explosion of them with Pentecost, but they seemed to fade away to the point that they are no longer mentioned by Scripture in books written after 57 or 58 AD, other than Revelation, where we see them return just before the Second coming of Christ as a witness to Him.
- Now, if the foundation of a building is laid, what happens next? The building progresses to completion.
 - If we were halfway building a building that was laid on a perfect foundation, what would happen if we quit building the building and regressed to busting up the foundation to pour it again?
 - ❖ We would be going backward, not forward, would we not? We would be going from something maturing and growing back to something premature, something less.
- There are some on the borderline between continuationism and cessationism. They believe they are allowing for something greater when in reality they are returning to elementary things, the things that only supported the foundation rather than the foundation itself.

i. The signs and wonders are servants to the Word proclaimed.

“To desire to want to see signs and wonders exhibited is not a greater experience but a lesser experience. You’re going back to the foundation, you’re going back to the servant rather than the ultimate authority, the Word of God, which all the signs and wonders attest to. To want them and to desire them is devaluing the Word of God.” Burk Parsons

- a. We don’t want to go back to the infancy of the church, we want the church to mature. Throughout church history we have seen a massive maturing of the church till the last one hundred and fifty years. Now we seem to be regressing.

John 20:27–29 *27 Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.” 28 Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”*

- If God is still speaking to people today, they had better write it down and add it to the Bible, because God cannot speak more authoritatively to one person than He does another. His truth is timeless, from generation to generation.

Hebrews 1:1–2 *1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son*

2 Peter 1:16–19 *16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **we were eyewitnesses** of His majesty. 17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 **So we have the prophetic word made more sure**, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.*

- What better experience could there be than seeing the transfiguration of Jesus, of seeing the majesty of Christ? But Peter says that *the prophetic word* is *more sure* than what he saw with his own eyes and experienced with Christ Himself: to which you do well to pay attention *as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts*.

Let's get back to God's Preceptive will.

- Does God lead you and direct your path?
 - ❖ Yes, that is the providence of God that we will talk about in a few weeks.
- The Old Testament saints realized that the Law of God flowed from His perfect character.
 - i. This is why they delighted in following it.
- We must learn how to apply the Law of God and use it to direct the decisions we make in this life.
 - i. God wasn't obligated to give us any knowledge from His own mind, but He did. He has given us His knowledge within the pages of Scripture, not only for us, but for our children.
 - a. Our priority is to pass this knowledge on from generation to generation.

Look at **Deuteronomy** again: 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.*

- Most people, when asking the question: “what is the will of God for my life”, are asking for a knowledge of the future.
 - i. A knowledge of the future, outside biblical prophecy, is hidden.

- ii. If you want to know what is pleasing to God, what He will bless you in, you must look at His prescriptive will.
- There are three reasons for God's Law.
 1. For the sinner to understand they need a Savior.
 2. For the believer to grow in holiness.
 3. For the governing of nations.
 - i. Number two is what we are talking about, growing in holiness which is our sanctification.
- Do you want to know the will of God for your life? Let's look at **Psalm 119**.

97 O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. 98 Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. 99 I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts. 101 I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. 102 I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, For You Yourself have taught me. 103 How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

- It is much easier to seek some mystical experience to guide us through life than it is to apply ourselves diligently to the study of the Word of God and to learn how to apply what we learn to every decision we make.
- Sometimes when people ask what the will of God is for their lives, what they mean is how can I get the will of God to conform to what I want to do?
- What happens when we study God's Word?
 - ❖ It changes us. It conforms us to the image of Christ. It causes our desires to change. It causes our will to align with His will.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 *3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.*⁶

⁶ Matthew 6:33

The Dispositional will of God

- What do we mean by God’s dispositional will?
 - ❖ The dispositional will of God refers to the way in which God sees His creation — that He wishes that none should perish but that all should have eternal life.
 - i. This could be called the desire of God.
- Many people get confused with verses in the Bible dealing with God’s disposition.

1 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

- i. If this verse were God’s decreed will then all would be saved, and none would be lost at all.
- ii. This will of God isn’t prescribed and simply perceived, it is something else.

Ezekiel 18:21–23 *21 But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 22 All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live. 23 Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord God, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?”*

- In verse 23 God asks a rhetorical question with an obvious answer. God takes no *pleasure in the death of the wicked*, rather He takes pleasure in saving the wicked.
 - i. Even though it is impossible for the wicked to turn, God’s disposition is that they turn. But if they do not turn, He will give them eternal death in which He takes no pleasure in doing.

Ezekiel 33:11 *“Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’”*

- He is holding Israel responsible but takes no pleasure in doing so. Yet He must because He is perfectly just.

1 Timothy 2:3–4 *“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*

- God’s desire is for all people to turn to Him. God’s desire is for us to be holy as well.
 - i. God is not willing that sin goes unpunished, because He is perfectly just.

Questions

- In what way has God revealed Himself in creation and in the Bible?
- In what way has He hidden Himself?
- Explain the difference between God's decreed will and His Preceptive will.
- What is greater: God's will that people be saved or God's will that sin must be punished?

Notes

