

The Will of God

I. Overview - the different aspects of the will of God.

1. The *sovereign will of God*.

A. Predestination - God's *absolute sovereign will*.

B. Predetermination - God's *bounded sovereign will*.

C. God's sovereign will is both His desire and His accomplishment of that desire.

i. Will - I. 1. a. Desire, wish, longing; liking, inclination, disposition (to do something).

ii. Will - II. 5. a. The action of willing or choosing to do something; the movement or attitude of the mind which is directed with conscious intention to (and, normally, issues immediately in) some action, physical or mental; volition.

D. God's sovereign will shall be done and is not dependent on man's obedience.

E. All action by men is not by God's sovereign will.

2. The *permissive will of God*.

A. God's permissive will may not be His declared will, but he permits or allows it to happen.

B. God's permissive will is exercised every time someone breaks God's law, which is His declared will.

C. Each time this happens, God has not caused it, but allows or suffers it.

3. The *declared will of God*.

A. God's declared will is His desire for what men should do - His law.

B. God's declared will may or may not be done and is dependent on man's obedience.

II. The absolute sovereign will of God.

1. God's will is sovereign in the control of the elements.

A. God controls the rain (**Job 36:27-28**).

B. God controls the water and wind cycles (**Psa 135:6-7**).

C. God controls the seas (**Psa 107:29; Mat 8:26**).

2. God's will is sovereign in some of the events in the lives of men.

A. God sometimes causes things to happen in our lives.

B. God makes barren women able to bear children (**Psa 113:9**).

C. God sometimes kills people (**Act 5:5**).

D. God sometimes puts it in men's hearts to fulfill His will (**Rev 17:17**).

3. God's will is entirely sovereign when it comes to saving men's souls and giving them eternal life.

A. Concerning eternal salvation, God *predestinates* people.

B. Predestinate - v. 1. *Theol.* Of God: To foreordain by a divine decree or purpose: a. to salvation or eternal life; to elect.

C. God predestinated His elect to be adopted as His children by Jesus Christ (**Eph 1:5**).

i. This predestination was according to *his will* (**Eph 1:5**).

ii. God *purposed* to do His will in Himself (**Eph 1:9**).

iii. Purpose - v. II. To set before oneself for accomplishment. 3. a. *trans.* To place before oneself as a thing to be done or attained; to form a purpose of doing (something); to design or resolve upon the performance of.

- iv. God *willed* (desired) to save a people for Himself and therefore *purposed* (designed a plan to accomplish it) to save them by *predestinating* (divinely decreeing) them to be His children (**Eph 1:11**).
 - v. God's foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification of His children (the called) according to His purpose is so certain that it is spoken of in the past tense even though many of them have not yet even been born (**Rom 8:28-30**).
 - vi. When God decrees something, it's as good as done (**Rom 4:17**).
 - D. God has not predestinated all things, but rather only the things that scripture says He has.
 - i. The word *predestinate* is only used four times in the entire scripture (**Rom 8:29-30; Eph 1:5,11**).
 - ii. All instances of *predestination* in the scripture refer only to eternal salvation, as does the definition of the word.
 - iii. All of the events of our lives are not *predestinated*.
 - E. The regeneration of the elect is also according to God's sovereign will.
 - i. *Of his own will begat he us* with the word of truth (**Jam 1:18**).
 - ii. This *word of truth* was the spoken word (**Joh 5:25**) of The Word (**Joh 1:1**) Who is the truth (**Joh 14:6**).
 - iii. Jesus quickens *whom He will* (**Joh 5:21**).
- III. The bounded sovereign will of God.
1. God has predetermined many of the events in our lives.
 - A. Predetermine v. - To determine beforehand. 1. *trans.* To fix, settle, or decide beforehand; to ordain or decree beforehand, to predestine.
 - B. Determine v. - III. To direct to some end or conclusion; to come to some conclusion. 14. *trans.* To give a terminus or aim to; to give tendency or direction to; to direct; to decide the course of; to impel to (some destination).
 - C. Predetermination is similar in many ways to predestination, but it is not identical.
 - D. To determine is to direct to some end, which is exactly what God does with men: we devise our way, but God *directs* our steps (**Pro 16:9**).
 - i. We should desire for God to do this for us (**Psa 119:5; Jer 10:23-24**).
 - ii. If we trust in Him and acknowledge Him, He will direct our steps (**Pro 3:5-6**).
 - iii. We should desire that God would direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ (**2Th 3:5**).
 - E. Paul was an apostle by the will of God (**2Co 1:1**).
 - i. The will of God in this case was a commandment of God (**1Ti 1:1**).
 - ii. Paul was appointed to be an apostle (**2Ti 1:11**).
 - iii. Appoint - II. To determine authoritatively, prescribe, decree, ordain.
 - iv. Paul obeyed this commandment from Jesus Christ (**Act 26:15-19**).
 2. To predetermine is to set bounds on something ahead of time.
 - A. God has done this with the length of our lives (**Job 14:5**).
 - B. God has done this with nations as well (**Act 17:26**).
 - C. A good illustration of this is how the banks of a river put bounds and limits on where the water can flow.
 - i. The water is free to flow where it wants within those bounds.
 - ii. God controls the hearts of kings (and men) in the same way (**Pro 21:1**).

- a. God did this very thing for Artaxerxes, king of the Medes and the Persians to benefit His people (**Ezr 7:27**).
 - b. God did not suffer (*to tolerate, allow*) kings to harm Israel (**1Ch 16:21-22**).
 - c. God did not suffer king Abimelech to touch Sarah (**Gen 20:6**).
 - d. God restrained king David from killing Nabal and his men (**1Sa 25:26**).
 - e. God turned the heart of king Rehoboam to punish His people (**2Ch 10:15**).
 - f. God hardened Pharaoh's heart to show His power in him (**Exo 10:20 c/w Rom 9:17-18**).
 - g. God hardened the heart of Sihon king of Heshbon in order to deliver him into the hand of Israel (**Deu 2:30**).
 - h. God shall put it in the hearts of the ten kings in Revelation to give their kingdoms to the beast (**Rev 17:17**).
3. The death of Jesus Christ is a classic example of God's predetermination.
- A. Jesus was delivered to be crucified by the *determinate* counsel and *foreknowledge* of God (**Act 2:23**).
 - i. Determinate - 1. a. Definitely bound or limited, in time, space, extent, position, character, or nature; definite, fixed; clearly defined or individualized; distinct, as opposed to *vague, undefined, or indefinite*.
 - ii. Foreknowledge - Knowledge of an event, etc. before it exists or happens; prescience.
 - iii. These definitions show that God set bounds and limits beforehand on how Jesus would be delivered up to be killed.
 - iv. Jesus' death was therefore predetermined, not predestinated (**Act 4:28**).
 - B. Leading up to the crucifixion, the Jews tried to kill Jesus several times and by several different ways.
 - i. In the beginning of His ministry, they tried to cast Him headlong over the brow of a hill, but He escaped (**Luk 4:29-30**).
 - ii. Later, they sought to lay hands on Him, but His hour was not yet come (**Joh 7:30**).
 - iii. Then they tried to stone Him, but He went through the midst of them (**Joh 8:59**).
 - iv. Then they sought to take him again, but He escaped out of their hand (**Joh 10:39**).
 - v. God thwarted all their plans because Jesus would be killed in the way it was *determined* by God (**Luk 22:22**).
 - C. The wrath of man will praise God, but He will restrain the remainder of their wrath (**Psa 76:10**).
 - D. God overruled the devices and conceits of these wicked men (**Pro 19:21**).
 - i. These men's goings were of the Lord (**Pro 20:24**).
 - ii. But they didn't understand their own way (**1Co 2:8**).
- IV. The permissive will of God.
- 1. There are some things in our lives that God doesn't decree but permits.
 - A. Permit v. - I. To allow, suffer, give leave; not to prevent.
 - B. God may or may not permit our travel to go as we have planned (**1Co 16:7**).

- C. Even the teaching the pastor intends to do is subject to the permissive will of God (**Heb 6:1-3**).
 - D. God has *allowed* His ministers to be put in trust with the gospel (**1Th 2:4**).
 - E. This is why we should always preface our plans with, "If the Lord will..." (**Jam 4:15; 1Co 4:19**).
2. God does NOT sovereignly will all actions in men's lives, especially sin.
- A. If all actions of men were caused by the sovereign will of God, then that would necessarily mean that God causes men to sin.
 - B. God doesn't cause men to sin.
 - i. People who sin and say that they were predestined to do so are liars (**Jer 7:8-10**).
 - ii. God has never commanded people to sin, nor has the thought of it ever come into His heart (**Jer 7:31**), nor has it come into His mind (**Jer 19:5; Jer 32:35**).
 - C. Though God doesn't cause men to sin, He does *suffer* men to sin.
 - i. Suffer - II. To tolerate, allow. 12. *trans.* To endure the existence, presence, or activity of (a person); to bear with, put up with, tolerate.
 - ii. For example: you tell your toddler to not touch the stove and after stopping him from doing so several times, you finally allow him to touch it and to suffer the natural consequences.
 - a. You didn't desire (declared will) for him to touch the stove.
 - b. You didn't make him (sovereign will) touch the stove.
 - c. You allowed or permitted him (permissive will) to touch the stove.
 - d. So in a sense, it was your will that he touched the stove.
 - iii. God suffers the sins of His own people.
 - a. God suffered Israel's sin and complaining in the wilderness for 40 years (**Act 13:18**).
 - b. God will suffer His people to be tempted, but not above that they are able to bear (**1Co 10:13**).
 - c. God is *longsuffering* and forbears with His people who break His laws (**Rom 2:4**).
 - d. Longsuffering - Patient endurance of provocation or trial; longanimity.
 - e. God was longsuffering with the apostle Paul while he was a chief sinner (**1Ti 1:13-16**).
 - f. God is longsuffering with us His children and allows us time to repent, not willing (desiring) that any of us should perish (**2Pe 3:9; 2Pe 3:15**).
 - iv. God suffered the sins of the nations prior to the coming of Christ.
 - a. For thousands of years before the coming of Christ, God turned a blind eye to the idolatry of the Gentiles (**Act 17:30**).
 - b. Wink - 1. a. *intr.* To close one's eyes.
 - c. God suffered them to walk in their own ways (**Act 14:16**).
 - v. God suffers and endures (*to last; suffer continuously*) the reprobate before judging them (**Rom 9:22**).
 - a. God was longsuffering in the days of Noah while men were disobedient and waited to judge them until the ark was finished (**1Pe 3:20**).
 - b. Think of how longsuffering God has been with our wicked nation.

- D. God allows lying spirits to put lying words in the mouths of false prophets to deceive people who want to believe a lie or do something foolish.
 - i. The Lord did this to king Ahab when he wanted to go to war with Ramoth-gilead.
 - ii. Ahab had already determined to go to war against Ramoth-gilead (**2Ch 18:3**).
 - iii. In order to appease king Jehoshaphat, Ahab went to the prophets to get a rubberstamp on what he already decided to do (**2Ch 18:4-5,11**).
 - iv. Ahab didn't want to hear contrary advice (**2Ch 18:12-17**).
 - v. Micaiah revealed to Ahab why all the prophets prophesied that he should go up against Ramoth-gilead -- because God had *permitted* a spirit to be a lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets to entice Ahab (**2Ch 18:18-21**).
 - vi. Notice though how God *permitting* the lying spirit to deceive Ahab and the prophets was said to be the Lord *putting* a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets (**2Ch 18:22**).
 - vii. This is an example of God's permissive will causing something to happen by allowing it to happen.
 - 3. God permits Satan to tempt and torment us, but He only allows Him to go so far.
 - A. God permitted Satan to take all of Job's possessions, but He restrained him from touching Job (**Job 1:9-12**).
 - i. Though it was Satan's doing, Job recognized that it was the LORD that had taken away (**Job 1:21**).
 - ii. It could rightly be said that the LORD had taken away because it was God's permissive will which allowed Satan to do it.
 - B. God once again allowed Satan to torment Job, but this time only his body; He restrained him from killing him (**Job 2:4-6**).
- V. The declared will of God.
1. God's declared will is His written word (**Deu 4:13 c/w Psa 40:8; Heb 10:7**).
 - A. Declared - Openly or formally made known by words or something equivalent; openly avowed, professed.
 - B. Men are commanded to do it.
 - C. This how God wants men to live.
 - D. It can be known (**Rom 2:17-18**).
 - E. We are commanded to understand what the will of the Lord is (**Eph 5:17**).
 - F. Jesus came to do God's will (**Joh 5:30**).
 - G. There is a promise of reward for those who do God's will (**Heb 10:35-36; 1Jo 2:17**).
 2. Certain things are declared in scripture to be patently "the will of God" including:
 - A. Jesus saving all that the Father gave Him (**Joh 6:38-40; Gal 1:4**).
 - B. Abstaining from fornication (**1Th 4:3**).
 - C. Giving thanks in everything (**1Th 5:18**).
 - D. Submitting to the lawful ordinances of civil government (**1Pe 2:13-15**).
 - E. Suffering for well doing (at least sometimes) (**1Pe 3:17**).
 - F. Suffering as a Christian and being reproached for the name of Christ (**1Pe 4:12-19**).
 - G. Servants obeying masters (**Eph 6:5-7**).
 - H. Not living in the lusts of men in riotous and lascivious living (**1Pe 4:1-4**).
 3. Men can choose whether they will do God's declared will (**Mar 3:35; Eph 6:6; Heb 10:36**).

- VI. God's declared will also includes guidelines that God has given in scripture of how He wants us to live and what He wants us to do.
1. This aspect of God's will can be ascertained by living according to God's laws and studying the scriptures (**Rom 12:2**).
 2. Prove v.- II. To make good, establish. 5. *trans.* To establish (a thing) as true; to make certain; to demonstrate the truth of by evidence or argument.
 3. We should pray for God's will to be done.
 - A. Jesus was our prime example of this (**Mat 26:39,42; Luk 22:42**).
 - B. Jesus taught us to pray for God's will to be done (**Mat 6:10**).
 - C. Ministers should pray for their flock to stand complete in the will of God (**Col 4:12**).
 4. We should be content with the will of the Lord being done (**Act 21:14**).
 5. It's important to know God's will and to do it, so as to avoid beatings from God (**Luk 12:47-48**).
 6. We are commanded to understand what the will of the Lord is (**Eph 5:17**).
 7. How do we discern the will of God when there's not a black and white verse?
 - A. Sin is the transgression of the law (**1Jo 3:4**).
 - B. If there is no law prohibiting something, then it is not a sin (**Rom 4:15**).
 - C. Though something may be lawful, it may not be expedient (**1Co 10:23**).
 - i. Expedient - II. 2. Conducive to advantage in general, or to a definite purpose; fit, proper, or suitable to the circumstances of the case.
 - ii. It may be lawful to eat lunch at McDonalds everyday, but is it expedient for your health?
 - iii. It may be lawful to watch soap operas all day, but does it edify you?
 - D. It was before proved that all things in our lives are not predestinated, but only the things that the scripture says are.
 - E. It was before proved that God's written word contains His will for our lives.
 - F. In areas of life or in situations where the Bible doesn't specifically state what God's will is, we must act within the guidelines set forth in scripture, and any decision or action made within those boundaries is God's will since none of God's laws are being broken.
 - G. Here are a few examples of applying the boundaries set forth in the Bible to determine if we are in the will of God:
 - i. Who does God want me to marry?
 - a. God allows us to be married to whom we will, within His boundaries. (**1Co 7:39**)
 - b. Is the person ineligible to be married (already married, not biblically free from a previous marriage)? (**Exo 20:14; Mat 19:9**)
 - c. If they are Biblically ineligible to be married, then it is not the will of God that you marry that person, no matter how right it may feel.
 - d. Will the potential wife perform her God-ordained role in the marriage?
 - 1) Will she be submissive to her husband? (**Eph 5:22,24**)
 - 2) Will she bear her husband children? (**1Ti 5:14**)
 - 3) Will she be a keeper at home? (**Tit 2:5**)
 - 4) Will she provide for her husband's sexual needs? (**1Co 7:3-5**)
 - e. Will the potential husband perform his God-ordained role in the marriage?

- 1) Will he be the head and leader of the wife and family? (**Eph 5:23**)
 - 2) Will he love his wife as Christ loved the church - self sacrificially? (**Eph 5:25**)
 - 3) Will he provide for his wife materially? (**1Ti 5:8**)
 - 4) Will he train and educate the children in the ways of God? (**Eph 6:4**)
 - 5) Will he provide for his wife's sexual needs? (**1Co 7:3-5**)
- f. Does the person share your faith?
- 1) Though it may be *lawful* to marry someone who doesn't share your faith, is it *expedient*?
 - 2) We are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers in the church (**2Co 6:14**), so why would you want to marry one?
 - 3) Intermarriage with unbelievers was forbidden in the OT. (**Deu 7:2-4**)
 - 4) Those things were written for our admonition, from which we should learn. (**1Co 10:11**)
- g. Do they exhibit godly character as described in the scriptures? (Proverbs, etc.)
- h. If the person you are thinking of marrying is within all these scriptural boundaries, then you can conclude that you are within the will of God to marry them, even if they are not "perfect" for you.
- i. There may be more than one person that you find who meets these criteria and therefore it would be within the will of God for you to marry either one of them.
- j. There is not only one person on earth that you could marry and live happily ever after; there are likely many of them. You just have to find one that meets God's qualifications and that you are compatible with.
- ii. What house or car does God want me to buy?
- a. Do you have to go into debt to buy it? (**Rom 13:8; Pro 22:7 c/w 1Co 7:23**)
 - b. Are you established with steady employment first? (**Pro 24:27**)
 - c. Will buying that house or car cause you to have take away from what you have purposed to give to God and His house? (**2Co 9:6-7; Hag 1:4-8**)
 - d. Will buying the house or car deplete your savings or hinder your ability to save? (**Pro 21:20**)
 - e. Will the new house be taking you away from the church geographically to where you could not be in regular attendance, or cause you to miss events and gatherings of brethren in the church?
 - 1) We ought to seek *first* the kingdom of God and not forsake assembling with the saints. (**Mat 6:33; Heb 10:25**)
 - 2) We should prefer to be in God's house above any other house. (**Psa 27:4; Psa 84:10**)
 - f. Is the purpose of it to show off and feed your pride? (**1Jo 2:16**)

- g. Will the upkeep of it take time away from your obligations to God, His word, His church, or your family?
 - 1) Possessions own you, you don't own them. (**Ecc 5:11-12**)
 - 2) Possessions and the cares of life that go along with them choke the word of God in your life. (**Mar 4:19**)
 - 3) Parents have an obligation to train up their children which must come before your aspirations of acquiring nice possessions. (**Pro 22:6; Eph 6:4**)
 - 4) Husbands should *dwell* with their wives according to *knowledge*: in other words spend time with them and know them well. (**1Pe 3:7**)
- h. If you can purchase the house or car you are considering and stay within the boundaries of the above cited scriptures (and any others that apply), then you can conclude that you are within the will of God to buy that house or car.
- i. As was the case with choosing a wife, there will likely be *many* houses or cars that would be within the will of God for you to buy.
- iii. What job or career path does God want me to take?
 - a. Is it a non-sinful profession (not a prostitute, hit man, abortion doctor, inventing evil things, predatory lending, etc.) (**1Co 6:9-10; Mat 19:18; Rom 1:30**)
 - b. Will it provide for you and/or your family? (**1Ti 5:8**)
 - c. Will it require travel that will keep you away from church? (See verses above about buying a house.)
 - d. It doesn't have to be a "prestigious" job to be a godly job. (**Pro 14:23**)
 - e. Can you do the job to the glory of God? (**1Co 10:31**)
 - f. If the job you are seeking meets these scriptural criteria (and any others that apply), then you would be in the will of God if you took it.
 - g. As with the other examples, there could be many jobs that would be God's will for you to have.