

THE WILL OF GOD

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification...”

1 Thessalonians 4:3

The phrase “the will of God” can be confusing because Scripture uses it in more than one way. In Scripture, God’s “will” refers to what God purposes, commands, desires, or permits according to his wisdom and authority. We should not think of God as divided within himself or as having competing desires. Rather, Scripture teaches us to recognize different aspects of God’s one will.

First, the Bible speaks of **God’s sovereign will**. This refers to God’s rule over all things and his ultimate purpose that cannot finally be defeated. God declares, “I will accomplish all my purpose” (Isaiah 46:10), and Paul says that God works “all things according to the counsel of his will” (Ephesians 1:11). This does not mean that God approves of everything people do, nor does it remove human responsibility. People can sin, rebel, and disobey God. But even human evil never escapes God’s knowledge, rule, or ability to accomplish his purposes.

Second, Scripture speaks of **God’s revealed will**. This is what God has made known through his word: what he commands, desires, and expects from us. Jesus says that only the one who “does the will of my Father” will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21). John contrasts the desires of the world with “whoever does the will of God” (1 John 2:17). In this sense, God’s will can be obeyed or disobeyed. This is the will of God most directly connected to daily discipleship.

Christians also often ask about **God’s providential guidance**. We want to know which job to take, whom to marry, where to live, or what decision to make next. God certainly knows our lives fully and cares for every step we take. Yet Scripture does not teach that God ordinarily reveals every future decision ahead of time. We walk by faith, not by sight, using Scripture, wisdom, prayer, counsel, and providential opportunities to make faithful decisions.

This makes God’s will both harder and easier than we sometimes imagine. It is harder because obedience requires a lifetime of faith, repentance, wisdom, and growth. But it is easier because God has already revealed what he desires: our holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3), our fruitfulness and growth in knowledge (Colossians 1:10), and our transformation into the image of Christ (Romans 8:28–29). The will of God is not mainly a hidden map to decode, but a revealed path of faithful obedience.

How should God’s revealed will guide us?

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