

The Will of God

Written by K B Napier

Wednesday, 18 January 2012 18:00

Like so many other terms used by Christians in churches, 'The Will of God' is one of them: But, what is this will of God? What does it mean? In the eyes of heretics it means whatever they want it to mean, so that their heresy is somehow 'acceptable' to God (many saved people think this, too)! As usual, we will look at what God says in His word.

Are You My Brethren?

Only those who do the will of God are my brethren:

"For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."
(Mark 3:35)

Is it too obvious to say that the opposite applies to those who do not do the will of God? Today, I am compelled to point this out because too many believers accept the most unbiblical of notions, and yet still think they are being faithful.

In this text the 'will' of God is the neuter noun, *thelēma*. A neuter noun is neither masculine nor feminine, but is neutral. Thus, it refers to everyone. Normally, but not necessarily, neuter nouns refer to inanimate objects, but this cannot be the case here, for the 'will' is of the living God. As a noun it is an object or abstract idea/concept.

What, then, is this 'will' of God? It is whatever God wishes to happen. As we are talking about God, what He wishes is also what is done. There can be no difference between the two, because God does not have useless thoughts, or thoughts that do not come to pass. Therefore, His wish is also His command is also His action. The word also speaks of God's desire or purpose to bless mankind in Christ. Again, God cannot desire something that has no purpose, therefore His desire and His purpose are one and the same. His 'will' is also about what He wishes us to do for or by Him.

In this light, His 'will' includes His commands and teachings. Because they are both what God demands, they are imperatives, to be obeyed. They are never optional, because every command of God has a purpose. The word infers choice by God (though 'choice' is an inadequate word when used of what God does; 'choice' suggests choosing between

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alternatives, but with God there can be no alternatives, only a fixed determination made in eternity).

The noun is a prolonged version of the verb, *thelō*, which adds the idea of God delighting in what He has elected to do. We should not thereby apply the word to things we humans delight in – for God delights mainly because He has determined and what He has determined has come to pass, whether humanly we call it 'bad' or 'good'; in our favour, or not.

God's will is always perfect and acceptable (because whatever God does must be acceptable to himself, and, thus acceptable to those who belong to Him). In the text, the one who does the will of God is my brother or sister (in Christ). The text does not specify what exactly this will is, but we can take it to apply to anything at all determined by God, and the will of God is found in His word.

In the text, God is the masculine noun, *theos*, which refers to the Trinitarian character of divinity, as well as applying to each Person in the Trinity, the only true God.

David Fulfilled God's Will

"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:" (Acts 13:36)

David served his nation "by the will of God". In this text a different word for 'will' is used – *boulē*. This feminine noun has a specific meaning: the counsel or purpose of God. David followed the divine plan of God in detail, which, for David, was God's 'advice'... how to run the country, how to conduct warfare, how to worship, etc. That is, he obeyed the wishes of God to the letter.

Nothing decided by God is a 'possible' choice or a mere possibility – it is always a deliberate action or plan, as the root verb, *boulomai*, tells us. Yet, many Christians have the idea that God's will is variable, probably in order to 'bend' it to their own idea of what that will is.

Thelēma is the most used word for God's 'will'.

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Romans 1:10

"Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you."

Paul hoped to visit certain people, but says it will occur by the 'will of God'. He longs to see those he is writing to, but recognises it will happen only if God's purpose is for him to do so. This is behind the oft-used, and overly-familiar, 'God willing'. Many Christians make their plans and then present them to God, rather than seek God's face to see what His will is to begin with. This is how king David ruled his life, an excellent example to follow.

The Mind of the Spirit

"And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what [is] the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to [the will of] God." (Romans 8:27)

In this text we see that the "mind of the Spirit" is the same as the "will of God". We could easily give a parallel wording like 'the will of the Spirit is the same as that of God'. Indeed, it has to be this way, because no Person in the Trinity can possibly disagree with, or contradict, the other!

The "mind", *phronēma*, a neuter noun, means whatever one has in his mind; his thoughts and purposes. Thus, the mind of the Holy Spirit is also the will of God. This agrees with the root verb, *phroneō*, and the second root, *phrēn*, which refers to the mind. In this text the words 'the will of' are implied by the context and text, and so need not be included in actuality. This is because "according to God" is the same as saying "according to the will of God".

We see that the purpose of God for the Holy Spirit, in this text, is to come between God and saved men, to plead their case. Not only does this mean the Spirit acts on behalf of the Trinity because it is their combined will to do so, but it is also the will of God that the saints will act according to God's plan and desires. The Holy Spirit will not contradict the Trinity by coming to the aid of saints who are disobeying the will of the Trinity (God).

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That this is true is found in Romans 12:2,

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

So, we prove or show our salvation by conforming to whatever God demands of us – His will. This means not doing what the world does and living by its fallen rules and ideas. This is done by renewing our minds, so that we no longer imbibe or think as we used to in our unsaved state. Instead, we mimic and mirror God's purposes, as declared in His word. Even where the Spirit speaks directly to us in certain personal situations, what He says is always consistent with what has already been declared.

We obey God 'in' or 'by' or 'through' the will of God, not through our own ideas, or thoughts, or desires. What we think or desire is irrelevant. Only what God requires is relevant and acceptable.

Note: The preposition, 'by', *día*, includes the meaning of 'through', 'in', 'with', 'by the means of', 'by reason of', 'on account of', 'therefore', 'because of'. This is because a primary preposition denotes the channel of an act. In this case, we are changed irrevocably by the renewing of our mind, which occurs at the 'point' of salvation on this earth. (It should continue throughout our lives in sanctification, but so many of us sin and taint this renewal).

1 Corinthians 1:1

In this text we see that Paul was "called" to be an apostle, "through the will of God". It was God's plan and purpose to make Paul an apostle. In the same way God appointed Sosthenes to also be an apostle. This completely disagrees with the way men become preachers, pastors, and teachers, today. Now, they think they can be 'called' by a college, a church, another pastor, or even by themselves. This is not true. Only God can call a man to service, as *klētos* proves... divinely selected. As for 'apostles', many men think they are apostles, even though they have never been called; this is proved by their heresies and sometimes immoral living. Paul repeats this claim in 2 Corinthians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1 and other books.

Jesus' Sacrifice by the Will of God

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Christians put too much emphasis on the murderous activities of the Sanhedrin, etc. It is certainly true that they were murderous, but this was only the means used by God to make Jesus a living sacrifice for our sins. The actual death was through the will of God, the agreement of the Trinity to send Jesus to earth to die for us. The murder was simply a means to an end. As we see in Galatians 1:4,

"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:"

Jesus only "gave himself for our sins" because it was "according to the will of God" to bring about our salvation in this way. Lot was willing to give his daughters to a bloodthirsty and sexually craven crowd, in order to save the angels... but the sacrifice of Jesus was of far greater import, and was the will of all three Persons in the Trinity, in this text represented by "the will of God our Father".

From the Heart

Sadly, many Christians I know and once knew only obeyed God out of duty. God wants our obedience from the heart, the seat of our thoughts and emotions, etc.

"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:"

(Ephesians 6:6,7)

How many attend midweek prayer groups because they are compelled by the pastor, or other members, and not because they are called by God? How many do scheduled 'good works' because that is what the pastor has determined? How many attend Christmas and Easter services for the same reasons? How many do all kinds of 'works' and supposed 'spiritual' things out of a sense of tradition and not because God has called them to do them? The answer is 'most'!

These only do 'eyeservice' to please men. The true "servants of Christ" do what they do because it is what God has commanded them to do, person-to-person. They do it willingly because they love the Lord, not because they do not wish to look backslidden before the pastor

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or the congregation! "As to the Lord, and not to men." I counsel you to look deep into your motives. If they are humanly-led then stop them, at least until you can prove to your own spirit that they come from God.

Are You Perfect and Complete?

I can see some readers now – hearts palpitating in horror, that I should speak of mere men as perfect! But, this is how God sees us; if we are saved by grace, we are perfect and complete!

"Epaphras, who is [one] of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Note that – not just perfect and complete, but perfect and complete in ALL the will of God! Do not let the fear of sin cause you to deny how God sees you. In this text, a man named Epaphras was commended because of his unwavering fervour and work for the Lord. He prayed for them so that they would live righteously before God and, by doing so, be known as "perfect and complete in all the will of God"... not just in some of it, but in all of it. That is, they obeyed everything God said in His word. At that time it referred to the Torah, but today it includes the New Testament as well as the Old.

Many fear this, and so reject being perfect and complete. They would rather live with their sins, than to be perfect and complete! They certainly shrug off such a statement. Yet, this is the will of God – ALL of it, *pas*: applied to every individual who is saved!

Being perfect and complete is not an option, nor is it the prerogative of the pastor. To be 'perfect', *teleios*, is to want in nothing spiritually. It is a current state: 'that which is perfect'. It speaks of the highest state of human integrity and virtue; of men who are spiritually mature. If you are not already like this – why not? If you are not, then seek to fulfil it. Do not just sit back and mutter that no-one is perfect. God says we are! Fulfil His demand and do not avoid it because you favour sin.

And are you "complete"? If not, then you should be, because God says you are! To be complete, *plēroō*, is to be full to the brim with spiritual things, thoughts and acts. I ask again – ARE YOU? If not, why not? How can you deny what already exists? To be complete also means to be perfect, and to be

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both we must obey the Lord implicitly as soon as we have knowledge of what is needed. This, reader, is God's will for YOUR life, not just for a rare few!

The Rest of It...

It is also the will of God to refrain from sexual sins such as fornication (which includes 'sleeping together' outside of marriage, adultery and homosexuality, etc). We must live sanctified lives. No option. (1 Thessalonians 4:3). This is the will of God.

We must continually give thanks to God, no matter what our circumstances or situations are. (1 Thessalonians 5:18). This, too, is a demand of the will of God.

When we fulfil God's commands we receive the promise. (Hebrews 10:36).

We must always act well before the unsaved, so that they cannot accuse us. (1 Peter 2:15). And, if they attack us and cause us to suffer because of it, this, too, is the will of God. (1 Peter 3:17). Many fight the latter as if it is unfair.

We must cast out lusts that tend to bring us low (1 Peter 4:2), and instead live according to God's demands and teachings. If this, too, causes others to bring us low, we must give thanks and continue in well doing (verse 19). This is the will of God. When we live like this we will live forever as a reward. (1 John 2:17).

In every text of scripture where God says "I will..." it means He is acting according to His will, a predetermined plan.

What To Do

I have lost count of how many Christians ask this question: "How do I know the will of God?" For a start we have His word! In it is every precept, counsel and command we ought to know. God never left anything to chance, or to the whims of men – experts or not. Read scripture and devour what it says. It is nutritious for you. (Psalm 119:105).

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When you show this willingness to act according to His known will, He will then trust you with His will in prayer. This is when you pray for Him to help you in whatever it is. He will use what He has already given in scripture, to lead you into an answer that covers your current needs. But, do not expect this kind of move by the Holy Spirit if you have ignored what scripture says, or will not set yourself to learn, by hard work and inward acceptance, what God already says! Obey what you already know – and only then will the Holy Spirit come to you with personal help in a particular situation.

In every case, in whatever situation, if you obey the Lord, HE ONLY gives what is right for you; what will build your spiritual strength, and what is His will. (Jeremiah 29:11). Every Christian should expect what is good and kind and useful, if he obeys. We must be disciples, and not just church attenders!

If you need guidance and wisdom then ASK for it... bearing in mind that you must firstly live a holy life (James 1:5). If God sees that your heart is true but you are temporarily sinning, then He will set you straight as well as help. This is because He loves you. Remember – the Holy Spirit dwells in you; He knows exactly what is happening and is ready to help... but, please, obey first and live righteously. Bad things happening to you is no excuse to copy the same sins, or to cry out as if God is not there. He is WITHIN you! He ALWAYS gives peace if you are righteous (Isaiah 32:17).

Where necessary listen to godly men and women. They are there to help on behalf of the Lord. (Proverbs 12:15). Even so, we must do our part by living righteously (Proverbs 3:5-7). God does not save us just to laugh in our faces or to trip us up. It is His will to transform us and to give us peace when we live holy lives. (Philippians 1:6). And each of us is given gifts and a service to do... when we obey and live righteously, we will come to know what these are.

The will of God, then, is fixed. It is predetermined in eternity. Each one of us is in His will and each one of us must fulfil it. The major route to this is reading scripture and obeying its precepts. When you start doing this, the question, "What is God's will?" will fade away, because you will be doing it.

The will of God is EVERYTHING He tells us in His word. Obey and live!

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