

Discerning the Will of God

The will of God: that which God desires, and what will come about. His will includes accomplishing all that He has purposed (Isaiah 46:10), as well as permitting that which He morally disapproves of. Paradoxically, God has one will: His good pleasure (Psalm 115:3).

1. **God's Will of Decree** (Deut. 29:29; Isaiah 46:8-13; Matt. 11:25-26; Acts 2:23; Rom. 9:18-19; Eph. 1:11; Colossians 1:1)
 - God's efficacious, sovereign will in which all that He has "purposed" will come to pass, regardless of the obedience or disobedience of His creatures. This is often unknown until it happens and is reflective of His Lordship over all things.
 - His will of decree cannot be hindered, prevented, or altered.
 - It can include prophecies that have already been fulfilled, along with future prophecies that will come about, irrespective of anything outside of Himself. These decrees are bound in "time, space, and matter" and will come about as intended (Second Coming of Christ, Final Judgment, etc.).
2. **God's Will of Benevolence** (Matthew 5:44-48; Acts 14:17)
 - His good-will to His creation.
3. **God's Will of Reconciliation** (Deut. 5:29; Psalm 81:10-14; Isaiah 30:18; 65:1-5; Lam. 3:31-36; Ezek. 18:21-23, 30-32; 33:11; Matthew 23:37 (Luke 13:34); 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)
 - His benevolent, merciful, loving, and kind disposition to offer forgiveness and salvation to all who hear His Word.
4. **God's Permissive Will**
 - His decreeing, ordaining, permitting, and allowing events and circumstances to occur that are morally reprehensible to Him, yet, by design, accomplish His good pleasure.
 - Theodicy: a philosophical approach reconciling God's goodness and power, and the choices of sinful men in a world of evil and suffering.
5. **God's Will of Precepts** (Ephesians 5:17, Colossians 4:12; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:18; 1 Peter 2:15; 3:17; 4:2; 4:19)
 - His prescriptive commands that He has given in Scripture for mankind to obey. This is God's will that is known.
 - His "revealed" will, which includes moral commands, and all that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).
 - Identified through imperatives, yet energized by indicatives.

- God has commanded:
 - His people to serve and invest in a local church (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-30; Ephesians 4:8-12)
 - husbands to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25)
 - wives to respect their husbands (Ephesians 5:33)
 - children to obey and honor their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3)
 - employees to obey their employer, in honor, respect, and a sincere heart (Ephesians 6:5-8)
 - employers to treat their employees without partiality (Eph. 6:9-10)
6. **God's Will of Spiritual Wisdom and Discernment** (Psalm 143:10; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:10; Colossians 1:9; Hebrews 5:14)
- The exercising of divine precepts and moral commandments.
 - Embodiment of godly principles and practices in decision making.
 - God has promised that if we seek wisdom, He will give it (James 1:5-6). Wisdom includes intelligence, knowledge, skills, understanding the circumstances (including the likely outcome), self-knowledge and discernment. This discernment is birthed from Scriptural principles imprinted in the whole person (mind, heart, will), life experiences, and illuminating help through the Holy Spirit.
 - The LORD may provide several options when faced with decisions, and uniquely bless whatever option is chosen.

Points of Application:

1. Those who love the LORD, and believe that He is sovereign, will obey Him as revealed in His preceptive will.
2. Claiming "God is in control" while living in unconfessed and unrepentant sin, under the auspice of "God's sovereignty," is a cold, lethargic, lazy, and apathetic excuse that will bring about God's chastening.
3. When discerning what God's "will" is, ask: Do I know God's preceptive will? Have I prayed for wisdom? Have I sought wisdom, if necessary? Am I loving the LORD as best as I can with what the LORD has provided? Am I walking in obedience? Make the best decision possible and entrust the outcome to the LORD.
4. God's decreed and preceptive will both represent divine values as one will. The decree will always come about, while the precepts may not. There is no special honor given to His decreed will or preceptive will, for God has one will: His good pleasure.
5. There is tremendous freedom for the saint who treasures Christ, loves the LORD, obeys His commandments, abhors sin, exercises wisdom to the best of their ability, and walks in reasonable faith.