

## Knowing God's Will

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

If Jesus Christ appeared in the flesh before your eyes and you could ask Him any question that you would like what would your question be?<sup>1</sup> For example, you might ask Him why so many tragic events happened in your life or why He allows war, pestilences, or injustices to exist? And while the answers to these questions would be intriguing, i.e., if we could even understand them, standing in the presence of His holiness would not our number one question be



Lord would you please tell me Your calling for my life so that I might understand the reason why I exist and so that I might obey You?<sup>2</sup> To know God's will is crucial to pleasing Him and yet those seeking His will are often left wondering how and under what circumstances can a finite human being truly know the will of the Divine? For instance, are there parts of God's will that are irrevocable, unknowable and not subject to a response from humanity? What parts of God's will be common to all of humanity that require a response from us in order for them

to come to fruition in our lives? Does God have a specific will or plan for me that is unique and once obeyed is the key to pleasing Him and attaining the fullness of Christ in my life? And if this plan exists how does one go about learning and obeying this good, pleasing and perfect will? Since Christ died and rose again to atone for our sins we truly do want to please Him and live up to our God-given potential but without answering these fundamental questions of the Divine purpose in our lives how can His greatest glory and our maximum impact on His kingdom ever be realized?<sup>3</sup> The following sermon is going to review Romans 12:1-2 and others passage in the Bible to help answer these all-important life questions.

### The Sovereign Will of God

God's will can be broken down into three specific categories. The first category of God's will relate to His eternal decrees.<sup>4</sup> God's plan for all things seen and unseen is absolute and as

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Carr, "[Knowing the Will of God \(Acts 9:1-6\)](#)," in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Tony Evans, "[Your Commitment and Your Calling](#)," in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 12:1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Tony Evans, "[Your Commitment and Your Calling](#)," in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 12:1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Alan Carr, "[Knowing the Will of God \(Acts 9:1-6\)](#)," in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1991.

such cannot be thwarted or modified by anyone or anything (Isaiah 46:10, Ephesians 1:11). To pray to change the absolute will of God for all creation would be futile and very frustrating<sup>5</sup> for what He wills He always makes happen!<sup>6</sup> For example, no matter how much faith, prayer or attempts to get the Messiah to come to conquer Rome this did not stop Jesus from fulfilling the



plan He set even before time began to be the suffering servant of Isaiah and atone for humanity's sin on the cross (Revelation 13:8)! Even if one were to quote Jesus' own words in the Sermon on the Mount, "ask and it will be given to you" (Matthew 7:7) to try and force Him to return in one's lifetime this would only happen if the appointed time of His will was to return within one's lifetime (1 John 5:14). Has there ever been anything written in prophecy that even the greatest of earthly kings in all their earthly splendor, power and wealth have ever been able to

either add or take away from either the timing or their details of their occurrence? Not only is God's eternal will absolute and irrevocable, but it is also "beyond anything we can full know on earth."<sup>7</sup> Lest we hear the words Job did, "brace yourself like a man (or woman), I will question you" we must accept the truth that there are many things that has and will happen that we as finite, sinful human beings are incapable of knowing or fully grasping His glorious plans! The omniscient, omnipotent, sovereign Lord's ways are infinitely higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8), for while we strive to know everything about the world we live in that is not our home (Hebrews 13:14) and the one we are going too (John 14:3), we remain like Apostle Paul, only seeing dimly and a mere glimpse of God's plan and His glory (1 Corinthians 13:12)!

## God's Will of Salvation

The second category of God's will relate to His "moral will"<sup>8</sup> for all of humanity. While the moral laws are like His eternal decrees, forever settled and unchanging, they differ because God allows humanity the choice to either follow or reject them!<sup>9</sup> The most important of these moral laws relates to the choice of either accepting or rejecting God's gracious gift of salvation. "Apostle Peter tells us that the Lord is not slow in keeping His promise to return but is merely

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<sup>5</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology\*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 476.

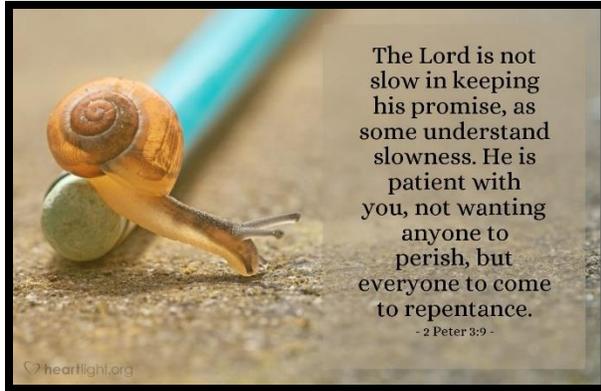
<sup>6</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology\*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 476.

<sup>7</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [\*Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology\*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 476.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Carr, "[Knowing the Will of God \(Acts 9:1-6\)](#)," in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1991.

<sup>9</sup> June Hunt, [\*Biblical Counseling Keys on Hope: The Anchor of Your Soul\*](#) (Dallas, TX: Hope For The Heart, 2008), 18.

patiently waiting, giving everyone more time and opportunity to repent because He wills that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9)! While God wills all to be saved, He does not force His gracious gift of salvation on anyone. It is by His grace we are offered His gift of salvation, but it is through our faith in the atoning sacrifice of His Son that one receives it and is born again



(Ephesians 2:8-9). While God could force everyone to be saved, because humanity is created in God's image who has free will (Genesis 1:27), by design we must have free will over how we live our lives. With this freedom of choice come great responsibility! Everyone is offered this gift of salvation for "all creation testifies to God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what is made, so that people are without excuse" (Romans 1:20) ... how could God be just if this were not so? Apostle Paul states,

"I (we) have the freedom to do anything, you say, but not everything is beneficial. I (we) have the right to anything but not everything is constructive" (1 Corinthians 10:23). So, when it comes the single most important decision of our lives, salvation,<sup>10</sup> God wills it, but we must choose to accept it by faith in His atoning sacrifice and the total surrender of our lives by denying oneself, taking up one's cross and following Jesus (Matthew 16:24). We can only imagine the rejoicing that occurs in heaven when a person repents and gets adopted into God's family and the sorrow it brings when a person dies in their sin when they could have had eternal life!

## God's Moral Will

Not only is God's moral that everyone be saved but also that they would "no longer conform to the pattern of this world" (Romans 12:2a). It is the Potter's will, who is absolute holiness and without any sin,<sup>11</sup> to take the clay of our lives and mold and reshape us into an image that reflects the glory of His Son.<sup>12</sup> Those who are born again have died to self goals and gratification (Galatians 2:20)<sup>13</sup> and as such are to reject the value system of the world that wrongly states love of self is the main reason for living.<sup>14</sup> This does not mean that believers are

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<sup>10</sup> Alan Carr, "[Knowing the Will of God \(Acts 9:1-6\),](#)" in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Chris Benfield, "[The Basis for Christian Living # 10 \(Romans 12:1-2\),](#)" in *Pulpit Pages: New Testament Sermons* (Mount Airy, NC: Chris Benfield, 2015), 863.

<sup>12</sup> Tony Evans, "[Your Commitment and Your Calling,](#)" in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 12:1-2.

<sup>13</sup> Tony Evans, "[Your Commitment and Your Calling,](#)" in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 12:1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Murray McCheyne et al., *A Treasury of Great Preaching: 5 Vol. Set* (WORDsearch, 2020).

to acquire the Gnostic belief that this material world is evil but merely that they are “throw off everything that hinders and sin that so easily entangles” (Hebrews 12:1)<sup>15</sup> and seek first the kingdom of God by loving Him and one another (Mark 12:28-30; Matthew 6:33). Worldly



things such as food, sex, drugs, cars, family or homes only become evil when they become idols and are viewed and used in a manner outside of God’s intended purpose for them in our lives.<sup>16</sup> While the New Testament sacrificial system<sup>17</sup> already has its once and for all sacrifice (Hebrews 10:1-18), this does not negate the believer’s responsibility to He who purchased them at the price of His very life (1 Corinthians 6:20) to place self-interests on the altar and fully surrender to His lordship so that they might become a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing unto the Father! Those who

live in a “world of spiritual schizophrenia,”<sup>18</sup> with one foot in both God’s and Satan’s kingdom cannot please God<sup>19</sup> for there truly is no darkness in Him at all (1 John 1:5). If we want to know and do God’s will then our first step must be to reject the ways of this world and be born again so that in cleaning the inside of the cup, we might present ourselves to our Creator as redeemed masterpieces of His grace, holy and acceptable because of our faith in and allegiance to Christ and not this world!

God’s moral will is not just about believers giving up their love of the ways of this world that are contrary to His holiness but also is a call for the renewal of one’s mind (Romans 12:2)! After being born again, “there is a renewing, or renovation, of the mind. We no longer view things as before. Our thoughts are lifted toward heaven with a desire to please the Lord.”<sup>20</sup> God does not leave the “babes of Christ” aimlessly searching for holiness on their own!<sup>21</sup> God has given us His word so that we might know the difference between sin and holiness and strive to be more like Him. If we want to have our minds renewed into the image in which God

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<sup>15</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 479.

<sup>16</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 480.

<sup>17</sup> R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 195.

<sup>18</sup> Tony Evans, “[Your Commitment and Your Calling](#),” in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 12:1–2.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Murray McCheyne et al., *A Treasury of Great Preaching: 5 Vol. Set* (WORDsearch, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> Chris Benfield, “[The Basis for Christian Living # 10 \(Romans 12:1–2\)](#),” in *Pulpit Pages: New Testament Sermons* (Mount Airy, NC: Chris Benfield, 2015), 865.

<sup>21</sup> Chris Benfield, “[The Basis for Christian Living # 10 \(Romans 12:1–2\)](#),” in *Pulpit Pages: New Testament Sermons* (Mount Airy, NC: Chris Benfield, 2015), 863.

formed us, then we “literally must lay our lives at the feet of Jesus”<sup>22</sup> and say help me Lord to have my mind renewed by Your will as revealed in Scripture! We are not to read God’s word to merely amass information<sup>23</sup> but are to allow His holy decrees to plow furrows of righteousness



in our hearts! The author of Hebrews states, “God’s word is alive and active sharper than any double-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12) and Apostle Paul says His word is “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training us in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). God’s word then is the “guideline by which we as Christians may operate”<sup>24</sup> for it alone is the decisive authority explaining who our Creator is and the truth of what we must do to please Him! While following God’s word “will not

always lead us to places where we want to go,”<sup>25</sup> such as persecution and the denial of “human nature,” based pleasure;<sup>26</sup> by setting aside “self” for God’s exclusive use<sup>27</sup> our obedience not only expresses our love and gratitude towards Him but is also the key to hearing “well done good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:23).

## God’s Will for Your Life

While the word contains the path and key to holy living for everyone, God also has a specific will for each believer.<sup>28</sup> The renewal of our minds by allowing God’s word to be “a lamp unto one’s feet and a light unto one’s path” (Psalms 119:105)<sup>29</sup> is not only crucial in having one’s mind renewed but is also the foundation by which one learns what God’s specific plan is for one’s life.<sup>30</sup> “God wants to give you your calling but only if your sails are set to the direction

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<sup>22</sup> Chris Benfield, [“The Basis for Christian Living # 10 \(Romans 12:1–2\),”](#) in *Pulpit Pages: New Testament Sermons* (Mount Airy, NC: Chris Benfield, 2015), 863.

<sup>23</sup> John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(2000–2014\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 478.

<sup>25</sup> Alan Carr, [“Knowing the Will of God \(Acts 9:1–6\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1994.

<sup>26</sup> Chris Benfield, [“The Basis for Christian Living # 10 \(Romans 12:1–2\),”](#) in *Pulpit Pages: New Testament Sermons* (Mount Airy, NC: Chris Benfield, 2015), 863.

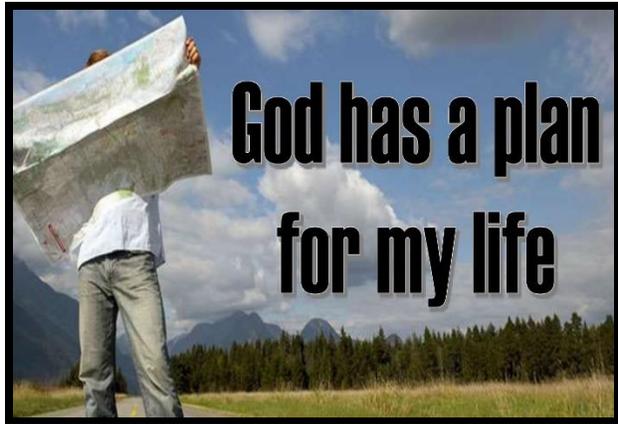
<sup>27</sup> Alan Carr, [“Knowing the Will of God \(Acts 9:1–6\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1994.

<sup>28</sup> Alan Carr, [“Knowing the Will of God \(Acts 9:1–6\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1991.

<sup>29</sup> Oswald Chambers, [Our Brilliant Heritage](#) (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1965).

<sup>30</sup> Craig S. Keener, [Romans](#), New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 144.

He is blowing to where He wants you to go, what He wants you to do, what He wants you to be.<sup>31</sup> As we learn to surrender our hearts over to Him and joyfully submit to His sovereignty over our lives<sup>32</sup> we draw nearer to Him and He in turn draws nearer to us (James 4:8)! When this happens, we no longer need to be anxious about what God wants us to do (Philippians 4:6-7)<sup>33</sup>



for when He speaks to us in a still, small voice (1 Kings 19:11-12)<sup>34</sup> we will hear Him because our hearts are receptive to and in alignment with His perfect and pleasing will! When we pray the Spirit who guides us into all truth (John 16:13)<sup>35</sup> will help us not only understand but utilize our spiritual gifts for the divine task God has assign us too! Many Christians don't know the will of God in their lives because they are afraid the sacrifice God will require of them might be too difficult a burden to bear<sup>36</sup> but the truth is God's will is difficult "only when it comes up against our stubbornness, then it is

as cruel as a ploughshare and devastating as an earthquake."<sup>37</sup> God's word tells us to strive to know His will in one's life (Ps. 143:10; Eph. 5:17; Col. 1:9; cp. Rom. 1:10)<sup>38</sup> not with fear of being insufficient but with the assurance that those who abide in Him and His words in them<sup>39</sup> will accomplish whatever they ask of Him! Praise be whatever decision God initiates (proverbs 4:11), line up with His word (Psalms 119:33), that accomplish His purpose (Philippians 2:13), depends on His strength (Philippians 4:13), gives Him the glory (1 Corinthians 10:31), promotes justice, kindness, and humility (Micah 6:8), reflects His character (1 Timothy 4:12), comes from faith (Hebrews 11:6), considers the interest of others (Philippians 2:4) and are bathed in prayer (1

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<sup>31</sup> Tony Evans, [“Your Commitment and Your Calling,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 12:1–2.

<sup>32</sup> Alan Carr, [“Knowing the Will of God \(Acts 9:1–6\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1994.

<sup>33</sup> June Hunt, [Biblical Counseling Keys on Hope: The Anchor of Your Soul](#) (Dallas, TX: Hope For The Heart, 2008), 19.

<sup>34</sup> Alan Carr, [“Knowing the Will of God \(Acts 9:1–6\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1992.

<sup>35</sup> Alan Carr, [“Knowing the Will of God \(Acts 9:1–6\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1993.

<sup>36</sup> Alan Carr, [“Knowing the Will of God \(Acts 9:1–6\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 1992.

<sup>37</sup> Oswald Chambers, [Our Brilliant Heritage](#) (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1965).

<sup>38</sup> Chad Brand et al., eds., [“Will of God,”](#) *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1673.

<sup>39</sup> Tony Evans, [“Your Commitment and Your Calling,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Ro 12:1–2.

Thessalonians 5:17) will always come to pass!<sup>40</sup> So, yes those who submit to God's right to rule over their lives by having their minds renewed by His word are not only capable of knowing God's will but also following His will in their lives!

## Conclusion

God has three categories to His will. The part of His will that relates to His eternal decrees that are absolute and as such cannot be thwarted or modified by anyone or anything. The next two categories relate to His moral will that like His eternal decrees are forever and unchanging but differ because God allows humanity the choice to either follow or reject them. The most important choice God gives us relates to our salvation. God desires that everyone be saved but gives us the choice to either have faith in the atoning sacrifice of His Son Jesus and be born again or reject Him and stay separated from Him forever. Of those who become saved God further desires that they reject the ways of this world and have their minds renewed by His holy word. Those who live in a "world of spiritual schizophrenia," with one foot in both God's and Satan's kingdom cannot please God for there truly is no darkness in Him at all. As we learn to surrender our hearts over to Him and joyfully submit to His sovereignty over our lives, we draw nearer to Him and He in turn draws nearer to us! When this happens, we no longer need to be anxious about what is God's specific will for our lives because when He speaks to us in a still, small voice we will hear Him because our hearts are receptive to and in alignment with His perfect and pleasing will. And while His revealed will for our lives might require us to go to places where we don't want to go such as persecution, joyfully and with thanksgiving in our hearts we are to follow with the assurance that if we seek first the kingdom of God we will receive what our hearts truly desire in this lifetime and all of eternity.

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<sup>40</sup> June Hunt, *Biblical Counseling Keys on Decision Making: Discerning the Will of God* (Dallas, TX: Hope For The Heart, 2008), 4–5.