

The Will of God

God is absolute sovereignty, righteousness, justice, love, eternal life, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability and veracity. We are all familiar with these as the ten attributes of Deity. We find that an understanding of all ten of these attributes is essential to understanding the will of God.

- Sovereignty is expressed in His absolute will. God's will is absolute in that no creature can thwart, resist or oppose His will.
- God's integrity is composed of His righteousness, justice and love and forms the basis for His will. His will can never be expressed in a manner contrary to the perfect standards of His integrity.
- God's eternal life essentially reflects His infinity and His perfection. God's will exists throughout eternity past, throughout past, present and future time, and throughout eternity future. It is perfect and remains so throughout time and eternity despite any decisions made by His creatures.
- God's omniscience and omnipresence guarantee that His will is based on perfect understanding of all facts. Omniscient God perfectly understands all actual events and all possible events.
- God's omnipotence carries out His will. Almighty God is able to do all that He pleases, and there is none that can prevent Him.
- God's immutability is the basis for the stability of God's will. His will is never capricious and cannot change. It stands forever with infinite stability and is the security of His redeemed.
- God's veracity means His will is based on absolute truth. His will for any individual is based on His faithfulness to the perfect standards of His integrity. God's will, as expressed in His dealings with mankind, cannot be based on falsehood of any kind.

The Will of God (Continued)

God's will operates on at least three different levels, each one subordinate to the next:

- God's directive will. This is the will of God as related to individuals in their lives by means of direct revelation (dreams, appearance of Theophanies in the OT, ministry of the Holy Spirit in the NT, etc.). Examples are Abram directed by God to leave Ur and journey to Canaan, Jonah commanded to go to Nineveh, Paul commanded to go to Rome.

God's general will for mankind is declared in the scriptures: God is *"not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."* (II Peter 3:9) God's will for the believer is expressed in the many hundreds of imperative mood verbs found in scripture.

- God's permissive will. This is the sphere of God's will within which the volition of man functions. God allows man limited freedom to make choices. Given man's fallen nature, this means that man will often choose against God's declared will. For instance, instead of going to Nineveh and evangelizing the Assyrians as God directed him, Jonah decided to travel to Tarshish – as far away from Nineveh as he could get. God permitted Jonah to embark on his journey – up to a point. Instead of going to Rome in AD 58 as God directed him to, Paul decided instead to go to Jerusalem. God permitted this – up to a point.

God wills that no man perish, but He permits each man to choose his eternal destiny – be it life with Him in Heaven for eternity, or life in eternal torment in the Lake of Fire. Man's volition operates only within God's sovereign will – and the will of man cannot overrule God's will. The functions of man's will is balanced by the Law of Volitional Responsibility which is expressed in Galatians 6:7: *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."*

- God's overruling will. God only permits the volition of man to have limited operation. When our decisions begin to encroach on His will in other areas, He may sovereignly overrule us. For example, God used a violent storm and a great fish to overrule Jonah's decision to go to Tarshish. God used a riot and the Roman system of jurisprudence to overrule Paul's decision to go to Jerusalem and to place him in Rome where He wanted him. In 701 BC, Sennacherib, King of Assyria, decided to destroy the Jews in Jerusalem. The Lord overruled that decision by personally slaughtering, in one night, the entire Assyrian army of 185,000 men that had laid siege to Jerusalem. History is littered with examples of God's overruling will.

The Will of God (Continued)

The will of God always brings glory to Himself. He works all of human and angelic history together for His maximum glory while allowing perfect freedom for His creatures. The will of men and angels is contained perfectly within His own will. Even though he allows men and angels perfect freedom, no angelic or human decision can ever diminish the glory of God. Indeed He used the expression of human and angelic free will throughout history to His greater glory.

There is an apparent contradiction between God's will and man's will. Those who espouse the false doctrine of limited atonement (Hyper-Calvinists) do so because they see the ability of man to reject God's will that they be saved as diminishing God's will. Since it is unthinkable that God's sovereignty could be diminished by man's contradicting will, they conclude that God's predestination of some to salvation and others to damnation means that Christ died only for those who were predestined to salvation.

However, predestination is nothing more than the expression of God's sovereign will that honors the volition of individuals. God's will is never arbitrary or capricious. God's predestination of individuals is based on His knowledge in eternity past of every man's choice relative to the work of Jesus Christ. On the basis of His omniscience, God predestined some to salvation and some to damnation, but that predestination is based on the volition of each individual, so that every man is entirely responsible for his own eternal state. Paul speaks of the unbelievers who reject grace in Romans 1:20-22: *"For the invisible things of Him [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they [the unbelievers] are without excuse:"*

Christ's atonement was unlimited: 1 Timothy 2:4-6, *"Who [God] will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."* Based on a proper understanding of God's will, there can be no other conclusion.