Understanding God's Will

What He Determines, What He Allows, and What He Expects

Part I

Key Verses

Isaiah 46:9-10 (NLT)

9 Remember the things I have done in the past.
For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me.
10 Only I can tell you the future before it even happens.
EVERYTHING I PLAN WILL COME TO PASS, for I do whatever I wish.

Proverbs 19:21 (NLT)

21 You can make many plans, BUT THE LORD'S PURPOSE WILL PREVAIL.

Ephesians 1:11 (NLT)

11 Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and HE MAKES EVERYTHING WORK OUT ACCORDING TO HIS PLAN.

The Various Aspects Of God's Will

#1 ~ God's Sovereign Will

What God has Decided…It Always Happens

#2 ~ God's Permissive Will

What God Allows To Happen

#3 ~ God's Prescribed Will

What God Commands In His Word

#4 ~ God's Preferred Will

What God Desires or Longs For

#5 ~ God's Directive Will

Where God's Leads His People Personally

Introduction

One of the greatest challenges in the Christian life is understanding the will of God.
We pray about God's will. We preach about God's will. We sing about God's will.
And whenever we are faced with decisions, difficulties, disappointments, or unexpected circumstances,
we often find ourselves TRYING TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S WILL.

And because we don't always understand it, we sometimes make statements that sound spiritual
but may not be biblically accurate.

It must have been God's will ~ Everything happens for a reason ~ If it's meant to be, it'll be
God Must Be Trying To Tell Us Something...

"We must be careful not to use the will of God as an explanation for everything we cannot explain.

Just because God permitted it does not mean He approved it.
And just because God can use it does not mean He caused it.

"You cannot respond properly to God's will until you learn to distinguish between
what God determines, what God allows, and what God expects."

This Series Will Help Us Understand That...

"Everything that happens in my life takes place UNDER GOD'S SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY,
but that does not mean everything that happens in my life reflects God's desire for me.
Some things God has determined, some things God has allowed,
and some things I have brought upon myself through the decisions I have made.

Introduction

Understanding the Difference Changes Our Response

After this series..... There Will Come Moments When We Stop And Ask Ourselves.....
"Am I experiencing something God has commanded, something God has permitted, or something I have chosen?"

Sometimes we are experiencing what God has commanded, and our responsibility IS OBEDIENCE.

Sometimes we are experiencing what God has permitted, and our responsibility is to TRUST HIM through the process.

Sometimes we are experiencing the consequences of what WE HAVE CHOSEN, and our responsibility is to ACKNOWLEDGE OUR DECISIONS and MAKE THE NECESSARY CORRECTIONS.

And if God has SOVEREIGNLY DETERMINED SOMETHING,
my responsibility is to recognize that His ultimate purpose cannot be defeated.

"When We Misunderstand God's Will, We Mismanage Our Response."

We can be praying about something that God has already commanded us to do.
We can be rebuking something that God has permitted us to endure.
We can be blaming the devil for consequences that resulted from our own decisions.
And we can be blaming God for situations He has called us to take responsibility for.

Proverbs 19:3 (NLT)

3 People ruin their lives by their own foolishness and then are angry at the Lord.

The Sovereign Will Of God

Isaiah 46:9-10 (NLT)

9 Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me.
10 Only I can tell you the future before it even happens.
EVERYTHING I PLAN WILL COME TO PASS, FOR I DO WHATEVER I WISH.

God's Sovereign Will is His Purposed Will

Sovereignty means that God is not subject to any higher authority.
His ultimate purposes cannot be defeated by human opposition, circumstances, or spiritual forces.

It Overrules Plots and Plans of the Enemy

God does not require humanity's permission to accomplish His purposes.
God does not need our approval ~ God does not depend on our ability ~ God is not limited by our understanding

God's sovereignty means that He has the final authority, even when humanity has the freedom to make decisions.

Proverbs 19:21 (NLT)

21 You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail.

Biblical Example ~ Exodus 5:2 (NIV)

2 Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go?
I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go."

God allowed Pharaoh to exercise his authority, but Pharaoh's authority was never greater than God's sovereignty.

The Sovereign Will Of God

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EVERYTHING I PLAN WILL COME TO PASS, FOR I DO WHATEVER I WISH.

God's Sovereign Will Has A Determined Outcome

Exodus 6:1 (NIV)

1 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand HE WILL LET THEM GO; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."

Pharaoh could resist God's command, but he could not ultimately PREVENT GOD'S PURPOSE.
Human resistance may affect the journey,
but it cannot ultimately overthrow what God has sovereignly purposed.

God's Sovereign Will Is Not Always Revealed in Advance

Deuteronomy 29:29 (NLT)

29 "The Lord our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions.

One of the greatest challenges of trusting God's sovereign will is
accepting that God can have a plan without revealing every detail of that plan to us.
We often want God to explain what He is doing before we are willing TO TRUST HIM with what He is doing.

The Permissive Will Of God

Job 1:8-12 (NLT)

8 Then the Lord asked Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth.
He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil."
9 Satan replied to the Lord, "Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God.
10 You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property.
You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is!
11 But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!"
12 "All right, you may test him," the Lord said to Satan. "Do whatever you want with everything he possesses,
BUT DON'T HARM HIM PHYSICALLY....

God's permissive will describes circumstances, choices, and actions that God ALLOWS TO OCCUR,
even when those actions do not reflect His moral desires.

Just Because God Allows Something To Happen....Does Not Mean He Approves Of It
He Has A Larger Purpose In Mind

What God Permits, He Can Still Use for His Purpose

Luke 22:31-32 (NLT)

31 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat.
32 But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail.
So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers."

The Prescribed Will Of God

Micah 6:8 (NLT)

8 No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you:
to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

God's Prescribed Will refers to what God has made known through His Word concerning
how we should live, what we should believe, and how we should conduct ourselves.

Unlike God's sovereign will, which may involve purposes that remain hidden from us,
God's prescribed will communicates what He expects from us.

We do not have to guess about everything God expects. Much of His will has already been revealed in His Word.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 (NIV)

3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)

16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances,
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

There are some things God has determined that we cannot change
There are some things God has permitted that we may not understand
But there are things God has commanded that we have no excuse for ignoring

Putting Them All Together

What He Determines, What He Allows, and What He Expects

Joseph's life provides one of the clearest biblical illustrations of how the different dimensions of God's will can operate within the same narrative.

God's Sovereign Will

Genesis 37:5-10 (NLT)

5 One night Joseph had a dream, 6 "Listen to this dream," he said.
7 "We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!"
9 Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. "Listen, I have had another dream," he said. "The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!"

God Revealed His Purpose Before Joseph Understood the Process

God did not reveal the difficulties Joseph would experience before those dreams were fulfilled
God can reveal His purpose without revealing every part of His process

The Understanding That Comes After Perseverance

Genesis 45:7-8 (NLT)

7 God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors.
8 So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh, the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

Putting Them All Together

What He Determines, What He Allows, and What He Expects

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God's Permissive Will

Genesis 37:18-20, 28 (NLT)

18 When Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance. As he approached,
they made plans to kill him. 19 "Here comes the dreamer!" they said.
20 "Come on, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our father,
'A wild animal has eaten him.' Then we'll see what becomes of his dreams!"
28 So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern
and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

Joseph's life demonstrates circumstances that God permitted without morally approving the wrongdoing involved.
God's permission does not remove human accountability.
The brothers were responsible for their actions, even though God would ultimately work through these circumstances.

God Allowed Joseph to Suffer for Doing What Was Right
Joseph was not put in prison because he disobeyed God. He was in prison after choosing to obey God.

What God permits us to experience does not automatically mean He has abandoned His purpose for us.

Putting Them All Together

What He Determines, What He Allows, and What He Expects

Joseph's life provides one of the clearest biblical illustrations of how the different dimensions of God's will can operate within the same narrative.

God's Prescribed Will

Genesis 39:7-9 (NLT)

7 and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully. "Come and sleep with me," she demanded.
8 BUT JOSEPH REFUSED. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household.
9 No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife.
How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."

While God was accomplishing His sovereign purpose and permitting difficult circumstances,
JOSEPH REMAINED RESPONSIBLE FOR HOW HE RESPONDED.
God Expected Joseph to Maintain His Integrity

Difficult circumstances do not cancel God's expectations for holy living.
We are not responsible for controlling God's sovereign will, nor can we control everything He permits.
BUT WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OBEYING WHAT HE HAS REVEALED.

GOD'S PLAN ALWAYS PREVAILS

Genesis 50:20 (NLT)

20 You intended to harm me, BUT GOD INTENDED IT ALL FOR GOOD.
He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.

In Conclusion

#1 ~ God's Sovereign Will

What God has Decided…It Always Happens

#2 ~ God's Permissive Will

What God Allows To Happen

#3 ~ God's Prescribed Will

What God Commands In His Word

Here is The Key Question

"Am I experiencing something God has commanded,
something God has permitted, or something I have chosen?"

With God All Things Are Possible



Let's Continue To Go Above And Beyond