Understanding God's Will

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

Part II

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

This week, we want to move beyond identifying the different wills and begin examining what happens when those wills intersect, cooperate, or be in conflict.

God's will does not operate in isolation from HUMAN DECISIONS.
Throughout Scripture, we discover how God's sovereign authority, His revealed instructions, and humanity's personal desires INTERACT.

God's sovereign will cannot ultimately be defeated, BUT HIS REVEALED WILL CAN BE DISOBEYED.
God can allow us to make decisions that contradict His instructions without surrendering His sovereign authority.

And sometimes the greatest struggle in our lives is not between what God wants and what the devil wants.
SOMETIMES THE STRUGGLE IS BETWEEN WHAT GOD WANTS AND WHAT WE WANT.

Sometimes THE RESISTANCE is not coming from the enemy; the resistance is coming from within us.
God tells us to forgive, but we would rather hold on to the hurt.
God tells us to trust Him, but we would rather remain in control.
God tells us to wait, but we would rather move ahead.
God tells us to give, but we would rather keep.

Sometimes our preferences are reasonable. Our desires are understandable. Our plans even make sense.
But the real question is not simply whether what we want makes sense to us.
The question is whether what we want aligns with what God has instructed.

Introduction

Tonight, We Will Examine This Concept…

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WHAT GOD HAS PRESCRIBED CONFLICTS WITH WHAT WE PREFER…

There will be moments when His instructions challenge our desires, His direction interrupts our plans, and His expectations require us to surrender our preferences.

THE PRESENCE OF A STRUGGLE DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY INDICATE THE ABSENCE OF FAITH.

You can love God and still struggle with what He is asking you to do.

You can have faith in God and still have questions about where He is leading you.

You can trust God's wisdom and still wrestle with His timing.

You can believe that God's plan is best and still have difficulty accepting the process He has chosen.

THE STRUGGLE reveals what we are wrestling with ~ It reveals what we are feeling…

OUR RESPONSE reveals whether we are willing to surrender ~ It reveals what we are willing to do

So Tonight We Will Examine The Journey Of Jonah and Jesus

Jonah struggled with God's will and initially chose resistance.

Jesus faced the agony of the Father's will and chose submission.

Here's The Question

When what God has prescribed conflicts with what I prefer,

WILL MY PERSONAL DESIRE LEAD ME TOWARD RESISTANCE OR SURRENDER?

Jonah's Journey Of Resistance

Jonah 1:1-3 (NLT)

1 The Lord gave this message to Jonah, 2 "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh.
Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are."
3 **But** Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord.
He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board,
hoping to escape from the Lord by sailing to Tarshish.

Principle #1 ~ God's Will Takes Priority Over Our Preference

Jonah's problem was that WHAT GOD PRESCRIBED was in direct conflict WITH WHAT JONAH PREFERRED.
Jonah demonstrates that you can know God's Word, recognize God's authority,
and STILL STRUGGLE TO SURRENDER your personal preferences to His instructions.

Look At God's Prescribed Will ~ "What God Commands Through His Word"

"Get Up And Go To The Great City of Nineveh and Announce Judgement…"

There Was Nothing Unclear About God's Instructions
God did not ask Jonah for his opinion ~ He did not invite Jonah to negotiate the assignment
He clearly communicated His expectation

The Challenge Is Not Always Understanding God's Will — Sometimes It Is Obeying It
We don't need God TO SAY SOMETHING NEW. We need to RESPOND TO WHAT HE HAS ALREADY SAID.

Jonah's Journey Of Resistance

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Principle #2 ~ Our Experiences Can Influence Our Preferences

Jonah 4:1-2 (NLT)

1 This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. 2 So he complained to the Lord about it:
"Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish!
I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
You are eager to turn back from destroying people.

What Happens When My Feelings Become More Important Than God's Instructions

Jonah's personal feelings were in conflict with God's Merciful Purpose.
Jonah would rather see the city face judgment than experience God's Mercy

"If we are not careful, we will allow what we have experienced to have greater influence
over our decisions than what God has instructed."

Jonah had REASONS for not wanting to go to Nineveh,
BUT HIS REASONS DID NOT GIVE HIM THE AUTHORITY TO REJECT GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS.

Jonah's Journey of Resistance

Jonah 1:1-3 (NLT)

3 **But** Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord.
He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board,
hoping to escape from the Lord by sailing to Tarshish.

Jonah's Preference Led Him To Make A Deliberate Choice To Disobey God's Instructions
Jonah did not have the authority to change God's instructions, but he did have the ability to disobey them.

Principle #3 ~ God's Permission Does Not Guarantee God's Approval

God prescribed Nineveh ~ But God permitted Jonah to board a ship toward Tarshish.
PERMISSION DOES NOT MEAN APPROVAL
Just because the opportunity was available did not mean the opportunity was approved by God.

What Does This Look Like
"God must be in this because the door opened."
"God must approve because everything worked out."
"God must want me to have this because the opportunity presented itself."

Sometimes the door is open because God has permitted us to make a decision,
EVEN WHEN THAT DECISION CONTRADICTS WHAT HE HAS INSTRUCTED.

God permitted Jonah's disobedience, but He did not abandon His sovereign authority over Jonah's circumstances.

Jonah's Journey of Resistance

Jonah 1:4 (NLT)

4 But the Lord hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart.

Jonah 1:7 (NLT)

7 Then the crew cast lots to see which of them had offended the gods and caused the terrible storm.
When they did this, the lots identified Jonah as the culprit.

Jonah 1:17 (NLT)

17 Now the Lord had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah.
And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

Jonah 2:10 (NIV)

10 And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

Principle #4 ~ God Does Not Surrender His Sovereignty to Our Decisions

God may permit us to pursue a direction contrary to His instructions,
but HE REMAINS SOVEREIGN over the circumstances surrounding our decisions.

God is sovereign enough TO INTERVENE when our personal decisions are carrying us away from His instructions.
God was not merely dealing with Jonah's disobedience;
He was preserving Jonah for an assignment that had not yet been fulfilled.

Jonah 3:1 ~ "And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time…"
God Can Accomplish His Purpose Without Removing Our Responsibility

Divine Intervention

Jonah 3:1 ~ "And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time…"

God's Ability To Intervene Does Not Mean HE WILL ALWAYS INTERVENE
To Bring us back to an opportunity we have rejected

Although He Has The Power To Intervene…He Has Not Promised To Do So Every time
Sometimes The Opportunity We Refused Is Given To Someone Else

1 Samuel 15:24-28 (NIV)

24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions.
I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.
25 Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord."
26 But Samuel said to him, "I will not go back with you.
You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!"
27 As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore.
28 Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today
and has given it to one of your neighbors--to one better than you.

GOD'S PURPOSE IS GREATER THAN YOUR PARTICIPATION

Esther 4:12-14 (NIV)

12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, 13 he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 14 For if you remain silent at this time,
relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish.
And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

Compare Jonah's Journey To Jesus' Surrender

John 6:38-40 (NIV)

38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.
39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me,
but raise them up at the last day.
40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life,
and I will raise him up at the last day."

Principle #5 ~ Surrender Does Not Require The Absence Of Struggle

Mark 10:45 (NIV)

45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Mark 8:31 (NIV)

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

GOD'S PRESCRIBED WILL for Jesus involved more than performing miracles,
healing the sick and teaching the multitudes.
IT ALSO INVOLVED SUFFERING, SACRIFICE, AND THE CROSS.

Just because something is INCLUDED IN GOD'S PURPOSE does not mean it will be pleasant to experience.

Acts 9:15-16 (NIV)

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and
their kings and before the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

Compare Jonah's Journey To Jesus' Surrender

Luke 22:42 (NIV)

42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; YET not my will, but yours be done."

Jesus' Preference ~ The Reality of His Human Struggle

Jesus demonstrates that the presence of a struggle does not necessarily indicate the absence of surrender.

You can love God and still struggle with what lies ahead
You can trust God and still experience anguish concerning the process
You can be committed to God's purpose and still recognize the pain associated with fulfilling that purpose

How Did Jesus Deal With The Pain Connected To God's Prescribed Will and God's Sovereign Will
THROUGH PRAYER

Matthew 26:42 (NIV)

42 He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

Matthew 26:44 (NIV)

44 So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

Jesus' Personal Will — The Decision to Surrender

Jonah's response was demonstrated through his resistance.
Jesus' response was demonstrated through His surrender.

The goal of spiritual maturity is not to reach a place where we never have personal preferences.
The goal is to reach a place where our personal preferences never become more important than our obedience to God.

Conclusion

Principle #1 ~ God's Will Takes Priority Over Our Preference

Principle #2 ~ Our Experiences Can Influence Our Preferences

Principle #3 ~ God's Permission Does Not Guarantee God's Approval

Principle #4 ~ God Does Not Surrender His Sovereignty to Our Decisions

Principle #5 ~ Surrender Does Not Require The Absence Of Struggle



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