

## **THE 7 EXPRESSIONS OF THE WILL OF GOD #3**

### **Review**

We have been studying the “7 Expressions of the Will of God”; not that God has 7 different “wills”; but that His will is expressed 7 ways in the Bible and the world.

### **7 Expressions of God’s Will**

**Sovereign will (Decree)**

**Preceptive will (Commandment)**

**Revealed/Secret will (Known/Unknown)**

**Active/Permissive will**

**Dispositional will (Nature)**

We have spent 2 studies on the doctrine and theology of “The 7 Expressions of the Will of God”; but this week I want to look at the practical steps we must take to discover the will of God for our lives. The Christian must never be satisfied with theological theories:

### **Matthew Henry**

**“The practical application of doctrinal truths is the life of preaching.”**

It is a good thing to know the many ways God’s will is expressed in the Bible; but it’s an even better thing to know what to do with what we know; how to apply it to our Christian life.

With that in mind, I would like teach tonight on the topic...

### **“Finding God’s Will For Your Life”**

This is where we move beyond simple doctrine and put our theology into practice.

This is the pattern of the Apostle Paul in the Book of Romans.

He writes 11 chapters of solid theology and doctrine;  
but Chapter 12 begins with a “Therefore”...

### **Derek Prince**

**“When you see a ‘therefore’ in the Bible, find out what it’s there for.”**

Paul has taught 11 chapters of theology; Chapters 9-11 are about the sovereignty of God; that God is in control of all things; that He has already ordained the end from the beginning. But the fact that God is sovereign does not mean we have nothing to

do nor any part to play! The sovereignty of God does not excuse us from personal responsibility. Paul says God is sovereign; “Therefore” do these 3 things:

**Romans 12:1-2**

**I urge (beseech) you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you (1) present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And (2) do not be conformed to this world, but (3) be transformed by the renewing of your mind, (so) that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

We do these 3 things so...get this result:

**Romans 12:2**

...that you can prove the will of God. (NKJV)

...that you will learn God’s will for you (NLT)

...that you may discern God’s will (The Apologetics Bible)

**The bottom line of all theology is to find the will of God for your life and do it!**

**I. 3 Preconditions for Knowing the Will of God**

**A. First: Present Your Body a Living Sacrifice**

1. The Old Testament sacrifices had to be placed on the altar by someone else; in the New Testament we must make a decision to put ourselves on it; as a *living* sacrifice.

2. The meaning here is a full dedication of our bodies to God in holiness.

3. **We can only discover the will of God for our lives to the degree that we are willing to die to ourselves and live unto God.**

4. Let me share a great secret about how to understand the Bible: we must approach it with a willingness to actually DO whatever it says. It’s an attitude. Jesus said it this way:

**John 7:17 KJV**

**If any man will do His will He shall know of the doctrine...**

The New American Standard Bible is my favorite translation:

**John 7:17 NASB**

**"If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.**

5. God reveals His will to those who are willing to do His will. He reveals His word to those who are willing to do His word.

**Psalm 37:5 NKJV**

**Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.**

**Proverbs 16:3 NIV**

**Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.**

**Proverbs 3:5-6**

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.**

a. Notice the order: be willing to do His will and you will find His will; commit your way to the Lord and He will bring you to success.

6. Uncommitted Christians read their Bibles and listen to sermons but never really understand the word of God because they did not come to the Word of God with an attitude to do what it says. They do not know the will of God because they have not already decided they will do the will of God.

7. Let me take a moment and speak directly to young people facing the future full of questions: What is the will of God for my life? What will I do for a living? Who will I marry?

8. But you failed to ask yourself the 1<sup>st</sup> question! "Have I truly presented my body to God as a "living sacrifice"? Am I willing to DO God's will when He shows me what it is? That's step one. The 2<sup>nd</sup> precondition for finding God's will is...

**B. Two: Be Not Conformed to This World**

1 Literally, be not conformed to this "age"; do not be shaped by the habits, mores, and styles of current culture.

**Matthew Henry**

**“The great enemy which we must avoid is conformity to this world. Be not conformed to this world. All the disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus must be nonconformists to this world.”**

2. American culture is increasingly unchristian and puts us under pressure to just “go with the flow”; to live like everybody else does.

3. There is also a conforming power in our relationships; we tend to conform to the people we hang around with.

**Proverbs 13:20**

**He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.**

4. My personal testimony in pastoring people is that I have seen so many who never find the will of God for their lives because they will not break away from bad company.

**1 Corinthians 15:33 NASB**

**Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals.**

**Matthew Henry**

**“If sinners entice us, we must not consent to them. And even in things indifferent, and which are not in themselves sinful, we must not conform to the custom and way of the world; not to act by the world's dictates as our chief rule, nor to aim at the world's favors as our highest end.”**

5. The ways of the world will undo the will of God for your life.

**2 Timothy 4:9-10**

**Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica.**

**Review: 3 Preconditions for Knowing the Will of God**

1. Body presented to God
2. Not conformed to this world
3. Transformed by the renewing of the mind

**C. Three: Mind Renewed by the Word of God**

1. The final precondition for finding the will of God is the “renewal of our minds”.

**Romans 12:2 NLT**

**Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. THEN you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.**

2. God renews our mind by changing the way we think; THEN we can learn God's will for our lives.

**Albert Barnes**

**“A renewed mind is essential to a successful inquiry after the will of God. Having a disposition to obey him, the mind will be prepared to understand His precepts.”**

3. The primary Agent for the renewal of the mind is the Word of God; specifically the revealed will of God contained in His precepts, meaning His law and His commandments.

## **II. The Practical Application**

### **A. The Clearest Expression of the Will of God is Contained in His Precepts**

1. It is good to know that God is sovereign; to know that all things are under His control.

2. But **the primary way we find the will of God is not by studying His sovereign will; it is by His preceptive will, meaning His law and His commandments.**

**R.C. Sproul**

**“We are encouraged by Scripture to learn the will of God for our lives, and we do so by focusing our attention not on the (sovereign) decretive will of God but on the preceptive will of God. If you want to know God's will for your life, the Bible tells you: ‘This is the will of God, your sanctification’ (1 Thess. 4:3).”**

a. The great John Wesley, founder of the Methodist church believed that the “renewal of the mind” referred to knowing and keeping the commandments of God.

**John Wesley**

**“The will of God is here to be understood as the *preceptive* part of Christianity, which is in itself so excellently good, so acceptable to God, and so perfective of our natures.”**

3. There is much mystery in the sovereignty of God. But the moral commandments of God’s law are clear. The sovereign will of God is settled forever; but He has given us a choice on what we will do with His precepts.

4. And there is a close connection between His commandments and our prosperity! Here are 3 passages to memorize and meditate:

**Psalm 19:8-11**

**The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and *in keeping them there is great reward.***

a. There are 150 Psalms. But Bible scholars agree Psalm 1 sets this stage for all the rest.

**Psalm 1:1-3**

**1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and *whatever he does shall prosper.***

- 3 things to avoid
- 2 things to do

b. Notice the similarity with God’s commands to Joshua after the death of Moses:

**Joshua 1:7-8**

**Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in**

**it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. *For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.***

- Observe the law and DO the law
  - Don't deviate right or left
- Speak the word/meditate the word/do the word...
- THEN- you will make your way prosperous and have good success

5. Devoting ourselves to knowing and doing the preceptive will of God sets us up for success in life; the primary way we find God's will for our life.

5. Do you want to find the will of God for your life? Do you want to prosper and be blessed?

#### **D. Devotion to the Preceptive Will of God**

1. Present my body to God
2. Refuse to be conformed to this world
3. Renew my mind by His Word; beginning with His precepts.

### **III. Close**

#### **A. Review**

##### **1. Here is how it works:**

- I come to present my body to God; I come committed to do whatever He shows me; I am willing to do His will
- I refuse to be conformed to this world
- I renew my mind by the Word of God; I change the way I think

2. These 3 things enable me to know God's will for my life; which is good, acceptable and perfect.

3. The primary way I know the will of God is by His precepts; meaning His law and His commandments; when I give myself to the Word and commit to do whatever it says, I find this great truth...

**Within the principles of God's precepts, I am free to make my choices.**

## **B. Specific Examples**

### **1. Marriage.**

a. God, in His sovereignty, created marriage and family because “it is not good that man be alone”.

b. God, in His preceptive will, gave commandment that Christians are not to marry outside the faith.

#### **2 Corinthians 6:14**

**Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?**

c. If you are not married, God’s sovereign will for you is a secret; but His preceptive will is made clear. Marry within the faith.

d. The question becomes: “Whom shall I marry?” The answer is, within the preceptive will of God, “Marry whoever you want!”

### **2. Occupation.**

a. God, in His sovereign will, commanded us to work.

b. God, in His preceptive will, commands ethical guidelines for our work; there are many commandments concerning our work.

c. The question arises, “But what shall I do for a living?” The answer is, “What do you want to do?” What are you gifted to do? What can you do that will be a blessing to others?

### **3. Other “gray areas”:**

a. We will face many decisions in life not specifically covered by the scriptures. But there is a precept that will cover many; the “Great Commandment” which is the law of love:

#### **Matthew 22:35-40**

**Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second**



**is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."**

b. This is the primary precept by which we know the will of God for situations not specifically covered by the other commandments.

c. It is always God's will that we love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. Apply that to the situation at hand and you will know what to do.

4. Let me close with a word of personal testimony: I have learned that practicing the principles of Romans 12, coming to the Word of God pre-committed to doing whatever it says, has given me a life where I have never suffered a lot of confusion about God's will for my life. When I give myself to renewing my mind by the Word of God, especially His precepts, the way has always been made clear.

**Alexander Maclaren**

**"We can obtain an increased power of perceiving, instinctively and surely, what it is God's will that we should do. And to know beyond doubt what I ought to and to have no hesitation or reluctance in doing it, seems to me to be heaven upon earth. And the man that has that needs little more. This is the reward of the renewed mind. Each peak we climb opens wider and clearer prospects into the un-travelled land before us."**

5. I'll close with this great advice from Jim Elliot, the missionary who was killed by natives in the jungles of Ecuador:

**Jim Elliot**

**"Wherever you are, be all there. Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God."**

## **WORKSHOP**

**Which expression of the will of God is in view in these verses?**

### **Proverbs 16:4**

**The Lord has made all for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.  
(Sovereign/Decretive)**

### **John 1:29**

**The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The  
Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**

### **Revelation 5:5**

**Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to  
open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.  
(Dispositional)**

### **Genesis 2:18**

**And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make  
him a helper comparable to him."  
(Decretive)**

### **Gen 2:16-17**

**And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden  
you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall  
not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."  
(Preceptive)**

### **Genesis 3:6-7**

**So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant  
to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.  
She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.  
(Permissive)**

### **Lamentations 3:31-33**

**For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will  
show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does  
willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.  
Sovereign/Dispositional**