

## **THE 7 EXPRESSIONS OF THE WILL OF GOD #4**

### **“Knowing God”**

#### **Review**

Tonight we conclude our series of teaching on the “The 7 Expressions of the Will of God”. Not that God has 7 different ‘wills’; but that there are 7 different ways His will is expressed in the Bible and in this world.

In Part One, we gave an overview:

#### **The 7 Expressions of God’s Will**

**Sovereign will (Decree)**

**Preceptive will (Commandment)**

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

**Active/Permissive will**

**Dispositional will (Nature)**

In our 2<sup>nd</sup> message we gave you the theology of the doctrine of the ‘sovereignty of God’; how God is in absolute and total control of all things at all times and we addressed some of the questions that arise from this doctrine.

In our 3<sup>rd</sup> message we looked at the practical steps to discovering the will of God as given by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Church at Rome.

We also showed how **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.**

I can know the will of God by knowing and keeping His commandments. But tonight I want to conclude our series with something I have never shared before; how to understand the will of God by knowing His disposition/nature.

#### **Theme**

**The best way to understand or to know the will of God is to *know* God; to *really* know Him; personally, intimately and experientially.**

The operative word here is “know”; to “know” in the biblical sense is far beyond what most Christians comprehend it to be. Let me lay a foundation with this:

### **I. Salvation is Revelation**

**John 17:3**

**And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

**A. Knowing God**

1. Christian salvation is not water baptism or church membership; it is a dynamic, living relationship with a divine Person; to “know” God!

2. The Greek word for “know” in the text means more than ‘head knowledge’ or casual acquaintance.

**Vine’s Expository Dictionary**

**Ginosko**

**In the NT ginosko frequently indicates a *relationship* between the person “knowing” and the object known.**

**Signifies “to come to know, recognize, understand,” or “to understand completely,”**

a. I know I have a 1000 Facebook friends; but how many of them do I know; how many do I really know?

b. Jesus said to be saved means to really *know* God the Father and God the Son.

c. It means closely acquainted; knowledgeable, familiar; intimate.

**Vine’s Bible Dictionary**

**In the Old Testament, the Hebrew phrase “to know God” means to have an intimate, experiential knowledge of Him.**

3. The closest comparison we have on a human level is the marriage relationship; where the man and woman have intimate, experiential knowledge of each other.

**Matthew 19:5-6**

**And Jesus said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be *joined* to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but *one flesh*.**

A man and wife become “one flesh”; but man and God become “one spirit”!

**1 Corinthians 6:17**

**He who is *joined* to the Lord is one Spirit with Him.**

4. 53 years ago, Elizabeth and I were married. We became “one flesh”. I think I can say I *know* Elizabeth. I not only know what she says. I know what she likes. What she doesn’t like. I know her so well that I have an instinct for her will; what she will do in certain situations. I’m suggesting that the same principle works when it comes to know God and His will.

5. As we walk with God we come to know Him more and more; not just what He says in His precepts or commandments; but Who He IS by disposition and nature. The more I know God, the more I come to know His will.

## **B. Two Levels of Knowledge**

1. Two levels of knowledge are described in this verse:

### **Psalm 103:7**

**He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.**

a. Israel as a nation “knew” God to the degree that He revealed His acts to Israel; they saw what He did.

b. But Moses “knew” God in a deeper way; God made known His “ways” to Moses.

c. Israel knew what God said and what He did; but Moses knew why God said what He said and did what He did!

### **Charles Spurgeon**

**“The nation saw less than Moses, for they beheld the deeds of God without understanding his methods in them; they might have known more if they had not been so perverse; the shortage was not in the revelation, but in the hardness of their hearts.**

2. How much more of God would we have if we sought to know Him as Moses knew Him?

### **Sir Richard Baker (1714-1818)**

**“God makes known not only his ways in which he would have us to walk, but his ways in which he walks himself; the course he holds in the government of worldly affairs; why he allows the wicked to prosper, and the godly to be oppressed. These ‘ways’ of His he made known to Moses; but to the children**

**of Israel, only His ‘acts’. They saw only the events of things, not the reasons for them, as Moses did.”**

3. This did not come by accident! Moses had hungered for this deeper relationship with the Lord.

**Exodus 33:13 NKJV**

**Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight.**

**Ex 33:13 AMP**

**...show me now Your way, that I may know You [progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with You, perceiving and recognizing and understanding you more strongly and clearly]...**

a. Notice Moses did not ask God to show him His will or His power; He asked God to show him more of Himself. And God answered His prayer:

**Exodus 33:17-18**

**So the Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name."**

b. Still Moses wasn't satisfied!

**And he said, "Please, show me Your glory."**

4. It is one thing to want to know person because of what they can do for you; it's a deeper thing to want to know a person simply for the sake how much you value the person.

5. I'm concerned with much of the current Christian culture that seeks to know the will of God or the power of God more than it seeks to know the Person of God. The Trappist monk Anthony Bloom said it this way...

**Anthony Bloom**

**“There are many times when we are ready to pray, but we are not ready to receive God. We want something from Him but Him we want not at all.”**

a. How many modern American sermons center upon getting something from God instead of helping us know God better?

6. There's a story of **Arthur Burns**, a Jewish economist of great influence in Washington during the tenure of several Presidents, was once asked to pray at a gathering of Christian politicians. Here is his prayer:

**"Lord, I pray that Jews would come to know Jesus Christ. And I pray that Buddhists would come to know Jesus Christ. And I pray that Muslims would come to know Jesus Christ."**

**And then he stunned the crowd with this:**

**"And Lord, I pray that Christians would come to know Jesus Christ."**

**Arthur Burns (1904-1987)**

7. Do modern American churchgoers really “know” God in the biblical sense?

a. I'm reading a new book by Christian Smith that studies spirituality among today's American teenagers. (By the way, they are more spiritual than many might think). He puts his finger on the problem:

**Christian Smith**

**“Often without realizing it, every culture quietly molds and shapes our views of God. But we can't grow in our relationship with God when we insist on relating to God as we think He should be. We must surrender to God-as-he-is, as revealed in the Bible. Otherwise, we will have a god of our own imaginations.”**

**Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Live of American Teenagers**

8. American culture has invented many versions of Jesus and some never grown in their knowledge of the true God because they have shaped God according to their own imagination. As theologian Kevin DeYoung says...

**Kevin DeYoung**

**“Not every Jesus is the real Jesus.”**

a. He lists a few of the invented versions of Jesus people believe in:

**There's the Republican Jesus—who is against tax increases and activist judges, for family values and owning firearms.**

(Just so I'm clear: God is not a Republican! Or a Democrat)

**There's Democrat Jesus**—who is against Wall Street and Wal-Mart, for reducing our carbon footprint and printing money.

**There's Open-minded Jesus**—who loves everyone all the time no matter what their lifestyle

**There's Therapist Jesus**—who helps us cope with life's problems, heals our past, tells us how valuable we are and not to be so hard on ourselves.

**There's Yuppie Jesus**—who encourages us to reach our full potential, reach for the stars, and buy a boat.

**There's Touchdown Jesus**—who helps athletes run faster and jump higher than non-Christians and determines the outcomes of Super Bowls.

**There's Spirituality Jesus**—who hates religion, churches, pastors, priests, and doctrine; he would rather have people out in nature, finding "the god within"

**There's Hippie Jesus**—who teaches everyone to give peace a chance, imagines a world without religion, and helps us remember that "all you need is love."

**There's Guru Jesus**—a wise, inspirational teacher who believes in you and helps you find your true self.

**There's Revolutionary Jesus**—who teaches us to rebel against the status quo, stick it to the man, and blame things on "the system."

### **Kevin DeYoung**

“And then there's Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. This Christ is not a reflection of the current mood or the projection of our own desires. He is our Lord and our God. He is the Father's Son, Savior of the world, and substitute for our sins—more loving, more holy, and more wonderfully terrifying than we ever thought possible.”

9. Have we lost the awesomeness of God? Have we forgotten He is altogether greater than our conceptions of Him?

a. One of the great geniuses of the Christian church was the medieval theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas. His great work **“Summa Theologica”**, was his attempt to gather all truth into one coherent whole. It contained:

- 38 treatises

- 3,000 articles
- 10,000 objections
- Subjects covered: Anthropology, science, ethics, psychology, political theory, and theology, all under God

b. **But on December 6, 1273, Thomas abruptly stopped his work.**

While celebrating Mass in the chapel of St. Thomas, he caught a glimpse of God and eternity, and suddenly he knew that all his efforts to describe God fell so far short that he decided never to write again.

c. When his secretary begged him to continue the work...

**Aquinas told his secretary: "Reginald, I can do no more. Such things have been revealed to me that all I have written seems as so much straw." Firm in his resolve, he wrote not another word and died a year later.**

10. God is greater than all teaching about God.

## II. Summing Up The Series

### A. Benefits of Knowing God and His Will

1. It is a good thing to be able to know and recognize the 7 expressions of the will of God; but it is even better to know and recognize God as He really is.

**Elizabeth George**

**“As we come to know God better, we will also find it easier to know, follow, and accept His will for our life.”**

2. To know God is to know ourselves. We cannot really know who we really are until we know who God really is.

**John Calvin**

**“The knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves are related. Nearly all the true and sound wisdom we possess consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. Man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face.”**

3. You can't believe wrong and live right. We need to know God rightly!

**Jon Morrison**

**“When people get their doubts and questions about God sorted out, their once cloudy thinking becomes clear again. When people start thinking rightly about God, they start living rightly for Him.”**

4. Love is linked to knowledge; the more we know Him the more we love Him; the more we love Him the more we will know Him.

### **Brother Lawrence**

**Let us give our thoughts completely to knowing God. The more one knows him, the more one wants to know him, and since love is measured commonly by knowledge, then, the deeper and more extensive knowledge shall be, so love will be the greater, and, if love is great, we shall love him equally in suffering and consolation.**

## **B. Practical Steps**

1. Reset your priorities; your value system.

### **Philippians 3:8**

**Everything else is worthless when compared to the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.**

### **2 Peter 1:2**

**Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.**

2. Recommit to the Word.

### **A.W. Tozer**

**“God is not silent. It is the nature of God to speak. The second Person of the Trinity called ‘the Word’. The Bible is the inevitable outcome of God’s continuous speech. It is the infallible declaration of His mind.”**

a. The Bible is God’s self-revelation of Himself to us; here is where we find the 7 expressions of His will.

3. Learn to be still.

### **Psalm 46:10**

**Be still, and know that I am God.**

a. If you can’t be still you’ll never know God.



**John Ortberg**

**“Stillness is always a prerequisite for receptivity. Telephones and television sets cannot receive messages when they are too filled with static and noise. Stillness first, then listening. The order cannot be reversed. Be still, and know that I am God.”**

b. A Mennonite Pastor comments on the evils of the internet.

**Shane Hipps, Mennonite Pastor**

**The internet creates a permanent puberty of the mind. We get locked in so much information, and the inability to sort that information meaningfully limits our capacity to understand. The last stage of knowledge is wisdom. But we are miles from wisdom because the Internet encourages the opposite of what creates wisdom—stillness, time, patient suffering. On the Internet, there is no such thing as waiting; there is no such thing as stillness. There is a constant churning.**

4. Love the Lord; delight yourself in Him and in worshipping Him.

**Jim Elliot**

**To stand by the shadows of a friendly tree with the wind tugging at your coattail and the heavens hailing your heart, to gaze and glory and to give oneself again to God, what more could a man ask? Oh, the fullness, pleasure, sheer excitement of knowing God on earth. I care not if I never raise my voice again for Him, if only I may love Him and please Him.**

5. And if all else fails, accept your limitations. Embrace the mystery.

**In his book *Thoughts in Solitude*, Thomas Merton wrote fifteen lines that have become known as "the Merton Prayer":**

**My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.**

## **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/Revelation 5:5**

**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)**

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

**James 4:6**

**God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble.**

**(Dispositional)**

**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 not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.**

**Sovereign/Dispositional**