

# Understanding the Will of God

Series 1-25

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## **Introduction: Understanding the Will of God**

Few subjects stir more questions, confusion, and debate among Christians than the will of God. For centuries, believers have asked:

- *What is God's will for my life?*
- *How can I know if I'm in it?*
- *Is God's will hidden, or has He revealed it?*
- *Does one wrong choice ruin God's plan for me?*

These are not idle questions. They affect how we live, how we pray, how we serve, and how we suffer. Misunderstandings about the will of God have led to discouragement, fear, and even false teaching. Some view God's will as a mysterious blueprint that must be discovered through signs and feelings. Others reduce it to prosperity, claiming that God's will is always health, wealth, and ease. Still others distort it into fatalism, where man's choices are meaningless because "everything is rigged."

But the Bible cuts through the fog with clarity. God has revealed His will in His Word. He is not playing hide-and-seek with His children. His will is not fragile or unknowable but good, acceptable, and perfect (Romans 12:2). It is both sovereign—His eternal decrees that cannot be thwarted—and revealed—His commands for us to obey daily.

This series, *Understanding the Will of God*, is a 25-part journey through Scripture that tackles the will of God from every angle:

- **Definition and Clarification** – What God's will is, and what it is not.
- **Doctrinal Foundations** – God's sovereign will, His revealed will, and His permissive will.
- **Practical Application** – How to discern and live in God's will in decisions, vocation, marriage, service, and daily life.

- **Correcting Misconceptions** – Refuting prosperity teaching, mystical confusion, fatalism, Catholic traditions, and modern distortions.
- **Biblical Case Studies** – From Joseph and Jonah to Paul and Christ Himself, showing God’s will at work in real lives.
- **Explicit Commands** – Sanctification, thanksgiving, obedience, and doing good as plainly stated aspects of God’s will.
- **Eternal Perspective** – God’s will in suffering, His eternal plan in the new creation, and the final triumph when every knee bows to Christ.

Each essay builds on the last, offering a rightly-divided, Bible-believing perspective. Together, they present a complete theology of the will of God—practical enough for daily living, yet broad enough to capture eternity’s horizon.

The goal of this series is not to produce armchair speculation but to equip believers with confidence, clarity, and courage. You will see that God’s will is not a fragile roadmap where one misstep ruins everything. It is the steady unfolding of His eternal plan, where even human choice, suffering, and trials are woven into His purpose.

Above all, this series will remind you that the will of God is not an abstract concept but a Person—Jesus Christ. To be “in God’s will” is to be in Him, walking by faith, obeying His Word, and awaiting the day when His will is perfectly accomplished in the new heaven and new earth.

As you walk through these 25 studies, may you find assurance in this truth: God’s will is not hidden in the shadows. It is revealed in His Word, proven in daily obedience, tested in suffering, displayed in service, and perfected in eternity. And when all is said and done, His good, acceptable, and perfect will shall stand forever.

## **1 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – What the Will of God Is**

### **Introduction: The Cry for Clarity**

One of the most frequent questions believers ask is: “*What is the will of God for my life?*” Behind that question lies both a hunger and a fear—a hunger to be in step with the Lord, and a fear of missing His plan. Unfortunately, because many Christians have not been firmly grounded in Scripture, they drift into speculation, mysticism, or even despair. Some

chase voices and signs. Others resign themselves to fatalism, believing that everything is predetermined and there is no responsibility to seek God's way.

The confusion deepens because the phrase "the will of God" is used so broadly in churches, books, and sermons that it often loses its biblical meaning. Some equate it with happiness, others with success, and still others with vague impressions. But Scripture does not leave us without definition. The Bible gives a clear, precise, and balanced view of what the will of God is.

In this essay, we will establish a firm biblical foundation. We will define the will of God, distinguish it from human speculation, explore its biblical categories, and see how it unfolds in the life of the believer. By the end, you will see that the will of God is not a riddle to solve but a reality to embrace.

## **I. The Biblical Foundation: God Has a Will**

The first truth we must establish is simple yet profound: **God has a will.** He is not an impersonal force or blind fate. He is a personal Being who acts with intention, purpose, and design.

Ephesians 1:11 says:

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

Notice: God's will has counsel. It is not random, but thoughtful. It has purpose. It directs all things. God's will is central to His identity as the Sovereign Lord.

The psalmist declared:

"But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psalm 115:3).

What pleases God is His will. He is not at the mercy of circumstances, demons, or men. His will rules over all.

To speak of God's will, then, is to speak of the very heartbeat of His plan for creation, redemption, judgment, and eternity.

## **II. The Two Main Categories: Sovereign Will and Revealed Will**

While the Bible speaks of God's will in many ways, two primary categories bring clarity.

## 1. God's Sovereign Will (His Decree)

This is what God has ordained from eternity. It includes His unchangeable purposes, decrees, and plans. Nothing can stop it. Proverbs 19:21 says:

“There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.”

The crucifixion of Christ is the greatest example. Acts 4:27–28 states:

“For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”

The wicked freely conspired, yet all unfolded exactly as God's sovereign will decreed. His sovereign will is irresistible, comprehensive, and certain.

## 2. God's Revealed Will (His Commands)

This is what God makes known through His Word, commanding man to obey. It is not hidden, but plainly declared. Deuteronomy 29:29 distinguishes:

“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

God's revealed will includes His commandments, instructions, and precepts. For example:

- “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).
- “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

These are not hidden mysteries but plain directives. Man may resist, disobey, or ignore this will, but it is revealed and binding nonetheless.

## III. Subcategories: God's Permissive Will

Alongside these categories, Scripture also speaks of what theologians often call God's **permissive will**. This is not a third separate kind of will but a description of how His sovereign and revealed will operate together in human history.

God sometimes allows man to rebel against His revealed will, while still weaving it into His sovereign plan. A clear example is Israel's demand for a king in 1 Samuel 8. God told Samuel that their demand was a rejection of Him. Yet He permitted it, and through that

permissive allowance, He still accomplished His sovereign plan by bringing Christ through the line of David.

Permissive will shows us that God's control is never threatened, even by human sin. His will is not fragile. He can permit rebellion without compromising His purpose.

#### **IV. The Attributes of God's Will**

Now that we have defined the categories, let us examine the attributes of God's will. These characteristics show us why His will is trustworthy.

1. **Good** – God's will is always morally pure and beneficial. Romans 12:2 calls it "good." Psalm 119:68 says: "Thou art good, and doest good."
2. **Acceptable** – God's will is pleasing, fitting, and desirable. It may not always feel pleasant, but it is always acceptable to Him and ultimately to us.
3. **Perfect** – God's will is complete, lacking nothing, flawless in design and outcome.

These three adjectives in Romans 12:2 summarize the essence of God's will. It is never evil, flawed, or incomplete.

#### **V. Distinguishing God's Will from Human Speculation**

Having defined the will of God, we must also distinguish it from common counterfeits. Many believers confuse the will of God with mere human speculation.

##### **1. The Will of God is Not Blind Fate**

Pagans often speak of "fate" or "destiny," as if events unfold by impersonal forces. But the will of God is not blind—it is personal. It flows from a loving, wise, holy God.

##### **2. The Will of God is Not Human Desire**

Many equate their own desires with God's will. They say, "If I want it strongly, it must be God's will." But James 4:3 warns: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." God's will is not the rubber stamp of our flesh.

##### **3. The Will of God is Not Mystical Guesswork**

Some treat God's will like a secret code, to be cracked by signs, dreams, or feelings. While God may providentially guide, His primary will is revealed in Scripture. Feelings are unstable; His Word is sure.

#### **4. The Will of God is Not Majority Opinion**

Israel once clamored for a golden calf because the people agreed together. But the majority can be wrong. God's will is not determined by consensus.

#### **5. The Will of God is Not Always Comfortable**

Some think God's will means the easiest path. Yet Scripture is filled with saints who suffered greatly in God's will. Hebrews 10:36 says: "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

### **VI. Biblical Examples of God's Will at Work**

The Bible gives living illustrations of God's will in action.

#### **1. Jesus Christ**

The supreme example of submission to God's will is Christ in Gethsemane. He prayed: "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Though His human desire recoiled from the cross, He yielded fully to the Father's will.

#### **2. Jonah**

Jonah illustrates rebellion against God's revealed will. God told him, "Arise, go to Nineveh" (Jonah 1:2). Jonah fled. Yet even Jonah's disobedience was used by God's sovereign will to bring revival in Nineveh.

#### **3. Joseph**

Joseph's brothers meant evil against him, but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20). Here we see the intersection of human wickedness and divine sovereignty.

#### **4. Paul**

Paul repeatedly described himself as an "apostle by the will of God" (2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1). His ministry, suffering, and mission were all bound up in God's will.

### **VII. Practical Implications: Why This Matters**

Understanding what the will of God is has life-changing implications.

1. **Confidence** – We can rest in God's sovereign will, knowing nothing happens by accident.

2. **Obedience** – We must focus on obeying His revealed will in Scripture, not chasing mysteries.
3. **Humility** – We acknowledge that some aspects of His will remain secret, and that is His prerogative.
4. **Hope** – We know His will is good, acceptable, and perfect, even when our present circumstances are painful.

### **VIII. Application: How to Live in the Will of God**

1. **Start with Scripture** – God’s revealed will is found in His Word. If you want to know His will, begin by obeying what He has already written.
2. **Submit Your Body** – Romans 12:1 calls us to present our bodies as living sacrifices. Obedience begins with surrender.
3. **Separate from the World** – If you are conformed to the world, you will never discern God’s will clearly.
4. **Renew Your Mind** – Let Scripture reshape your thinking. A renewed mind discerns the will of God.
5. **Trust His Sovereignty** – When life seems chaotic, remember that His sovereign will is unfolding perfectly.

### **Conclusion: The Will of God Defined**

The will of God is not a fog of human speculation, nor a mystical riddle. It is the expression of God’s holy, wise, loving purpose. It is sovereign, revealed, and at times permissive. It is good, acceptable, and perfect. It is personal, not impersonal; purposeful, not random; certain, not fragile.

The believer’s task is not to invent the will of God but to submit to it, trust it, and prove it in daily life. When we do, we discover that His will is not only right but best.

### **2 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – What the Will of God Is Not**

#### **Introduction: Clearing the Fog**

Confusion about the will of God often begins not with what it *is* but with what it *is not*. Many Christians waste years chasing shadows, thinking they are pursuing God's will when in fact they are following illusions. Others abandon the search altogether, assuming the will of God is unknowable, unattainable, or irrelevant.

This confusion is not new. In the Old Testament, Israel repeatedly mistook human desire, superstition, or majority opinion for God's will. In the New Testament, false teachers arose claiming visions and commandments of men as divine authority. And today, countless books and sermons perpetuate myths that cloud the clear revelation of God's will in Scripture.

The stakes are high. If we misidentify the will of God, we can end up enslaved to error, vulnerable to manipulation, or paralyzed by fear. That is why it is crucial to define not only what the will of God *is* but also what it *is not*.

In this essay, we will expose the counterfeits: luck, fate, mysticism, majority rule, comfort, human wishes, and worldly success. By clearing these away, we make room to see the will of God clearly as revealed in His Word.

## **I. The Will of God is Not Luck**

In popular culture, people speak of "good luck" or "bad luck" as if outcomes are random. A Christian may fall into this same trap by secretly believing that life is governed by chance. But the Bible never presents God's will as a gamble.

### **1. God's Providence Overrules Chance**

Proverbs 16:33 says:

"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."

Even when men cast lots, thinking the outcome random, God rules over it. Nothing escapes His providence.

### **2. The Error of Luck**

To attribute events to luck is to deny God's sovereignty. If "luck" governs life, then God does not. If blessings are luck, then thanksgiving is meaningless. If trials are bad luck, then Romans 8:28 cannot stand.

### **3. The Danger of Believing in Luck**

Those who view life as luck become superstitious, fearful, or presumptuous. They may chase rituals or charms instead of trusting God. But Scripture declares: “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD” (Psalm 37:23). That is providence, not luck.

## **II. The Will of God is Not Fate**

Closely related to luck is fatalism—the idea that everything is fixed by impersonal destiny, so human choices are meaningless. Many ancient pagans believed in the Fates, spinning the thread of life beyond even the gods’ control. Some Christians slide into a similar mindset, confusing God’s sovereignty with fatalism.

### **1. God’s Sovereignty is Personal, Not Impersonal**

Ephesians 1:11 says God “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” This is not cold destiny but a personal God wisely directing history.

### **2. Man’s Choices Still Matter**

Fatalism says, “It doesn’t matter what I do.” But Scripture says: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Joshua 24:15). Man is accountable. God’s sovereign will and human responsibility work together without contradiction, though beyond our comprehension.

### **3. The Danger of Fatalism**

Fatalism breeds passivity. Why pray, evangelize, or obey if everything is inevitable? But God commands prayer because it matters (James 5:16). He commands evangelism because souls hang in the balance (Romans 10:14–15).

God’s will is sovereign, yes—but never fatalistic.

## **III. The Will of God is Not Mysticism**

Another counterfeit is mysticism—the belief that God’s will is revealed through secret, subjective experiences. Many Christians equate the will of God with inner voices, dreams, or feelings.

### **1. God’s Will is Revealed in Scripture**

2 Timothy 3:16–17 teaches that Scripture equips us “unto all good works.” We do not need mystical whispers when God has spoken plainly in His Word.

### **2. The Dangers of Mysticism**

- **Unreliability:** Feelings change. Dreams fade. Voices contradict.
- **Manipulation:** False teachers exploit mystical claims to control others.
- **Error:** Mysticism often contradicts the Bible.

Paul warned in Colossians 2:18 against those who claimed visions and intruded into things they had “not seen.” God’s will is not revealed in hidden revelations apart from His Word.

### **3. True Guidance**

God does guide by His Spirit, but the Spirit never contradicts Scripture. Psalm 119:105 says: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” The primary revelation of God’s will is His Word, not mystical experiences.

## **IV. The Will of God is Not Majority Opinion**

In democratic cultures, people assume truth is found in numbers. If most people agree, it must be right. But Scripture repeatedly shows that the majority is often wrong.

### **1. Israel in the Wilderness**

The majority cried out for a golden calf. The majority murmured against entering Canaan. In both cases, the majority was dead wrong.

### **2. Jesus Before Pilate**

The crowd shouted, “Crucify him!” The will of the people was directly opposed to the will of God.

### **3. Application**

The will of God cannot be discerned by polls, trends, or crowds. Matthew 7:13–14 reminds us that the broad way leads to destruction, while the narrow way leads to life.

## **V. The Will of God is Not Human Comfort**

Many believe that if a path is comfortable, it must be God’s will. They think God’s plan is always the easiest, safest, and smoothest road. But Scripture teaches otherwise.

### **1. Christ’s Example**

The Father’s will led Christ to the cross. Hebrews 10:7 quotes Him: “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” That will included suffering, rejection, and death.

## **2. Paul's Example**

Paul followed the will of God into shipwrecks, beatings, imprisonments, and martyrdom. Acts 21:13 records him saying: "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

## **3. Our Call**

1 Peter 4:19 exhorts: "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing." God's will often includes trials, for through them He refines us.

## **VI. The Will of God is Not Worldly Success**

In the modern church, many equate God's will with material prosperity or visible achievement. If someone is rich, famous, or influential, people assume they are in God's will. But this is a carnal distortion.

### **1. The Prosperity Myth**

Jesus said: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Paul warned that those who suppose "gain is godliness" are destitute of the truth (1 Timothy 6:5).

### **2. Biblical Examples**

- Jeremiah was faithful but persecuted, poor, and ignored. Was he outside God's will? Certainly not.
- John the Baptist lived in poverty, dressed in camel's hair, and was beheaded in prison. Yet Jesus called him the greatest born among women.
- The early church was scattered, persecuted, and despised, yet they were squarely in God's will.

### **3. True Success**

True success is measured by faithfulness to God's will, not worldly applause. Revelation 2:10 promises: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

## **VII. The Will of God is Not Human Wishes**

Finally, one of the most common misconceptions is to confuse human wishes with God's will. People pray selfishly, then baptize their desires with the phrase, "It must be God's will."

### **1. James's Warning**

James 4:3 rebukes: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." God's will is not a blank check for fleshly indulgence.

### **2. Israel's Example**

Israel demanded meat in the wilderness. God gave it, but Psalm 106:15 says: "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." Their wish was granted, but it was not God's will.

### **3. Christ's Model**

Jesus taught us to pray: "Thy will be done" (Matthew 6:10). True prayer aligns our wishes to God's will, not vice versa.

## **VIII. Summary of What the Will of God is Not**

To summarize, the will of God is not:

- **Luck** – Life is not random chance.
- **Fate** – Life is not ruled by blind destiny.
- **Mysticism** – God's will is not hidden in secret voices or feelings.
- **Majority Opinion** – The crowd is usually wrong.
- **Comfort** – God's will often leads through trials.
- **Worldly Success** – Wealth and fame are not the measure.
- **Human Wishes** – God's will is not a mirror of our lusts.

By rejecting these counterfeits, we clear the fog. Only then can we see the will of God for what it truly is: revealed in His Word, worked out in His providence, and proven in obedience.

## **Conclusion: Anchored in Truth**

If the will of God is confused with luck, fate, mysticism, majority rule, comfort, success, or human wishes, then Christianity collapses into superstition and disappointment. But when we clear away these misconceptions, we stand on solid ground. We know that God's will is anchored in His holy character, revealed in His Word, and applied by His Spirit.

The believer who understands what the will of God is *not* will no longer be tossed to and fro by every wind of teaching or every whim of emotion. Instead, he will stand firm, discerning God's will clearly, proving it daily, and rejoicing that it is always good, acceptable, and perfect.

### **3 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Two Aspects: Sovereign Will vs. Revealed Will**

#### **Introduction: Two Angles on One Will**

Few doctrines bring more confusion, debate, or division than the question of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. On one side, some claim that God's will is absolute and that man has no real choice. On the other side, some claim that man's free will trumps God's sovereignty, making Him a mere spectator. Both are errors.

The Bible holds these truths in perfect balance. God has a **sovereign will**—His eternal decrees, unchanging purposes, and absolute control over history. At the same time, God has a **revealed will**—His commandments, instructions, and expectations for mankind, which we can choose to obey or disobey.

These are not two contradictory wills, but two aspects of one divine purpose. One is secret, eternal, and irresistible; the other is revealed, practical, and resistible. One guarantees that God's plan cannot fail; the other holds men accountable for their choices.

In this essay, we will define both aspects, prove them from Scripture, illustrate them in history, and explain their harmony. By the end, you will see that these two aspects are not enemies but friends, working together to display the wisdom, justice, and mercy of God.

#### **I. Defining the Sovereign Will of God**

The sovereign will of God is His eternal decree by which He ordains all that comes to pass. It is not dependent on man's will or power. It is absolute, irresistible, and comprehensive.

##### **1. Scriptural Basis**

- **Psalm 115:3:** “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”
- **Daniel 4:35:** “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”
- **Ephesians 1:11:** “Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

These verses leave no room for chance, luck, or human sovereignty over God. His sovereign will encompasses all things.

## 2. Characteristics

- **Eternal:** God’s sovereign will was established before the foundation of the world.
- **Immutable:** What He decrees cannot change or fail.
- **Comprehensive:** It includes both great events (the rise and fall of empires) and small details (the fall of a sparrow, Matthew 10:29).
- **Irresistible:** No man, angel, or demon can overturn His sovereign decree.

## 3. Examples

- **Creation:** God willed the universe into existence by His word (Genesis 1).
- **Providence:** Joseph said to his brothers, “God meant it unto good” (Genesis 50:20). Their sin was real, but God’s sovereign will overruled.
- **The Cross:** Acts 2:23 says Jesus was “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” yet crucified by wicked hands.

## II. Defining the Revealed Will of God

The revealed will of God is what He has made known in His Word for man to obey. Unlike His sovereign will, this aspect can be resisted and disobeyed.

### 1. Scriptural Basis

- **Deuteronomy 29:29:** “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

- **1 Thessalonians 4:3:** “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.”
- **1 Thessalonians 5:18:** “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

These commands are not secret decrees but clear instructions.

## 2. Characteristics

- **Revealed in Scripture:** The Bible is the handbook of God’s revealed will.
- **Resistible:** Man can choose to obey or disobey.
- **Moral:** It concerns what is right, holy, and pleasing to God.
- **Practical:** It guides our decisions, relationships, and service.

## 3. Examples

- **Ten Commandments:** God revealed His moral law at Sinai.
- **The Sermon on the Mount:** Jesus explained God’s will for righteousness in daily life.
- **Paul’s Epistles:** Direct instructions like “Pray without ceasing” and “Abstain from fornication” reveal God’s will plainly.

## III. The Harmony Between Sovereign and Revealed Will

The challenge comes when we ask: how do these two aspects fit together? If God’s sovereign will is irresistible, how can man be accountable to obey His revealed will?

### 1. Sovereign Will Does Not Excuse Disobedience

Some argue, “If God’s will is sovereign, then my sin must be part of His plan, so I’m not responsible.” This is false. While God’s sovereign will encompasses human sin, man remains guilty for his disobedience.

Example: Judas betrayed Christ. His act fulfilled prophecy and was part of God’s sovereign plan. Yet Judas was still responsible and condemned for his sin (Matthew 26:24).

### 2. Revealed Will Does Not Overturn Sovereign Will

Others argue, “If man disobeys, he can thwart God’s plan.” Not so. Disobedience may hinder blessings or delay outcomes, but it cannot overturn God’s sovereign purpose.

Example: Israel resisted God's revealed will by refusing to enter Canaan. Yet God's sovereign will still brought Israel into the land forty years later.

### **3. Both Serve God's Glory**

In the end, God's sovereign will ensures His glory will be displayed, whether through man's obedience or disobedience. His revealed will shows man what he ought to do; his failure highlights God's justice, and his obedience displays God's grace.

## **IV. Biblical Illustrations**

### **1. Pharaoh**

God commanded Pharaoh through Moses: "Let my people go" (revealed will). Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused. Yet God's sovereign will was that Pharaoh's hardness would display His power (Romans 9:17). Pharaoh disobeyed, but God's plan stood.

### **2. Joseph**

Joseph's brothers sinned by selling him into slavery, disobeying God's revealed will against hatred and violence. Yet God's sovereign will overruled, using their evil to save many lives (Genesis 50:20).

### **3. Jesus in Gethsemane**

Christ prayed, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). His submission to the Father's sovereign will fulfilled the revealed will that the Lamb must be slain. Sovereign decree and revealed obedience met perfectly at the cross.

## **V. Practical Implications**

Understanding these two aspects guards us from error and equips us to live faithfully.

### **1. It Guards Against Fatalism**

Knowing God's sovereign will is irresistible should not lead to passivity. We are still called to obey His revealed will. Our choices matter.

### **2. It Guards Against Pride**

Knowing God's revealed will is resistible should not lead us to think we can frustrate His eternal plan. His sovereignty remains intact.

### **3. It Guides Our Decisions**

We don't need to uncover His sovereign decrees before they unfold. Instead, we are responsible to obey His revealed will in Scripture today. The rest is in His hands.

### **4. It Gives Comfort in Trials**

When we suffer, we know God's sovereign will is at work for our good (Romans 8:28), even if others disobey His revealed will and harm us.

### **5. It Inspires Evangelism**

Though God's sovereign will ensures His elect will be saved, He has revealed that salvation comes through preaching. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). We obey the revealed will and trust the sovereign will for results.

## **VI. Misinterpretations Corrected**

### **1. Calvinist Determinism**

Some Calvinists blur the line, teaching that God's sovereign will irresistibly causes all things, even sin, making man a puppet. This destroys human responsibility. The Bible teaches man is genuinely responsible to obey God's revealed will.

### **2. Arminian Overreaction**

Others deny sovereignty, insisting that man's free will reigns supreme. This shrinks God to a powerless spectator. The Bible teaches God's sovereign will rules all.

### **3. The Biblical Balance**

The truth lies in the tension: God's sovereign will guarantees His plan; God's revealed will commands man to obey. Together they display both His sovereignty and man's responsibility.

## **VII. Living in Light of Both Aspects**

The believer's duty is not to unravel God's secret decrees but to obey His revealed commands. Deuteronomy 29:29 is the anchor: "The secret things belong unto the LORD... but those things which are revealed belong unto us."

- When perplexed by suffering, trust His sovereign will.

- When faced with temptation, obey His revealed will.
- When confused about the future, rest in His sovereignty and act on His revealed truth.

This balance brings both comfort and conviction.

### **Conclusion: One Will, Two Aspects**

The will of God has two aspects. His sovereign will decrees all things from eternity, ensuring that His plan cannot fail. His revealed will instructs man how to live, calling us to obedience and holiness.

To deny sovereignty is to strip God of His glory. To deny responsibility is to strip man of his accountability. To embrace both is to walk in truth.

The believer who grasps these two aspects will no longer swing between fatalism and fear. He will live with confidence in God's plan, diligence in obedience, and hope in every circumstance. For God's sovereign will guarantees the end, and His revealed will guides the way.

## **4 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Permissive Will of God**

### **Introduction: A Vital but Misunderstood Aspect**

One of the greatest mysteries in Scripture is how God rules over a world filled with sin. If God is holy and sovereign, why does He allow evil? If His will is perfect, how can men and angels rebel against it? The answer is bound up in the doctrine of the **permissive will of God**.

The term “permissive will” does not mean that God has a divided will or that He compromises His holiness. Rather, it means that the sovereign God, for His own purposes, allows human beings to act in rebellion against His revealed will—without approving of it—and then uses even their sin to accomplish His overarching plan.

This doctrine guards us from two errors:

- **Determinism**, which claims God directly causes all evil.
- **Open theism**, which claims God is surprised by human choices.

The truth is that God is never the author of sin, but He is never helpless in the face of sin either. He permits it, sets its boundaries, and bends it to serve His purposes.

In this essay, we will define the permissive will of God, explore its biblical foundations, survey examples in Scripture, answer common objections, and apply its lessons for our daily lives.

## **I. Defining the Permissive Will of God**

The permissive will of God is His allowance of actions—often sinful or rebellious—that He does not directly cause or approve, yet which He permits within His sovereign plan.

### **1. Distinguishing It from Sovereign and Revealed Will**

- **Sovereign Will:** What God decrees and guarantees. Nothing can overturn it.
- **Revealed Will:** What God commands in Scripture for man to obey.
- **Permissive Will:** What God allows, even when contrary to His revealed will, yet still within His sovereign plan.

Thus, permissive will is not a separate will of God but the way His sovereignty and man's free will intersect in history.

### **2. Key Scriptures**

- **Acts 14:16:** "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways."
- **Psalms 81:12:** "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels."
- **Romans 1:24:** "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts."

These verses show God permitting rebellion, yet never losing control of the outcome.

## **II. The Biblical Basis of Permissive Will**

The permissive will of God is woven throughout Scripture.

### **1. God Permits Sin Without Approving It**

God's holiness never diminishes. Habakkuk 1:13 declares: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Yet He allows sinners to act freely, even when their actions oppose His revealed will.

## **2. God Sets Boundaries Around Sin**

Even Satan can go no further than God permits. In Job 1–2, Satan attacked Job, but only within limits set by God. The devil's malice was real, but God's sovereignty was absolute.

## **3. God Uses Sin for Greater Purposes**

Romans 8:28 assures us that God works all things—even sin, rebellion, and evil—for the good of His people and the glory of His name.

# **III. Biblical Examples of the Permissive Will of God**

## **1. Pharaoh**

God commanded Pharaoh: "Let my people go" (Exodus 5:1). Pharaoh refused, hardening his heart. Scripture alternates between Pharaoh hardening his own heart and God hardening it (Exodus 7:13; 8:32; 9:12). God did not cause Pharaoh's sin, but He permitted it, setting the stage to display His power in judgment.

Romans 9:17 explains:

"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."

Pharaoh's rebellion was sin, yet God permitted it to magnify His glory.

## **2. Israel Demands a King**

In 1 Samuel 8, Israel demanded a king to be like the nations. This was contrary to God's revealed will—He was their King. Yet He permitted it. Samuel warned them of the consequences, but God said, "Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king" (v.22).

God's permissive will allowed their request, but He still overruled, eventually bringing Christ, the King of kings, through David's line.

## **3. Jonah Flees from God**

God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh. Jonah ran in the opposite direction. God permitted Jonah's rebellion to an extent, even allowing him to be cast into the sea. Yet

through that rebellion, God sent a storm, a great fish, and ultimately revival in Nineveh. Jonah's disobedience was real, but God's purposes prevailed.

#### **4. Joseph's Brothers**

Joseph's brothers sinned grievously by selling him into slavery. Yet Joseph later testified: "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Genesis 50:20). Their sin was permitted, but God used it to position Joseph to save lives in Egypt.

#### **5. The Crucifixion of Christ**

The supreme example of permissive will is the cross. Wicked men—Herod, Pilate, the Jewish leaders, and the crowd—freely conspired to crucify Christ. Yet Acts 2:23 says He was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Their sin was permitted, but it fulfilled the greatest act of redemption.

### **IV. The Purposes of God's Permissive Will**

Why does God allow what He hates? The Bible gives several reasons.

#### **1. To Display His Power**

Pharaoh's rebellion allowed God to display His might through the plagues and the Exodus.

#### **2. To Fulfill Prophecy**

The cross fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22). Sinful actions were permitted to accomplish God's redemptive plan.

#### **3. To Discipline His People**

When Israel refused to listen, God permitted them to walk in their lusts, which brought chastisement (Psalm 81:12).

#### **4. To Reveal Human Sinfulness**

By permitting sin, God exposes the wickedness of the human heart. Romans 1 shows God "giving up" men to their lusts to reveal their depravity.

#### **5. To Magnify His Grace**

Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds (Romans 5:20). God's permissive will highlights His mercy in saving sinners.

## **V. Misunderstandings About the Permissive Will of God**

### **1. God is Not the Author of Sin**

Some claim that if God permits sin, He must cause it. Scripture rejects this. James 1:13 says: “God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” God permits but never authors sin.

### **2. Permission is Not Approval**

Just because God allows something does not mean He approves of it. Israel’s demand for a king was permitted, but God clearly declared it a rejection of Him.

### **3. Permissive Will Does Not Weaken Sovereignty**

Some fear that speaking of “permission” weakens God’s sovereignty. On the contrary, it magnifies it: God is so sovereign that He can permit rebellion without losing control.

### **4. Permissive Will is Not an Excuse for Sin**

Sinners may say, “If God permitted my sin, it must be okay.” Not so. Pharaoh, Judas, and others bore full responsibility for their choices, even though God permitted them.

## **VI. Practical Applications**

### **1. Trust God in a Sinful World**

We live in a world where evil seems rampant. But the doctrine of permissive will reminds us that nothing happens outside God’s allowance. Evil men may rage, but God sets their boundaries.

### **2. Take Responsibility for Obedience**

Though God may permit sin, we remain accountable. We cannot hide behind His sovereignty. Our duty is to obey His revealed will.

### **3. Find Comfort in Providence**

Even when others sin against us, God can turn it for good. Like Joseph, we can say: “Ye meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.”

### **4. Avoid Presumption**

We must never test God by assuming He will fix our disobedience. Jonah was chastened severely for fleeing. God’s permissive will is not a license to sin.

## **5. Praise God for Redemption**

Above all, the cross shows that God's permissive will leads to redemption. Wicked men crucified Christ, but God permitted it for our salvation. This should move us to awe and worship.

## **VII. The Permissive Will of God and Human Freedom**

One of the blessings of understanding permissive will is clarity about human freedom. God created man with the ability to choose. That freedom is real but not ultimate. We may rebel, but our rebellion is never outside God's plan.

This truth keeps us from pride (thinking our will rules God) and despair (thinking our sin has ruined His plan). Both are false. God permits rebellion, but He always reigns.

## **VIII. The Permissive Will of God and Judgment**

Sometimes God's permissive will is itself a form of judgment. Romans 1 repeats the phrase: "God gave them up." When men persist in sin, God permits them to go further, handing them over to their own lusts. This is a fearful judgment, showing that sometimes the worst punishment is God letting us have our own way.

## **IX. Conclusion: Resting in God's Permission**

The permissive will of God is one of the most humbling truths in Scripture. It shows that sin is real, choices matter, rebellion has consequences—but God remains sovereign, weaving even human wickedness into His perfect plan.

From Pharaoh's hardened heart to Joseph's betrayal, from Israel's demand for a king to Jonah's flight, and supremely at the cross, the Bible testifies that God permits what He does not approve, but He never loses control.

For the believer, this truth brings both comfort and caution. Comfort, because nothing can separate us from God's purpose, even when others sin against us. Caution, because rebellion, though permitted, brings chastisement and loss.

The will of God is sovereign, revealed, and permissive. Together these aspects display His holiness, wisdom, and power. The believer who grasps this can rest in God's plan, obey His commands, and trust that even in a world of sin, God's purpose will stand.

## **5 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Mystery of God’s Will**

### **Introduction: The Curtain of Mystery**

One of the most humbling truths in Scripture is that God’s will is not fully revealed to us in this life. We know much, but not all. We see clearly enough to obey, but not completely enough to understand all things. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:12:

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

The Bible often speaks of the **mystery of God’s will**. A mystery, in biblical terms, is not something spooky or unknowable, but something once hidden and now revealed in part by God’s choosing. Ephesians 1:9 captures this beautifully:

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.”

God has revealed His will in Christ, but not in its fullness. What He has shown is enough to save us, sanctify us, and guide us. But much remains hidden until eternity, when His purposes will be completely unveiled.

This essay will explore the mystery of God’s will. We will define what “mystery” means in Scripture, explain how God reveals His will in stages, survey examples of mysteries revealed in the New Testament, and consider the promise of full disclosure in eternity.

### **I. Defining “Mystery” in the Bible**

#### **1. Not an Unsolvable Puzzle**

In common usage, a mystery is something permanently unknowable. In the Bible, however, a “mystery” (*mysterion*) is a divine secret that was once hidden but is now revealed by God.

Romans 16:25–26:

“According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest...”

#### **2. Mysteries Belong to God’s Plan**

Mysteries are not random but part of God's eternal design. They were hidden until the right time, then revealed for the edification of the church.

Ephesians 3:9 speaks of "the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

### **3. The Mystery of His Will**

Ephesians 1:9 calls this specifically the "mystery of his will." God's will was hidden, then partially revealed in Christ. Yet its full scope remains future.

## **II. The Mystery of God's Will in Redemptive History**

God has always revealed His will progressively. He did not give all truth at once but unfolded it step by step.

### **1. In the Old Testament**

- **Adam:** God revealed His will in the garden but did not disclose the full plan of redemption.
- **Abraham:** God revealed that through his seed the nations would be blessed, but the details of Christ were still veiled.
- **Moses:** God revealed His law, sacrifices, and tabernacle, foreshadowing Christ but not unveiling Him fully.

1 Peter 1:10–11 says the prophets searched diligently what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ signified, but they did not see it clearly.

### **2. In the New Testament**

With the coming of Christ, the mystery of God's will burst into the open.

- **Incarnation:** God revealed Himself in flesh (John 1:14).
- **Cross:** The mystery of redemption was unveiled—Christ dying for Jew and Gentile alike.
- **Church:** The "mystery" that Gentiles would be fellow heirs with Israel was revealed (Ephesians 3:6).

### **3. In the Future**

Even now, much remains hidden. God's will in its full scope will not be known until eternity, when the plan is complete.

Revelation 10:7 says:

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel... the mystery of God should be finished."

### **III. Mysteries Revealed in the New Testament**

The New Testament mentions several mysteries connected to God's will.

#### **1. The Mystery of the Gospel**

Ephesians 6:19: "That I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." The plan of salvation through Christ was hidden but is now revealed.

#### **2. The Mystery of Christ and the Church**

Ephesians 5:32: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." The union of Christ and His body was not revealed in the Old Testament.

#### **3. The Mystery of the Indwelling Christ**

Colossians 1:27: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The reality of Christ indwelling believers was once hidden but is now made known.

#### **4. The Mystery of Israel's Blindness**

Romans 11:25: "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." God's will regarding Israel and the Gentiles is revealed progressively.

#### **5. The Mystery of the Rapture**

1 Corinthians 15:51: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." The catching away of the church was a hidden truth until revealed by Paul.

All these mysteries form part of the greater "mystery of God's will."

### **IV. Why God Reveals His Will in Part**

Why does God not reveal everything now? Several reasons emerge.

#### **1. To Teach Us Dependence**

If we knew everything, we would not need to trust God. By revealing His will in part, He teaches us to walk by faith. Proverbs 3:5–6 commands us to trust the Lord and lean not on our own understanding.

## **2. To Display His Timing**

God reveals truth when the time is ripe. The cross came “in due time” (Romans 5:6). The church was revealed in the fullness of time. His will unfolds according to His calendar.

## **3. To Guard Us from Overload**

We are finite. We could not handle the full scope of God’s will now. Jesus said to His disciples: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12).

## **4. To Test Our Obedience**

God reveals enough of His will for us to obey today. He withholds the rest to test whether we will walk in faithfulness with what we know.

## **V. The Mystery of God’s Will in Eternity**

Though we know in part now, the Bible promises that in eternity the mystery will be fully unveiled.

### **1. Full Knowledge Promised**

1 Corinthians 13:12: “Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” In glory, we will see God’s plan face to face, with no obscurity.

### **2. Mystery Finished**

Revelation 10:7 declares that the “mystery of God should be finished.” At the culmination of history, God’s plan will be complete, and all hidden purposes revealed.

### **3. God’s Will Accomplished**

Ephesians 1:10 says His purpose is “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ.” Eternity will display the finished masterpiece of God’s will.

## **VI. Practical Implications**

Understanding the mystery of God's will shapes our Christian walk.

### **1. Humility**

We must admit our knowledge is partial. Arrogance has no place when we see through a glass darkly.

### **2. Faith**

Though we don't see the full picture, we trust God's character. His revealed will is enough for today.

### **3. Hope**

The promise of full knowledge in eternity gives us hope. One day, the confusing events of life will make sense in the light of God's finished plan.

### **4. Obedience**

Mystery is not an excuse for disobedience. God has revealed enough for us to know how to live now.

## **VII. Illustrations from Life and Scripture**

- **Job:** Job never saw the heavenly counsel where Satan accused him. The mystery of God's will was hidden, but Job's faith endured. In eternity, he will see the full purpose.
- **Paul:** Paul faced prison, beatings, and uncertainty, yet said: "We know that all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28). He lived by faith in the mystery.
- **The Church:** For centuries, the church has lived in expectation of Christ's return. The timing remains mysterious, but the promise is sure.

## **VIII. Common Misconceptions Corrected**

1. **Mystery Means Confusion** – Some think "mystery" means we can never know anything about God's will. Wrong. God has revealed much; mystery means what was hidden is now revealed in part.
2. **We Can Unlock All Mysteries Now** – Some claim secret keys, codes, or revelations. But Scripture says full disclosure comes only in eternity.

3. **Mystery Excuses Disobedience** – Some shrug, “God’s will is a mystery, so why try to obey?” But God’s revealed will is clear, and we are accountable for it.

## **IX. Living Between the Now and the Not Yet**

We live in the tension between what God has revealed and what He has withheld. We know enough to trust, but not enough to control. This requires faith. Hebrews 11:8 says Abraham went out, “not knowing whither he went.” He walked by faith in God’s will, though much was mysterious.

So too must we. We walk in obedience to His revealed will, resting in His sovereign will, and waiting for the full unveiling of His mysterious will in eternity.

### **Conclusion: The Mystery Made Known, Yet Awaiting Fulfillment**

The mystery of God’s will is both revealed and hidden. In Christ, we see the heart of God’s plan—redemption, reconciliation, and the uniting of all things in Him. Yet much remains veiled, awaiting the fulness of time.

Ephesians 1:9–10 assures us: God has made known to us the mystery of His will, but He will finish it in eternity when all is gathered in Christ.

For now, we live by faith, obey His revealed will, trust His sovereignty, and hope for the day when mystery gives way to sight.

One day, we will stand in glory, see the tapestry complete, and confess with joy: His will was always good, acceptable, and perfect.

## **6 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – Levels of God’s Will? Debunking the “Good, Acceptable, Perfect” Misuse**

### **Introduction: A Popular but Problematic Teaching**

Romans 12:2 is one of the most-quoted verses on the subject of God’s will:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, **that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**”

Many well-meaning preachers and teachers have popularized the idea that Paul is describing three different “levels” of God’s will:

1. **Good will** – a basic or lower plan of God for half-hearted believers.
2. **Acceptable will** – a better, intermediate plan for moderately committed Christians.
3. **Perfect will** – the highest plan, reserved for the most consecrated saints.

This interpretation has been repeated so often that it sounds convincing. It appeals to human reasoning because we are accustomed to thinking in terms of hierarchies, levels, and stages. But as attractive as it may sound, it is not what Paul meant.

This essay will carefully examine Romans 12:2 in its context, explain the proper meaning of “good, acceptable, and perfect,” show the dangers of the “levels of God’s will” theory, and provide a rightly divided, Bible-believing explanation that magnifies the unity of God’s will rather than dividing it.

## I. The Context of Romans 12:2

Romans 12:2 cannot be interpreted in isolation. It is tied to verse 1, where Paul writes:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, **acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.**”

Several points emerge:

- Paul is addressing believers who are already saved (“brethren”).
- He appeals on the basis of God’s mercies (Romans 1–11).
- The command is total consecration: present your body as a living sacrifice.
- The goal is to be holy and acceptable to God.

Romans 12:2 flows directly from this: transformation of the mind enables believers to discern and prove the will of God. The adjectives “good, acceptable, and perfect” describe the character of God’s will, not three different versions of it.

## II. What the Text Actually Says

Let us examine the grammar and flow of the verse.

### 1. One Will, Three Adjectives

Paul speaks of “**the will of God**” (singular), not three wills. The three adjectives—good, acceptable, perfect—are piled up to describe one will.

If Paul meant three distinct wills, he would have used plural language (“wills of God”). But he did not. The phrase is singular.

## **2. The Word “And”**

The words “good, and acceptable, and perfect” are not meant to be three separate categories but a rhetorical way of emphasizing the fullness of God’s will. Paul often stacks adjectives for emphasis. For example, in Philippians 4:8 he lists things that are “true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report.” He is not describing six different truths but highlighting the richness of virtue.

## **3. The Word “Prove”**

Paul says believers are to “prove” the will of God. The Greek word *dokimazō* means to test, examine, or demonstrate as genuine. The idea is not to figure out which level of God’s will you’re in, but to live in such a way that God’s will is shown to be good, acceptable, and perfect in your life.

## **III. The Meaning of “Good, Acceptable, Perfect”**

What do these three words mean?

### **1. Good**

God’s will is morally good, upright, beneficial. It is always in contrast to the corrupt standards of the world. His will never leads into sin or moral compromise.

### **2. Acceptable**

God’s will is pleasing—well-pleasing to Him, and ultimately pleasing to the renewed mind of the believer. To the carnal man, God’s will may seem unpleasant, but the spiritual mind finds it agreeable and delightful.

### **3. Perfect**

God’s will is complete, whole, flawless. It lacks nothing. It accomplishes all that God intends. It is not merely “better” than other options but the final standard of perfection.

Together, these words describe the total character of God’s will. It is good in nature, acceptable in experience, and perfect in outcome.

## **IV. The Dangers of the “Levels of God’s Will” Theory**

Though popular, the idea of three levels of God’s will is dangerous for several reasons.

### **1. It Divides God’s Character**

God does not have a fragmented will. To suggest He has three different wills of varying quality implies He compromises with lesser options. But James 1:17 says: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” God’s will is always consistent with His perfect nature.

### **2. It Creates a False Hierarchy Among Believers**

The “levels” idea divides Christians into classes: some living in the “good” will, others in the “acceptable,” and only the elite in the “perfect.” This fosters pride in some and discouragement in others. Yet Paul teaches that all believers are called to full consecration (Romans 12:1).

### **3. It Misleads About God’s Guidance**

Believers may fear they are stuck in God’s “Plan B” or “Plan C” because they missed His “perfect will.” This produces anxiety and paralysis. In reality, God’s will is not a fragile path we can ruin but a perfect plan He works out even through our failures (Romans 8:28).

### **4. It Minimizes Responsibility**

Some may excuse disobedience by saying they are only in the “good” will, not the “perfect.” But Scripture never presents disobedience as an acceptable alternative. God calls all believers to holiness and obedience.

## **V. Biblical Proof Against the “Levels” Theory**

The Bible consistently presents God’s will as one, unified, perfect plan.

### **1. Deuteronomy 29:29**

“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

There is one will: God’s secret will (sovereign) and revealed will (commands). There is no mention of fragmented levels.

## **2. Psalm 40:8**

“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

David did not speak of levels of God’s will but delighted in the one will revealed in His law.

## **3. John 4:34**

“Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”

Christ lived fully in the will of the Father, not in stages of “good, acceptable, perfect.”

## **4. Colossians 4:12**

Paul prays for believers to “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” The phrase “all the will of God” shows unity, not fragmentation.

## **5. 1 Thessalonians 4:3**

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.”

God’s will is singular and clear: our holiness.

## **VI. Biblical Examples**

### **1. Noah**

Noah obeyed God’s revealed will and built the ark. He was not in some “lower level” of God’s will but exactly where God intended.

### **2. Abraham**

When Abraham obeyed and left Ur, he did not discover a “partial will” but followed God’s clear direction.

### **3. Paul**

Paul repeatedly described himself as an apostle “by the will of God” (2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1). He did not say “by the perfect will of God,” as if there were alternatives, but simply “the will of God.”

## **VII. Why the “Levels” Idea Persists**

Despite the clear teaching of Scripture, the “levels” interpretation persists because:

- **It appeals to human pride.** People like the idea of being in a higher class of spirituality.
- **It explains failure superficially.** Instead of facing disobedience, people claim they are just in a lower level of God’s will.
- **It simplifies complexity.** People prefer neat categories, even if unbiblical.

But sound doctrine requires us to resist attractive but false teachings.

### VIII. The Rightly Divided View

How should Romans 12:2 be understood?

- The verse describes **one will of God.**
- That will is described as **good** (in essence), **acceptable** (in experience), and **perfect** (in completion).
- Believers discern this will by refusing conformity to the world, being transformed by the renewing of their mind, and living out God’s commands.
- In practice, this means daily obedience, testing, and proving God’s will in real life.

The focus is not on ranking God’s will into levels but on demonstrating its fullness by obedience.

### IX. Practical Application

#### 1. Confidence

Believers can rest assured they are not missing out on a “higher” will. God’s will is one, and obedience leads to its full experience.

#### 2. Motivation

Instead of striving for a mystical “perfect will,” believers can focus on daily obedience to God’s revealed will.

#### 3. Unity

Recognizing one will of God fosters unity in the body of Christ. We are not divided into spiritual classes but called together to holiness.

## 4. Worship

Seeing God's will as singular and perfect leads us to worship Him for His wisdom and goodness, rather than fearing we are on the wrong "level."

## X. Conclusion: One Perfect Will

Romans 12:2 is not a chart of three levels of God's will but a portrait of its character. God's will is good in essence, acceptable in practice, and perfect in completion. To divide it into levels is to distort the text, foster confusion, and rob believers of assurance.

The truth is liberating: God's will is one. We prove it daily by surrendering ourselves to Him, renewing our minds, and walking in obedience. In doing so, we discover that His will is not fragmented but whole, not compromised but complete, not inferior but always good, acceptable, and perfect.

## 7 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Prosperity Gospel and the Will of God

### Introduction: A Counterfeit Message

One of the most dangerous distortions of the will of God in our time is the so-called **prosperity gospel**. It claims that God's will for every believer is continual health, financial wealth, and outward success. According to this teaching, sickness and poverty are never God's will, and if you have enough faith, you will always prosper materially.

This teaching is appealing. Who doesn't want health and wealth? It fills stadiums, sells millions of books, and dominates television broadcasts. But despite its popularity, the prosperity gospel is a counterfeit. It misrepresents God's will, twists Scripture, and sets people up for disappointment and despair.

The truth of God's will, revealed in His Word, is very different. Sometimes His will includes suffering, poverty, persecution, and hardship. Sometimes His people prosper outwardly, but often they endure trials that refine their faith. God's will is not to give us everything we want, but to make us like Christ.

In this essay, we will expose the errors of the prosperity gospel, examine what Scripture really says about God's will for health, wealth, and success, and show why the true will of God is far greater than the shallow promises of prosperity preachers.

## **I. The Prosperity Gospel Defined**

The prosperity gospel—sometimes called the “health and wealth gospel” or “word of faith movement”—teaches that God’s will is always for His people to:

1. **Be healthy** – free from sickness or disease.
2. **Be wealthy** – financially prosperous and successful.
3. **Be victorious** – enjoying constant worldly success and influence.

According to this teaching, if you are sick, poor, or struggling, it must be because you lack faith, have failed to claim your promises, or are outside God’s will.

This view reduces the will of God to material blessing and makes faith a tool to manipulate Him into granting our desires.

## **II. The Prosperity Gospel’s Misuse of Scripture**

Prosperity teachers often quote Bible verses out of context to support their claims. Let us examine a few.

### **1. Jeremiah 29:11**

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

This promise was given to Israel in Babylonian exile, not to guarantee individual health and wealth for every believer. It points to God’s larger plan of redemption.

### **2. 3 John 2**

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.”

This was John’s personal greeting, not a doctrinal promise. To turn a polite wish into a universal guarantee of prosperity twists the text.

### **3. Malachi 3:10**

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse... and prove me now herewith... if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing.”

This promise was given to Israel under the Old Covenant, connected to the blessings and curses of the Mosaic Law. It is not a formula to force God to make us rich today.

#### **4. Mark 11:24**

“What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

Prosperity teachers isolate this verse, ignoring the condition of praying according to God’s will (1 John 5:14). Prayer is not a blank check for fleshly desires.

### **III. The True Will of God About Health**

#### **1. Sickness Can Be Within God’s Will**

Paul wrote to Timothy: “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities” (1 Timothy 5:23). Timothy was sick often, yet Paul did not rebuke him for lack of faith but prescribed a remedy.

Paul himself had a “thorn in the flesh,” which he prayed three times for God to remove. God replied: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul remained weak, but God’s will was glorified in his suffering.

#### **2. God Heals, But Not Always**

Yes, God can and does heal according to His will (James 5:15). But healing is not guaranteed in every situation. Some are healed, others are not, for reasons known to God. To insist that all sickness must be healed is to go beyond Scripture.

### **IV. The True Will of God About Wealth**

#### **1. Poverty Is Not Always a Curse**

Jesus said: “Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20). Poverty may bring hardship, but it is not necessarily outside God’s will.

Paul wrote: “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound... I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:12–13). God’s will for Paul included both poverty and prosperity.

#### **2. Wealth Can Be a Snare**

1 Timothy 6:9–10 warns: “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare... For the love of money is the root of all evil.” If wealth were always God’s will, why would Scripture warn so strongly against desiring it?

### **3. Contentment Is God’s Will**

God’s will is not that all believers be rich but that all be content. “Having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Timothy 6:8).

## **V. The True Will of God About Success**

### **1. God’s Servants Often Suffer**

Far from enjoying worldly success, many of God’s faithful servants endured hardship.

- Jeremiah preached faithfully yet was persecuted, imprisoned, and ignored.
- John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ but was beheaded in prison.
- The apostles were beaten, imprisoned, and martyred.

Were these men outside God’s will? No—they were in the center of it.

### **2. God’s Definition of Success**

Success in God’s eyes is not measured by wealth or popularity but by faithfulness.

Revelation 2:10 says: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

## **VI. Why the Prosperity Gospel Is Dangerous**

### **1. It Misrepresents God**

It portrays God as a cosmic vending machine, dispensing blessings on demand if we insert enough faith. This demeans His sovereignty and holiness.

### **2. It Exploits People**

Prosperity preachers often demand money, promising blessings in return. This preys on the vulnerable and enriches the false teachers.

### **3. It Produces Disillusionment**

When sickness or poverty comes, followers feel betrayed. They think God failed them, when in reality they were taught lies. Many abandon the faith in despair.

#### **4. It Distracts from the True Gospel**

The prosperity gospel shifts the focus from sin, salvation, and eternity to money, health, and temporary pleasures. It replaces the cross with comfort.

#### **VII. The Real Purpose of God's Will**

The prosperity gospel promises health, wealth, and success. The real will of God promises something far greater: holiness, conformity to Christ, and eternal glory.

Romans 8:29 declares: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." God's will is not primarily to make us comfortable but to make us Christlike.

2 Corinthians 4:17 puts it in perspective:

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Affliction, not prosperity, often accomplishes God's deepest work.

#### **VIII. Biblical Balance: God Does Bless, But Not Always**

To reject the prosperity gospel is not to deny that God sometimes blesses His people materially. Abraham, Job, and Solomon were wealthy. But wealth was not the essence of God's will for them, and in Solomon's case it even became a snare.

God may will prosperity for some, poverty for others, health for some, sickness for others. The point is not the outward condition but the inward faithfulness.

#### **IX. Practical Lessons**

1. **Expect Trials** – Suffering is often part of God's will (1 Peter 4:19).
2. **Be Content** – Whether in abundance or need, contentment is God's will (Philippians 4:11).
3. **Seek Holiness, Not Riches** – "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33).
4. **Use Blessings for Service** – If God does prosper you, use it for His glory, not self-indulgence.

5. **Fix Your Eyes on Eternity** – Temporary prosperity is nothing compared to eternal riches in Christ.

## **X. Conclusion: The True Will of God**

The prosperity gospel is a distortion. It claims God's will is always health, wealth, and success. The Bible says God's will is sometimes suffering, sometimes poverty, sometimes loss—but always for our good and His glory.

The true will of God is not to make us rich but to make us righteous. Not to give us endless health but to make us holy. Not to guarantee success in this life but to prepare us for glory in the next.

Jesus said in John 16:33: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." That is the real promise of God's will—not prosperity now, but victory in Christ forever.

## **8 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – Charismatic Confusion: Dreams, Signs, and Voices**

### **Introduction: A Growing Confusion**

In the modern church, one of the most persistent sources of confusion about the will of God is the belief that it is revealed primarily through mystical experiences. Many sincere believers think they can discern God's will by receiving a dream, interpreting a sign, or hearing an inner voice. Charismatic movements especially promote the idea that ongoing "prophetic words" or supernatural impressions are necessary for guidance.

This teaching is appealing because it offers immediate answers and dramatic experiences. Who wouldn't want to receive a direct message from heaven about what job to take, who to marry, or which decision to make? But while such practices may feel spiritual, they often lead to error, manipulation, and disappointment.

The Bible teaches that God's will is not dictated by mystical experiences apart from Scripture. He has already revealed His will clearly in His Word. While God is sovereign and may occasionally guide in unusual ways, His ordinary means of revealing His will is the written Word of God, illuminated by the Spirit, not dreams, signs, or voices.

In this essay, we will define what charismatic confusion is, examine the biblical record of dreams and signs, expose the dangers of relying on mystical experiences, and show how Scripture equips us to know God's will without such confusion.

## **I. The Charismatic Emphasis on Mystical Experiences**

Charismatic and Pentecostal movements often emphasize personal revelation in the form of:

1. **Dreams** – Messages supposedly from God while sleeping.
2. **Signs** – External events interpreted as divine direction.
3. **Voices** – Inner impressions or audible words believed to be God speaking.

These are presented as normal ways for believers to know God's will. People are told to "listen for God's voice," "look for signs," or "wait for a dream." While sincere, this shifts the focus away from the sufficiency of Scripture.

## **II. The Biblical Record of Dreams and Signs**

The Bible does record God using dreams, visions, and signs, especially in the Old Testament. But it is critical to understand their nature.

### **1. Dreams in the Old Testament**

- **Joseph (Genesis 37):** Received prophetic dreams about his family.
- **Pharaoh (Genesis 41):** Dreamed of fat and lean cows, interpreted by Joseph.
- **Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2, 4):** Received dreams interpreted by Daniel.

These dreams had prophetic significance in salvation history, not personal guidance for everyday decisions.

### **2. Dreams in the New Testament**

- **Joseph, husband of Mary (Matthew 1–2):** Directed to take Mary as wife, flee to Egypt, and return.
- **Pilate's wife (Matthew 27:19):** Warned of Jesus' innocence in a dream.

These were exceptional events tied to Christ's incarnation and crucifixion.

### 3. Signs

- **Gideon's fleece (Judges 6):** Gideon asked for a fleece to be wet or dry. This revealed Gideon's weak faith, not a model for discerning God's will.
- **The star of Bethlehem (Matthew 2):** A unique sign pointing to the Messiah's birth.

Signs in Scripture are rare, often miraculous, and tied to major redemptive events.

### 4. Voices

- **Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3).**
- **Samuel as a boy (1 Samuel 3).**
- **Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).**

These were not ordinary but extraordinary revelations at turning points in salvation history.

## III. Why Dreams, Signs, and Voices Are Not Normative Today

### 1. The Completion of Scripture

Hebrews 1:1–2 declares:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”

God spoke through dreams and visions in the past, but now He has given us His full revelation in Christ and in the written Word.

### 2. The Sufficiency of Scripture

2 Timothy 3:16–17:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable... that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

Scripture alone is sufficient to equip us for every good work. We do not need extra revelations.

### 3. The Danger of Subjectivity

Dreams and impressions are subjective, easily influenced by emotions, stress, or even indigestion. Scripture alone is objective and infallible.

## **IV. The Dangers of Relying on Mystical Experiences**

### **1. Deception**

Satan can appear as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). He can counterfeit dreams, signs, and voices to mislead. Many cults began with supposed visions or voices.

### **2. Division**

When every believer claims a personal revelation, the result is chaos. One says God told them one thing, another says something contradictory. This undermines unity.

### **3. Manipulation**

False teachers exploit mystical claims to control followers. By saying “God told me,” they put themselves beyond accountability.

### **4. Disappointment**

When experiences fail, believers feel abandoned by God. They think they lack faith, when in reality they were taught to expect what God never promised.

## **V. Examples of Charismatic Confusion Today**

1. A believer refuses medical treatment, convinced God told him in a dream he is already healed. He dies prematurely, leaving his family disillusioned.
2. A woman marries an unbeliever, claiming God gave her a sign. The marriage collapses.
3. A preacher declares God told him a specific date for revival or Christ’s return. The date passes, and faith is shattered.

These are not harmless mistakes but spiritual tragedies caused by misplaced reliance on mystical guidance.

## **VI. What the Bible Actually Teaches About Knowing God’s Will**

### **1. Through Scripture**

Psalms 119:105: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” God’s Word reveals His will for salvation, holiness, and daily living.

### **2. Through the Spirit**

The Spirit illuminates Scripture, applying it to our hearts. John 16:13 says the Spirit guides into truth, but that truth is grounded in Christ's words.

### **3. Through Wisdom**

James 1:5 promises wisdom to those who ask. God gives discernment through His Word, Spirit, and godly counsel.

### **4. Through Providence**

God opens and closes doors according to His will (Revelation 3:7). Circumstances may confirm His guidance, but always in harmony with Scripture.

## **VII. Why People Crave Mystical Guidance**

1. **Impatience** – Waiting on God's Word feels slow, so people seek quick answers.
2. **Pride** – Receiving special revelations makes people feel superior.
3. **Fear** – People are afraid of making decisions, so they want certainty from signs.
4. **Ignorance** – Many simply have not been taught the sufficiency of Scripture.

## **VIII. How to Respond to Charismatic Confusion**

1. **Gently Correct** – Many caught in this error are sincere but misled. Point them to the Word.
2. **Teach Sufficiency** – Emphasize that Scripture is enough to guide us.
3. **Model Discernment** – Live by biblical principles, showing that God's will is clear in His Word.
4. **Guard Against Extremes** – Don't mock those who are confused, but don't endorse error.

## **IX. A Better Way: Proving God's Will Biblically**

Romans 12:2 shows the true way to discern God's will:

- **Present your body** (surrender).
- **Refuse conformity** (separation).

- **Be transformed by the renewing of your mind** (saturation with Scripture).
- **Prove God's will** (experience it in obedience).

This process requires no dreams, signs, or voices—only faithful submission to God's Word.

## **X. Conclusion: Back to the Book**

Charismatic confusion about dreams, signs, and voices leads many astray. But God has not left us to chase mystical experiences. He has given us His complete Word, sufficient and final.

The will of God is not dictated by subjective impressions but revealed in Scripture. The Spirit applies that Word, providence confirms it, wisdom guides it, and obedience proves it.

When we rest on the Word of God, we need not fear missing His will. We will know that His will is always good, acceptable, and perfect—not because of dreams or voices, but because His Word is sure.

## **9 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – Fatalism and Calvinism: Is God's Will Rigged?**

### **Introduction: Is Everything Already Rigged?**

When people wrestle with the will of God, one of the first questions that arises is: *"If God is sovereign, is my life already rigged?"* In other words, are my choices real, or am I just playing out a script?

This tension has fueled debates for centuries, particularly in the rise of Calvinism. Calvinism, following the teaching of John Calvin and later the "five points" (TULIP), claims that God's will is so absolute that everything—even salvation itself—is predetermined. According to this view, some are unconditionally elected to salvation, others to damnation, and no human decision can alter it.

On the surface, this seems to elevate God's sovereignty. But in reality, it reduces God's will to a form of **fatalism**—a belief that everything is pre-set and human freedom is an illusion. This robs man of responsibility, makes God the author of sin, and contradicts plain Scripture.

The question we must answer is: **Is God's will truly rigged?** Or does the Bible present a different balance: a sovereign God who rules all things, yet a God who genuinely calls men to repent, believe, and obey?

This essay will define fatalism, examine Calvinism's errors, contrast them with Scripture, and present the Bible-believing balance of God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

## **I. Defining Fatalism**

### **1. Fatalism in Pagan Thought**

In Greek philosophy, the "Fates" were imagined as weaving human destiny, with even the gods subject to them. Human freedom was an illusion; all was fixed.

### **2. Fatalism in Secular Thought**

Today, fatalism appears in secular sayings like "Everything happens for a reason" or "It was meant to be." This removes personal responsibility and portrays life as an impersonal script.

### **3. Why Fatalism is Attractive**

Fatalism gives a false sense of comfort: if everything is rigged, I can't be blamed. But it also breeds despair: why strive, pray, or evangelize if nothing changes?

Fatalism is not biblical sovereignty. It strips God of personality and reduces Him to a cosmic machine.

## **II. Calvinism and Fatalism**

### **1. Calvinism Defined**

Calvinism is often summarized by TULIP:

- **Total Depravity** – man cannot respond to God without being regenerated first.
- **Unconditional Election** – God chose some to be saved, others to be damned, without condition.
- **Limited Atonement** – Christ died only for the elect, not for all.
- **Irresistible Grace** – the elect cannot resist salvation; the non-elect cannot receive it.
- **Perseverance of the Saints** – the elect will inevitably persevere.

## **2. Where Fatalism Creeps In**

Calvinism teaches that God's will irresistibly causes every action, including sin. If true, then man's choices are illusions. Salvation, rejection, obedience, disobedience—all predetermined. This is not sovereignty but fatalism dressed in religious language.

## **3. The Distortion of God's Character**

By making God the direct cause of all things, Calvinism makes Him the author of sin. It presents a God who damns men without giving them opportunity and calls that "justice." This caricature contradicts the God of Scripture, who is holy, loving, and just.

## **III. The Biblical Teaching on God's Sovereignty**

### **1. God is Absolutely Sovereign**

The Bible clearly teaches that God is in control.

- Psalm 115:3: "Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."
- Daniel 4:35: "He doeth according to his will... and none can stay his hand."

Nothing happens outside God's sovereign will. He rules the universe with absolute authority.

### **2. God's Sovereignty Does Not Negate Human Responsibility**

The same Bible that declares God's sovereignty also calls man to repent, believe, and obey.

- Acts 17:30: "God... now commandeth all men every where to repent."
- John 3:16: "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish."
- Romans 10:13: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

These are not hollow invitations. They imply genuine human responsibility.

### **3. God's Sovereignty Uses Human Choices**

God's sovereign will includes human freedom. Pharaoh hardened his heart, yet God overruled it for His glory. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, yet God used it to save lives. Man's choices are real, but God's plan prevails.

## **IV. The Error of Fatalistic Calvinism**

### **1. It Contradicts Scripture's "Whosoever"**

The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that salvation is available to all who believe. Calvinism limits this to the elect, contradicting plain verses.

### **2. It Undermines Evangelism**

If the elect are predetermined, why preach? Yet Paul declared: "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Evangelism is not meaningless; it is God's ordained means of saving the lost.

### **3. It Excuses Sin**

If God causes all things, then even sin must be His doing. But James 1:13 is clear: "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

### **4. It Distorts Prayer**

If all is predetermined, prayer changes nothing. But Scripture teaches prayer is powerful and effective (James 5:16).

## **V. The Biblical Balance: Sovereignty and Responsibility**

### **1. Sovereignty Ensures God's Plan**

God's sovereign will guarantees His purposes cannot fail. Christ will return, the kingdom will come, the elect will be saved.

### **2. Responsibility Ensures Man's Accountability**

Man is genuinely called to repent and believe. God does not mock us with empty invitations. Those who reject Him are responsible for their choice.

### **3. Harmony, Not Contradiction**

God's sovereignty and man's responsibility meet at the cross. God sovereignly planned Christ's death (Acts 2:23), yet wicked men were responsible for crucifying Him. Sovereignty and responsibility coexist without contradiction.

## **VI. Practical Implications**

### **1. Confidence, Not Fatalism**

Knowing God is sovereign should give confidence, not despair. He rules, but our choices matter.

## **2. Motivation to Evangelize**

We preach because men can and must respond. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to *whosoever believeth* (Romans 1:16).

## **3. Encouragement in Prayer**

We pray because God hears and acts. Prayer is not futile in a rigged system but powerful in God's plan.

## **4. Responsibility for Holiness**

We cannot blame God for our sin. His will is that we walk in holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

## **VII. Why People Gravitate to Fatalism**

1. **Intellectual Pride** – Fatalism feels “deep” and intellectual.
2. **Fear of Uncertainty** – People prefer the illusion of control, even if it means a rigged system.
3. **Excuse for Sin** – Fatalism removes responsibility.
4. **Tradition** – Many inherit Calvinism without examining Scripture.

## **VIII. Biblical Examples Refuting Fatalism**

- **Cain:** God told him, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?” (Genesis 4:7). Cain was responsible.
- **Israel:** God pleaded with them to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19). Their fate was not rigged; they were accountable.
- **Nineveh:** Jonah preached, and the city repented. If their destruction was unconditionally decreed, why preach? Yet God spared them.
- **Jesus' Lament:** “How often would I have gathered thy children together... and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37). Their willful rejection proves responsibility.

## **IX. Conclusion: God's Will Is Not Rigged**

Fatalism and Calvinism distort God's sovereignty into a rigged system. The Bible presents a far greater truth: God is absolutely sovereign, yet man is genuinely responsible. His will is not a cold script but a living plan that calls for real repentance and faith.

To embrace fatalism is to excuse sin, undermine evangelism, and misrepresent God. To embrace Calvinism's determinism is to make God unjust and man a puppet. The truth is that God rules all, yet calls all, and holds all accountable.

God's will is not rigged. It is righteous, merciful, and just. The call is genuine: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

## **10 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Catholic View: Church Tradition vs. God's Will**

### **Introduction: Two Authorities in Conflict**

For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church has taught that divine truth comes not only from Scripture but also from "Sacred Tradition" and the teaching authority of the Church (the Magisterium). In practice, this means that the will of God is defined not simply by the Word of God, but by traditions, councils, papal decrees, and ecclesiastical rulings.

This creates a clash: **Is God's will revealed in His Word, or in human traditions that often contradict it?**

As Bible believers, we affirm the principle of *Sola Scriptura*—that Scripture alone is the final authority. The Catholic elevation of tradition often overrides God's Word, distorting His will into a man-made system of rituals, sacraments, and hierarchical control.

In this essay, we will define Catholic teaching on tradition, show how it conflicts with God's revealed Word, survey specific examples where tradition contradicts Scripture, and reaffirm that the true will of God is found in His inspired Word, not in human institutions.

### **I. The Catholic Doctrine of Tradition**

#### **1. The Catholic Claim**

The Catholic Catechism teaches that divine revelation comes through two equal sources: **Sacred Scripture** and **Sacred Tradition**. The Magisterium (pope and bishops) has the authority to interpret both.

Thus, God's will is not determined by the Bible alone, but by how the Church interprets it alongside tradition.

## 2. The Problem

When tradition and Scripture conflict, tradition is often elevated above Scripture. The Council of Trent (1545–1563) declared Church tradition equal in authority to Scripture and even anathematized those who denied it.

## II. God's Word on Tradition

The Bible speaks clearly about the danger of elevating tradition above God's Word.

- Mark 7:9: Jesus rebuked the Pharisees: "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."
- Colossians 2:8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

Tradition, when it contradicts Scripture, nullifies God's will.

## III. Examples of Catholic Tradition vs. God's Will

### 1. Salvation by Faith vs. Works

- **Scripture:** Ephesians 2:8–9 teaches salvation by grace through faith, not works.
- **Tradition:** Catholic teaching adds sacraments, penance, indulgences, and purgatory as necessary for salvation.

This distorts God's revealed will that salvation is a free gift through Christ alone.

### 2. The Authority of Christ vs. Papal Authority

- **Scripture:** Christ alone is Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18).
- **Tradition:** The pope is declared "Vicar of Christ" with infallible authority.

This replaces God's will with man's authority.

### 3. Worship of God vs. Veneration of Saints and Mary

- **Scripture:** Worship belongs to God alone (Matthew 4:10).

- **Tradition:** Catholics pray to Mary and the saints, treat Mary as “Queen of Heaven,” and ascribe to her roles Scripture reserves for Christ.

This practice undermines God’s will for direct worship of Him alone.

#### 4. One Mediator vs. Many Intercessors

- **Scripture:** “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).
- **Tradition:** Catholics teach saints and Mary can intercede for us.

This denies the sufficiency of Christ as mediator.

#### 5. The Finished Work of Christ vs. The Mass

- **Scripture:** Hebrews 10:12 says Christ offered one sacrifice for sins forever.
- **Tradition:** The Mass is taught as a re-presentation of Christ’s sacrifice, offered daily.

This denies the once-for-all sufficiency of Christ’s death.

### IV. Why Tradition Appeals to Men

1. **Control** – Church leaders can dictate practices beyond Scripture.
2. **Certainty** – People like visible rituals more than invisible faith.
3. **Pride** – Man’s inventions seem wiser than God’s simplicity.

But God’s will is not revealed in elaborate traditions. It is found in His Word, accessible to all.

### V. The True Will of God

God’s will is revealed in His inspired Word. It is:

- **Sufficient** – 2 Timothy 3:16–17 says Scripture equips us for every good work.
- **Final** – Revelation 22:18–19 warns against adding to God’s Word.
- **Clear** – Psalm 119:105 calls His Word a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

Tradition is unnecessary and often contradictory. God’s Word alone reveals His will.

## **VI. Practical Implications**

### **1. Reject Human Authority Above Scripture**

No council, pope, or tradition can override the Bible.

### **2. Test All Teachings by the Word**

Acts 17:11 commends the Bereans for searching the Scriptures to test Paul's teaching. The same standard applies today.

### **3. Stand Firm in Grace**

Do not let tradition rob you of the simplicity of salvation in Christ alone.

### **4. Proclaim the Truth Boldly**

Expose false tradition and point others to the sufficiency of God's Word.

## **Conclusion: Tradition or Truth?**

The Catholic elevation of tradition over Scripture distorts the will of God. By adding rituals, sacraments, and papal authority, it replaces the clear Word of God with man-made systems.

The will of God is not hidden in tradition. It is revealed plainly in Scripture. We must stand where Jesus stood: rejecting man-made traditions that nullify God's commands.

As Paul declared in Galatians 1:8–9, even if an angel or apostle preaches another gospel, let him be accursed. The Catholic gospel of tradition is such a distortion.

The true will of God is clear: salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone, obedience to His Word, and worship of God alone. To submit to tradition is to miss His will. To stand on Scripture is to walk in it.

## **11 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – Old Testament Foundations**

### **Introduction: The God Who Speaks**

From the beginning, the God of the Bible is not silent. He speaks, commands, warns, promises, and directs His people. Unlike the mute idols of the nations, Israel's God revealed Himself in word and deed. His will was not left to speculation but disclosed in specific instructions, guidance, and judgments.

The Old Testament provides the foundation for understanding the will of God. To Israel, He revealed His will in three primary ways: **through the Law, through the Prophets, and through Providence**. Together, these means showed Israel how to live, worship, and walk in covenant relationship with Him.

This essay will explore each of these avenues, showing how God's will was revealed to Israel, how they responded (often in disobedience), and how these foundations prepare us to understand His will fully revealed in Christ.

## **I. The Will of God Revealed in the Law**

### **1. The Giving of the Law**

At Sinai, God revealed His will for Israel in a comprehensive way. Exodus 20 records the Ten Commandments, spoken directly by God, followed by further statutes in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The Law was not man's attempt to guess God's will but God's direct revelation. It covered every aspect of life: worship, morality, diet, festivals, and even hygiene.

### **2. The Purpose of the Law**

- **To reveal God's holiness** – "Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).
- **To reveal man's sin** – Romans 3:20 says, "By the law is the knowledge of sin."
- **To reveal God's covenant will** – Israel's blessings and curses were tied to obedience or disobedience (Deuteronomy 28).

### **3. The Content of the Law**

- **Moral Law** (e.g., Ten Commandments): Expressing God's eternal moral will.
- **Ceremonial Law** (sacrifices, festivals): Pointing to Christ as the fulfillment.
- **Civil Law** (laws for Israel as a nation): Governing their unique theocracy.

All these expressed God's will for Israel in their covenant relationship.

### **4. Israel's Response**

Israel often failed to keep God's law. The golden calf, wilderness rebellions, and cycles in Judges show their resistance to His will. Yet even in failure, the Law revealed His standards and pointed them to the need for grace.

## **II. The Will of God Revealed Through the Prophets**

### **1. The Role of the Prophet**

Prophets were God's spokesmen, delivering His will to the people. Amos 3:7 says: "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."

They called Israel back to God's revealed will in the Law and declared His purposes for the future.

### **2. Examples of Prophetic Revelation**

- **Moses** – More than a lawgiver, he was a prophet who spoke with God face to face.
- **Samuel** – Transitioned Israel from judges to kings, anointing Saul and David.
- **Isaiah** – Declared God's holiness, warned of judgment, and prophesied of Christ.
- **Jeremiah** – Announced the coming exile and the promise of a new covenant.
- **Ezekiel & Daniel** – Saw visions of God's sovereignty over nations.

### **3. Prophets as Corrective Voices**

The prophets often rebuked Israel for rejecting God's revealed will. Isaiah 1:2–4 pictures God as a Father grieved by rebellious children. Jeremiah 7 denounces empty ritual apart from obedience.

### **4. Prophets as Predictive Voices**

The prophets also revealed God's will for the future, pointing to Christ's coming, Israel's restoration, and the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom.

## **III. The Will of God Revealed Through Providence**

### **1. Providence Defined**

Providence is God's sovereign direction of events to accomplish His will. Unlike direct commands or prophetic words, providence works through circumstances, history, and daily life.

### **2. Examples of Providence in the Old Testament**

- **Joseph:** Betrayed by brothers, sold into slavery, imprisoned—yet God used it all to save many lives (Genesis 50:20).
- **Ruth:** God’s providence guided Ruth from Moab to Bethlehem, where she became part of David’s line, leading to Christ.
- **Esther:** Through providence, Esther was made queen “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14) to save her people.

### **3. Providence in Israel’s History**

God’s providence directed Israel’s rise and fall, from the conquest of Canaan to the exile and return. Though nations raged, God’s will prevailed, fulfilling His promises.

## **IV. Lessons from Israel’s Relationship with God’s Will**

### **1. The Law Shows God’s Holiness and Man’s Sin**

The Law revealed God’s perfect will but also man’s inability to keep it, pointing to the need for a Savior.

### **2. The Prophets Show God’s Patience and Justice**

God repeatedly sent prophets to call His people back, revealing His patience but also His justice in judgment when they refused.

### **3. Providence Shows God’s Sovereignty**

Even when Israel sinned, God’s providence moved history toward His purposes. Exile did not cancel His plan; it prepared the way for Christ.

## **V. How the Old Testament Foundations Point to Christ**

### **1. Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law**

Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law... I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matthew 5:17). He embodied God’s will perfectly.

### **2. Christ as the Final Prophet**

Hebrews 1:1–2 declares that God “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” Christ is the final and fullest revelation of God’s will.

### **3. Christ as the Lord of Providence**

In Him, all things hold together (Colossians 1:17). His providence directs history to its climax.

## **VI. Application for Believers Today**

### **1. Value the Law as Revelation**

Though not under the Law, we learn God's holiness and standards through it.

### **2. Heed the Prophetic Word**

The prophets reveal not only history but also Christ and God's future plan.

### **3. Trust God's Providence**

Like Joseph or Esther, we can trust that God is working His will in our lives, even when unseen.

## **VII. Common Misconceptions Corrected**

- **Misconception 1:** The Old Testament God was different from the New.
  - Truth: His will has always been holy, just, and merciful.
- **Misconception 2:** The Law was a path to salvation.
  - Truth: The Law revealed sin and pointed to Christ (Galatians 3:24).
- **Misconception 3:** Providence means luck or chance.
  - Truth: Providence is God's sovereign will at work in history.

## **Conclusion: Foundations That Still Stand**

The Old Testament reveals God's will through the Law, Prophets, and Providence. These foundations show us His holiness, justice, and sovereignty. They also show man's sin, rebellion, and need for grace.

Ultimately, the Old Testament prepares the way for Christ, the perfect revelation of God's will. To understand His will today, we must begin with these foundations, recognizing that the same God who revealed Himself to Israel still reveals Himself to us through His Word and in His Son.

The believer who grasps these Old Testament foundations will not be tossed about by speculation but will stand firmly on the unchanging truth: God has spoken, His will is clear, and His plan is unfolding perfectly.

## **12 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – Christ in Gethsemane: “Not My Will, But Thine”**

### **Introduction: The Garden Before the Cross**

There are few passages in the Bible where the mystery of Christ’s humanity and divinity collide as powerfully as in Gethsemane. On the night before the crucifixion, Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the garden, where He prayed in agony:

“Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”

— Luke 22:42

Here we see the supreme example of submission to God’s will. The eternal Son, fully God yet fully man, faced the dreadful cup of wrath for the sins of the world. His human nature recoiled at the horror of separation from the Father, yet He surrendered perfectly: “Not my will, but thine.”

In this essay, we will examine the context of Gethsemane, the meaning of Christ’s prayer, the theological implications, the example it sets for believers, and the hope it gives us in our own struggles with God’s will.

### **I. The Context of Gethsemane**

#### **1. The Last Supper**

After sharing the Passover meal with His disciples, instituting the Lord’s Supper, and predicting Peter’s denial, Jesus led them to the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30).

#### **2. The Garden of Gethsemane**

Gethsemane means “oil press.” How fitting that in this place, Christ’s soul was pressed with the weight of the world’s sin. He took Peter, James, and John further with Him, then withdrew alone to pray (Matthew 26:36–39).

#### **3. The Nearness of Betrayal**

Judas was on his way with soldiers. Within hours, Christ would be arrested, tried, scourged, and crucified. The cross loomed over Gethsemane.

## **II. The Cup in Gethsemane**

### **1. The Cup Defined**

When Jesus prayed, “Remove this cup from me,” He referred to more than physical death. In Scripture, the “cup” often symbolizes God’s wrath against sin.

- Psalm 75:8: “For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup... the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.”
- Isaiah 51:17: “Thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling.”
- Revelation 14:10: “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.”

The cup before Christ was the full fury of God’s wrath against the sins of humanity, which He would bear as substitute.

### **2. The Weight of the Cup**

Christ, sinless and holy, would be made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). He would experience not only physical agony but the spiritual anguish of bearing sin, shame, and separation. No wonder His soul was “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matthew 26:38).

## **III. The Prayer of Submission**

### **1. Honest Expression of Humanity**

Christ’s words, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” reveal His true humanity. He recoiled at the thought of suffering, as any man would. Yet unlike us, He did not shrink into disobedience.

### **2. Perfect Submission**

The heart of His prayer was surrender: “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” His human will yielded to the Father’s divine plan. This was not conflict between sin and obedience but the submission of human desire to divine purpose.

### **3. An Angel’s Strength**

Luke 22:43 records that an angel appeared to strengthen Him. Even the Son in His humanity received divine aid to endure the path of obedience.

#### **IV. Theological Significance of Gethsemane**

##### **1. The Reality of Christ's Humanity**

Christ's agony proves He was fully human, capable of experiencing dread, sorrow, and anguish. Hebrews 4:15 affirms He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

##### **2. The Perfection of His Obedience**

Romans 5:19 contrasts Adam's disobedience with Christ's obedience: "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Gethsemane shows His obedience tested to the utmost—and proven perfect.

##### **3. The Necessity of the Cross**

If salvation could come any other way, the cup would have passed. Gethsemane proves there was no other path. Salvation is only through Christ's atoning death.

##### **4. The Triumph of God's Will**

Gethsemane shows that God's will is ultimate, even when it requires suffering. The Son's submission secures our redemption and demonstrates the supremacy of divine will over human desire.

#### **V. The Contrast with Adam in Eden**

In Eden, Adam said, in effect, "Not Thy will, but mine be done," plunging humanity into sin. In Gethsemane, the last Adam said, "Not my will, but thine be done," securing salvation.

The contrast could not be sharper: disobedience in a garden brought death, obedience in a garden brought life.

#### **VI. The Disciples in Gethsemane**

While Christ agonized in prayer, His disciples slept. Three times He found them unable to watch and pray. Their weakness highlights the contrast with His obedience.

Jesus warned: “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41). This lesson still applies: our flesh resists God’s will, but prayer strengthens us to submit.

## **VII. The Will of God and Suffering**

Gethsemane teaches that God’s will sometimes includes suffering. Jesus, the sinless Son, faced agony by the Father’s will.

1 Peter 4:19 exhorts: “Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing.”

Suffering is not outside God’s will but often central to it.

## **VIII. The Example for Believers**

### **1. Honest Prayer**

Like Christ, we can pour out our fears, desires, and struggles to the Father. Prayer is not pretending to feel nothing but bringing our true hearts before Him.

### **2. Surrender**

The pattern of submission—“Not my will, but thine”—is the model for every believer. We are called to die to self and live for God’s purposes.

### **3. Endurance Through Grace**

Just as Christ was strengthened by an angel, we are strengthened by the Spirit to endure trials and obey God’s will.

## **IX. Gethsemane and Our Salvation**

Without Gethsemane, there is no Calvary. Christ’s submission in the garden set the course for the cross. His willingness secured our redemption.

Hebrews 10:7 records Christ’s words: “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” That will was our salvation through His sacrifice.

## **X. Applications for Today**

1. **Trust God's Will in Trials** – Even when God's will is hard, we can trust His plan as Christ did.
2. **Pray in Surrender** – Every prayer should echo, “Thy will be done” (Matthew 6:10).
3. **Stand Firm in Temptation** – Like the disciples, we are weak; like Christ, we must pray.
4. **Live Sacrificially** – The Christian life is not about our comfort but about God's glory.

## **XI. Common Misunderstandings**

- **Misconception 1:** Christ doubted the Father.
  - Truth: He never doubted; He submitted His human will.
- **Misconception 2:** The cup was only physical death.
  - Truth: It was the wrath of God against sin.
- **Misconception 3:** Gethsemane shows weakness.
  - Truth: It shows the perfection of obedience under the heaviest weight.

## **XII. The Glory Beyond Gethsemane**

Hebrews 12:2 declares: “Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Gethsemane led to Calvary, and Calvary to resurrection and exaltation. Submission to God's will led to ultimate glory.

## **Conclusion: The Supreme Example**

In Gethsemane, Christ gave the supreme example of submission to God's will. His prayer—“Not my will, but thine, be done”—summarizes the essence of obedience. It was the turning point where human dread bowed to divine decree, ensuring our redemption.

Every believer faces their own “Gethsemane moments,” when God's will crosses ours. In those moments, we look to Christ. He submitted, and so must we. His submission saved us; our submission glorifies Him.

The will of God may lead through gardens of agony, but it always leads to glory.

## **13 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – Paul’s Life in the Will of God**

### **Introduction: A Life Fully Surrendered**

Few figures in Scripture illustrate the pursuit and practice of God’s will more vividly than the Apostle Paul. Once a zealous persecutor of the church, Paul was transformed by the risen Christ and devoted the rest of his life to one consuming passion: to know and do the will of God.

From his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, through his missionary journeys, to his final imprisonment in Rome, Paul’s life was a living testimony of obedience to God’s revealed will. He did not view God’s will as a mystery to be guessed at but as a call to be obeyed, even when it meant hardship, rejection, and suffering.

In this essay, we will examine Paul’s life in the will of God under three headings: **missions, ministry, and suffering**. We will see how his understanding of God’s will shaped his decisions, guided his work, and sustained him through trials. His example offers timeless lessons for every believer seeking to walk in God’s will today.

### **I. Paul’s Conversion and Call**

#### **1. The Damascus Road**

Paul’s first encounter with the will of God came when he met Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). He fell to the ground at the blinding light and heard the voice of Jesus:

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”

This moment shattered Paul’s assumptions and redirected his life. He asked the crucial question:

“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6)

From then on, Paul’s life was defined by that question.

#### **2. God’s Answer**

Through Ananias, God revealed His will for Paul:

- He was chosen to bear Christ's name before Gentiles, kings, and Israel (Acts 9:15).
- He would suffer greatly for Christ's sake (Acts 9:16).

Paul's entire ministry flowed from this initial revelation of God's will.

## **II. Paul's Understanding of God's Will**

### **1. God's Will as Obedience to Revelation**

Paul saw God's will not as hidden but revealed. His Damascus encounter made it clear: God's will is to obey the Lord's command.

### **2. God's Will as Christ-Centered**

Paul emphasized that God's will is summed up in Christ. Ephesians 1:9–10 describes “the mystery of his will” as the uniting of all things in Christ.

### **3. God's Will as Spirit-Led**

Paul was sensitive to the Spirit's guidance. In Acts 16:6–7, the Spirit forbade him from entering certain regions, redirecting him to Macedonia. Paul did not act on whim but on Spirit-led discernment.

### **4. God's Will as Mission**

Paul saw God's will as inseparable from mission. Romans 1:1 describes him as “separated unto the gospel of God.” His life was consumed with making Christ known.

## **III. Paul's Life in Missions**

### **1. Obedience to the Call**

Paul undertook three major missionary journeys, each driven by his conviction that God's will was for the gospel to reach the Gentiles. He was tireless in preaching, teaching, planting churches, and strengthening believers.

### **2. Strategic Decisions**

Paul's missionary strategy reflected his understanding of God's will:

- He targeted major cities (Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica) to spread the gospel widely.

- He returned to strengthen existing churches, showing God’s will is not just evangelism but discipleship.
- He submitted plans to God’s guidance. Acts 16 shows his redirection to Europe by the “Macedonian call.”

### **3. Flexibility Under Providence**

Paul made plans, but he held them loosely under God’s will. Romans 1:10 records his prayer to visit Rome, but God delayed until he came as a prisoner. He acknowledged often, “if the Lord will” (1 Corinthians 4:19; 16:7).

## **IV. Paul’s Life in Ministry**

### **1. Teaching the Will of God**

Paul consistently instructed believers about God’s will:

- **Sanctification:** “This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).
- **Thanksgiving:** “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- **Service:** He urged believers to serve “doing the will of God from the heart” (Ephesians 6:6).

For Paul, God’s will was not vague but specific in daily holiness, gratitude, and obedience.

### **2. Pastoral Care**

Paul’s ministry was marked by deep love and concern for the churches. He prayed continually for them to “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Colossians 4:12).

### **3. Bold Preaching**

Paul never shrank from declaring “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). He did not tailor the message to please men but sought only to please God.

## **V. Paul’s Life in Suffering**

### **1. Suffering as God’s Will**

Paul understood that suffering was part of his divine calling. Acts 9:16 foretold it, and he embraced it.

- He endured imprisonments, beatings, shipwrecks, hunger, and danger (2 Corinthians 11:23–28).
- He bore a “thorn in the flesh,” yet accepted it as God’s will, hearing Christ’s words: “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

## **2. Suffering as a Witness**

Paul’s imprisonments advanced the gospel. In Philippians 1:12–14, he rejoiced that his chains encouraged others to preach boldly. His suffering was not an obstacle but a platform for God’s will.

## **3. Suffering as Conformity to Christ**

Paul saw suffering as participation in Christ’s sufferings (Philippians 3:10). God’s will was not ease but conformity to Christ, even in pain.

# **VI. Paul’s Final Submissions to God’s Will**

## **1. The Journey to Rome**

Though warned of imprisonment, Paul pressed on to Jerusalem, saying:

“I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

He submitted his life fully to God’s will.

## **2. Imprisonment in Rome**

In Rome, Paul continued preaching and writing letters that still shape the church today. His ministry in chains exemplified submission to God’s providence.

## **3. Anticipating Death**

In 2 Timothy 4:6–8, Paul looked forward to his departure with confidence, knowing he had finished his course in God’s will. His life ended not in defeat but in victory.

# **VII. Lessons from Paul’s Life in the Will of God**

## **1. Ask the Right Question**

Paul's first words as a believer—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—should be ours daily. God's will begins with surrender.

## **2. Trust the Spirit's Guidance**

Paul teaches us to hold plans loosely and let the Spirit direct. God may close doors to open greater ones.

## **3. Embrace Mission as God's Will**

Every believer is called to participate in the mission of the gospel, whether by going, sending, or supporting.

## **4. Accept Suffering**

God's will often includes hardship. Like Paul, we must see suffering not as failure but as part of His purpose.

## **5. Live for Christ Alone**

Paul's motto was: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). God's will is not about comfort but about Christ.

## **VIII. Misconceptions Corrected**

- **Misconception 1:** God's will is always pleasant.
  - Truth: For Paul, it included suffering and sacrifice.
- **Misconception 2:** God's will is a rigid blueprint.
  - Truth: Paul made plans but trusted God to redirect.
- **Misconception 3:** Only "special apostles" live in God's will.
  - Truth: Paul urged all believers to live in God's will daily.

## **Conclusion: A Pattern for Believers**

Paul's life is a shining example of walking in the will of God. From Damascus to Rome, his path was marked by surrender, mission, ministry, and suffering. He sought not his own will but God's, and in doing so, he turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

His story reminds us that God’s will is not always easy, but it is always right. It may lead through hardship, but it also leads to eternal glory. Like Paul, we are called to live each day asking: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

In the end, Paul could testify with confidence: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” That is the legacy of a life lived in the will of God.

## **14 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – Jonah: Running from the Will of God**

### **Introduction: A Prophet on the Run**

The story of Jonah is one of the most well-known narratives in the Bible. It is often remembered for the great fish that swallowed the prophet, but the heart of the book is not about a fish—it is about the will of God. Jonah was a prophet called to preach to Nineveh, yet he tried to run in the opposite direction. His rebellion, chastisement, and eventual restoration provide profound lessons about God’s will.

Every believer has a “Jonah moment” when God’s will crosses our own desires. Do we submit or do we run? Jonah shows us both the folly of rebellion and the mercy of God in bringing His servants back into line with His will.

In this essay, we will walk through Jonah’s story, draw out lessons about rebellion, chastisement, and restoration, and apply them to our lives today.

### **I. Jonah’s Commission**

#### **1. The Call of God**

Jonah 1:1–2 records:

“Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”

God’s will was clear: Jonah was to go to Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, and preach against its sin.

#### **2. The Challenge of the Call**

Nineveh was infamous for cruelty and wickedness. To a patriotic Israelite like Jonah, Nineveh represented an enemy deserving judgment, not mercy. God's will conflicted with Jonah's prejudice and patriotism.

## **II. Jonah's Rebellion**

### **1. Fleeing from God's Will**

Jonah 1:3 says:

"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD."

Instead of going northeast to Nineveh, Jonah boarded a ship westward to Tarshish. He was not confused about God's will—he was in open rebellion against it.

### **2. The Folly of Running**

Jonah's attempt to escape illustrates the futility of resisting God's will. Psalm 139:7 asks: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" The answer is nowhere. Jonah knew this but still ran, showing the irrational nature of sin.

### **3. The Descent of Rebellion**

Jonah's rebellion is marked by downward steps: he went *down* to Joppa, *down* into the ship, *down* into the sides of the ship to sleep, and ultimately *down* into the sea. Running from God always leads downward.

## **III. God's Chastisement**

### **1. The Storm**

God sent a great storm that threatened to sink the ship (Jonah 1:4). The sailors cried out to their gods, but Jonah slept. His rebellion endangered not only himself but also others around him.

### **2. The Exposure**

When the sailors cast lots, Jonah was exposed as the cause. Sin cannot be hidden forever; God brings it to light. Jonah confessed: "I fear the LORD... that hath made the sea and the dry land" (1:9).

### **3. The Sea**

Jonah told them to cast him into the sea. When they did, the storm ceased. Jonah's rebellion had brought judgment, but God's providence was still at work.

#### **4. The Great Fish**

God prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah (1:17). What seemed like punishment was actually preservation. God chastised Jonah, not to destroy him but to restore him.

### **IV. Jonah's Repentance**

#### **1. Prayer from the Deep**

In Jonah 2, from the belly of the fish, Jonah prayed. He confessed God's discipline: "Thou hadst cast me into the deep" (2:3). He acknowledged God's salvation: "Salvation is of the LORD" (2:9).

#### **2. Deliverance**

God commanded the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land (2:10). Chastisement accomplished its purpose: Jonah was restored to obedience.

### **V. Jonah's Restoration**

#### **1. The Renewed Call**

Jonah 3:1–2 says:

"And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh."

God did not discard Jonah. He gave him a second chance. God's will had not changed, and His mercy extended even to His reluctant prophet.

#### **2. The Preaching at Nineveh**

Jonah obeyed and preached: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:4). His message was simple but powerful.

#### **3. The Repentance of Nineveh**

From the king to the commoner, Nineveh repented. They fasted, prayed, and turned from evil. God spared them, showing that His will is mercy as well as judgment.

## **VI. Jonah's Resentment**

### **1. Anger at God's Mercy**

Jonah 4:1–2 reveals Jonah's heart:

“It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry... for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.”

Jonah resented God's mercy to Nineveh, preferring judgment. Even after obedience, his heart was misaligned with God's will.

### **2. The Object Lesson of the Gourd**

God prepared a gourd to give Jonah shade, then a worm to destroy it. Jonah mourned the plant more than the people. God rebuked him: should He not spare Nineveh with its thousands of souls?

This lesson showed that God's will is rooted in compassion, not Jonah's narrow nationalism.

## **VII. Lessons on Rebellion**

1. **God's Will Can Be Clear Yet Resisted** – Jonah knew God's will but rebelled. We, too, can resist when God's will crosses our desires.
2. **Rebellion Affects Others** – Jonah's disobedience endangered the sailors. Our sin impacts those around us.
3. **Running Leads Downward** – Every step away from God is a step down spiritually.
4. **Sin Will Be Exposed** – Jonah could not hide; neither can we.

## **VIII. Lessons on Chastisement**

1. **God Pursues His Children** – He sent the storm and fish to bring Jonah back.
2. **Chastisement is Merciful** – God disciplines not to destroy but to restore (Hebrews 12:6).
3. **God Prepares Means of Discipline** – Just as He prepared the fish, He tailors discipline for each of us.

4. **Chastisement Leads to Repentance** – Jonah prayed in the fish, showing chastisement turned his heart back to God.

## **IX. Lessons on Restoration**

1. **God Gives Second Chances** – Jonah received the call a second time.
2. **Obedience is Possible After Failure** – Jonah obeyed after rebellion, proving restoration is real.
3. **God's Will is Unchanging** – His command to Jonah remained the same; His purposes do not shift.
4. **God Uses Imperfect Servants** – Even Jonah's reluctant obedience led to revival.

## **X. The Will of God and Mercy**

Jonah's story ultimately reveals God's merciful will: He desires repentance, not destruction.

- For Nineveh – God spared them when they repented.
- For Jonah – God restored him after rebellion.

God's will is not rigid fatalism but merciful patience, calling sinners and saints alike to turn and live.

## **XI. Applications for Believers**

### **1. Submit Early**

It is better to obey at first than to learn through storms and chastisement.

### **2. Trust God's Mercy**

When we fail, God does not cast us away. His will includes restoration for the repentant.

### **3. Align Our Hearts**

It is not enough to obey outwardly; our hearts must align with God's compassion.

### **4. Share God's Will**

Like Jonah, we are called to proclaim God's message, even to those we dislike or fear.

## **XII. Jonah as a Picture of Christ**

Jesus compared Himself to Jonah (Matthew 12:40). Jonah spent three days in the fish; Christ spent three days in the tomb. But where Jonah ran from God's will, Christ submitted perfectly. Jonah brought a message of judgment reluctantly; Christ brought the gospel willingly.

This contrast magnifies Christ as the true prophet who fully accomplished God's will.

## **XIII. Misconceptions Corrected**

- **Misconception 1:** The story is about a fish.
  - Truth: It is about God's will and mercy.
- **Misconception 2:** God's chastisement is cruelty.
  - Truth: It is loving discipline to restore.
- **Misconception 3:** God cannot use failures.
  - Truth: He used Jonah after rebellion to spark a great revival.

## **Conclusion: From Rebellion to Restoration**

Jonah's story is the story of God's will pursued, resisted, enforced, and fulfilled. It shows us the folly of rebellion, the necessity of chastisement, and the wonder of restoration.

Jonah tried to flee from God's will but found it unavoidable. God pursued him through storm and fish, restored him to obedience, and revealed His compassion for the nations.

The lessons are clear:

- God's will cannot be outrun.
- Rebellion brings chastisement.
- Chastisement leads to repentance.
- Repentance brings restoration.

Above all, Jonah's story points us to Christ, who unlike Jonah, never ran from God's will but embraced it fully for our salvation. His obedience stands in contrast to Jonah's rebellion, securing the mercy Jonah reluctantly proclaimed.

Every believer must learn the lesson of Gethsemane—"Not my will, but thine be done"—lest we learn the lesson of Jonah, that rebellion leads to storms. Better to submit willingly than to be broken unwillingly. Yet even when we run, the God of mercy pursues, chastises, and restores.

That is the will of God revealed in Jonah's story: holy, unchanging, but overflowing with mercy.

## **15 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – Joseph: God's Will Through Evil Turned to Good**

### **Introduction: The Mystery of Providence**

The story of Joseph in Genesis is one of the clearest demonstrations of how God's will works through human choices, even sinful ones, to accomplish His good purposes. Betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused, and imprisoned, Joseph endured years of hardship that seemed to contradict any notion of God's favor. Yet in the end, he could declare with confidence to his brothers:

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

— Genesis 50:20

This statement summarizes the interplay of human evil and divine providence. Joseph's brothers acted wickedly, yet God overruled their actions to bring about His will. This case study reveals that God's will is not thwarted by evil but works through it to accomplish good.

In this essay, we will walk through Joseph's life, highlight the key events that reveal God's providence, and draw lessons about the will of God as it turns evil to good.

## **I. Joseph's Early Life and Dreams**

### **1. Favored Son**

Joseph was the beloved son of Jacob, born to Rachel in his old age. Jacob's favoritism was symbolized by the coat of many colors (Genesis 37:3). This favoritism bred jealousy among his brothers.

## **2. Dreams of Destiny**

Joseph dreamed of sheaves and stars bowing to him, symbolizing his future exaltation (Genesis 37:5–11). Though given by God, these dreams intensified his brothers' hatred.

## **3. Lessons in God's Will**

God sometimes reveals glimpses of His will early, but its fulfillment may be far off and involve suffering. Joseph's dreams were true, but he had to endure years of trials before they were realized.

## **II. Betrayal and Slavery**

### **1. The Brothers' Plot**

When Joseph visited his brothers in the field, they conspired to kill him. Reuben persuaded them to spare his life, and instead they sold him to Ishmaelite traders for twenty pieces of silver (Genesis 37:28).

### **2. The Pain of Rejection**

Joseph's betrayal by his own family was a crushing blow. Yet even this evil act became part of God's providential plan.

### **3. God's Will in Betrayal**

Human hatred sought to destroy Joseph, but God was positioning him for a future role in Egypt.

## **III. Potiphar's House**

### **1. A Slave in Egypt**

Joseph was sold to Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard (Genesis 39:1). Far from home, stripped of privilege, Joseph could have despaired.

### **2. The Lord's Presence**

Despite his circumstances, “the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man” (Genesis 39:2). God’s will does not depend on location or circumstance; His presence makes all the difference.

### **3. Falsely Accused**

Potiphar’s wife attempted to seduce Joseph. When he refused, she falsely accused him, and he was cast into prison (Genesis 39:20).

### **4. God’s Will in Injustice**

Joseph’s integrity cost him dearly, yet this injustice was part of God’s providence. The prison would become the path to the palace.

## **IV. Prison and Forgotten Promises**

### **1. Faithfulness in Prison**

Even in prison, Joseph found favor and was entrusted with responsibility (Genesis 39:22). His faithfulness in small things prepared him for greater tasks.

### **2. The Butler and Baker**

Joseph interpreted their dreams accurately, showing God’s Spirit was with him. The butler was restored, the baker executed—exactly as Joseph said (Genesis 40).

### **3. Forgotten by Man, Remembered by God**

The butler forgot Joseph for two years. Yet in God’s timing, this delay positioned Joseph for Pharaoh’s dreams. God’s will often involves waiting.

## **V. Pharaoh’s Dreams and Joseph’s Rise**

### **1. Pharaoh’s Troubled Dreams**

Pharaoh dreamed of seven fat cows devoured by seven lean cows, and seven full ears of corn devoured by seven thin ones. None could interpret (Genesis 41).

### **2. Joseph’s Interpretation**

Brought from prison, Joseph declared: “It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace” (41:16). He explained the dreams foretold seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine.

### **3. Promotion to Power**

Impressed, Pharaoh made Joseph second in command, giving him authority to prepare Egypt for the famine. God's will exalted Joseph from prison to palace in one day.

## **VI. The Famine and Family Reunion**

### **1. The Famine Arrives**

The famine struck, affecting all lands. Joseph's brothers came to Egypt seeking grain (Genesis 42). They bowed before him, fulfilling his dreams.

### **2. Tests of the Brothers**

Joseph tested their repentance through a series of encounters, ultimately revealing himself with tears (Genesis 45).

### **3. Preservation of Life**

Joseph recognized God's purpose: "God did send me before you to preserve life" (45:5). The famine that threatened destruction became the means of salvation for many.

## **VII. God's Will Declared**

Joseph's words in Genesis 50:20 encapsulate the doctrine of providence:

- **Human Intention:** "Ye thought evil against me." His brothers acted wickedly and bore responsibility.
- **Divine Intention:** "God meant it unto good." God's sovereign will worked through their evil without being the author of it.
- **Divine Purpose:** "To save much people alive." God's will was redemptive, not destructive.

## **VIII. Lessons from Joseph on God's Will**

### **1. God's Will Can Involve Suffering**

Joseph endured betrayal, slavery, false accusation, and prison. God's will did not spare him hardship but worked through it.

## **2. God's Will Works Through Human Evil**

God did not cause the brothers' hatred, but He overruled it. Human sin cannot thwart divine providence.

## **3. God's Will Requires Patience**

Joseph waited years between promise and fulfillment. God's will unfolds in His timing, not ours.

## **4. God's Will Leads to Good**

Romans 8:28 echoes Joseph's story: "All things work together for good to them that love God." The end was life, not death.

## **IX. Joseph as a Type of Christ**

### **1. Beloved Son**

Like Joseph, Christ was the beloved Son sent to His brethren.

### **2. Betrayed and Sold**

Joseph was sold for silver; Christ was betrayed for thirty pieces.

### **3. Innocent Sufferer**

Joseph was falsely accused; Christ was condemned unjustly.

### **4. Exalted to Save**

Joseph was exalted to Pharaoh's right hand to save nations; Christ was exalted to God's right hand to save the world.

### **5. Forgiveness**

Joseph forgave his brothers; Christ forgives sinners who crucified Him.

Joseph's story foreshadows the greater story of Christ, who submitted perfectly to God's will.

## **X. Applications for Believers**

1. **Trust God in Trials** – Even when life seems unfair, God is at work.

2. **Do Not Fear Human Evil** – What others mean for harm, God can turn to good.
3. **Be Faithful in Small Things** – Joseph’s integrity in Potiphar’s house and prison prepared him for leadership.
4. **Wait on God’s Timing** – His delays are not denials.
5. **Forgive Others** – Like Joseph, we must forgive those who wrong us, trusting God’s larger plan.

## **XI. Misconceptions Corrected**

- **Misconception 1:** God caused Joseph’s brothers to sin.
  - Truth: They acted freely and bore guilt; God overruled their evil.
- **Misconception 2:** God’s will avoids pain.
  - Truth: Joseph’s life shows God’s will may include suffering.
- **Misconception 3:** God’s delays mean abandonment.
  - Truth: God’s timing is perfect, even when slow to us.

## **Conclusion: Evil Overruled by Good**

The life of Joseph is a masterpiece of providence. From the pit to the palace, from betrayal to blessing, God’s will turned evil into good. His story assures us that no matter what men intend, God’s purposes stand.

When life feels like betrayal or prison, Joseph reminds us to trust that God’s hand is at work. His will may lead through valleys, but it always leads to glory.

Joseph’s words remain a guiding principle for all believers:

“Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good.”

That is the will of God—not rigged, not thwarted, but sovereign, wise, and always working for the good of His people.

## **Introduction: The Question Every Believer Asks**

One of the most common questions Christians ask is: *“How can I know the will of God for my life?”* We want to know His direction for our relationships, careers, ministries, and decisions. We long for assurance that we are walking in His plan.

But for many, the will of God seems like a hidden mystery, something we must anxiously search for as though it were a needle in a haystack. Some fear missing God’s “perfect will,” as if one wrong choice will derail their entire lives. Others drift, waiting for a mystical sign or dream instead of actively obeying what God has already revealed.

The Bible, however, presents a clear and practical picture. God is not playing hide-and-seek with His will. He has revealed His will in His Word, given us His Spirit, invites us to prayer, and provides counsel within the body of Christ. The question is not whether God’s will can be known, but whether we will seek it in the ways He has ordained.

This essay will explore four primary avenues of discerning God’s will: **Scripture, the Spirit, prayer, and counsel**. Together, these form a reliable framework for knowing His will in daily life.

## **I. The Foundation: Scripture**

### **1. The Sufficiency of God’s Word**

The Bible is the primary and sufficient source for knowing God’s will.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 declares:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

This means the Bible equips us for every good work. If we want to know God’s will, we must start with His Word.

### **2. God’s Revealed Will**

There are many aspects of God’s will that are explicitly revealed in Scripture:

- **Sanctification:** “This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).
- **Thanksgiving:** “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

- **Doing Good:** “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Peter 2:15).

Before seeking specific direction, we must obey God’s revealed will in these areas.

### **3. Principles for Decision-Making**

Even where Scripture does not give direct commands, it provides principles. For example:

- **Does it glorify God?** (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- **Is it lawful and edifying?** (1 Corinthians 10:23)
- **Does it avoid the appearance of evil?** (1 Thessalonians 5:22)
- **Does it help or hinder my walk with Christ?** (Hebrews 12:1)

When we saturate our minds with Scripture, we develop discernment to make wise choices consistent with God’s will.

## **II. The Guide: The Holy Spirit**

### **1. The Spirit’s Role**

Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide believers into truth. John 16:13 says:

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.”

The Spirit illuminates Scripture, convicts us of sin, and directs our steps.

### **2. The Spirit’s Leading in Acts**

The book of Acts shows the Spirit guiding the early church.

- In Acts 13:2, the Spirit said, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”
- In Acts 16:6–7, the Spirit forbade Paul to enter certain regions, redirecting him to Macedonia.

This demonstrates that the Spirit actively guides God’s people.

### **3. Avoiding Subjectivism**

Some misuse “the Spirit’s leading” to justify personal desires or impressions. But the Spirit never contradicts Scripture. His guidance is consistent with God’s revealed Word.

#### **4. Developing Sensitivity**

Believers grow in sensitivity to the Spirit by walking in obedience. Galatians 5:16 says: “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” A Spirit-filled life is a life aligned with God’s will.

### **III. The Channel: Prayer**

#### **1. The Invitation to Ask**

James 1:5 promises:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

God invites us to pray for wisdom in decisions.

#### **2. Prayer as Submission**

Prayer is not demanding our way but aligning with God’s will. Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy will be done” (Matthew 6:10). Gethsemane shows Christ Himself praying in submission: “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

#### **3. The Peace of Prayer**

Philippians 4:6–7 connects prayer with peace:

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God... shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Prayer does not always provide immediate answers, but it calms the heart and assures us that God is in control.

#### **4. The Persistence of Prayer**

Discerning God’s will often requires persistent prayer. Luke 18:1 teaches that “men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” Patience in prayer deepens our dependence on God’s timing.

### **IV. The Safeguard: Counsel**

#### **1. The Wisdom of Many**

Proverbs 11:14 says: “In the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” God has placed us in the body of Christ to seek advice and guidance.

## **2. Godly Counsel vs. Carnal Advice**

Not all counsel is equal. Psalm 1 warns against walking in the counsel of the ungodly. We must seek counsel from mature, Scripture-saturated believers.

## **3. Examples of Counsel in Scripture**

- Moses benefited from Jethro’s counsel about delegation (Exodus 18).
- Paul consulted with the apostles in Jerusalem regarding the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 15).

God uses wise counsel to clarify His will and guard us from error.

## **4. Humility in Receiving Counsel**

Pride resists advice, but humility listens. Proverbs 12:15 says: “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.”

## **V. Integrating the Four Avenues**

The believer discerns God’s will by integrating these four avenues:

- **Scripture** provides the foundation of God’s revealed will.
- **The Spirit** guides us in applying Scripture and directing our steps.
- **Prayer** aligns our hearts with God’s purposes.
- **Counsel** provides safety and confirmation.

Together, these guard against error and lead us into God’s will.

## **VI. Practical Steps for Discerning God’s Will**

### **1. Start with Obedience to Revealed Will**

Before seeking guidance on specifics, obey what God has already revealed: holiness, thanksgiving, submission, service.

### **2. Saturate Yourself with Scripture**

Daily study of the Word shapes your mind to think God's thoughts and discern His ways.

### **3. Walk in the Spirit**

Confess sin, yield daily, and cultivate sensitivity to the Spirit's promptings consistent with Scripture.

### **4. Pray for Wisdom**

Bring decisions before God in prayer, asking Him to guide and open doors.

### **5. Seek Godly Counsel**

Consult wise believers who know God's Word and walk in it.

### **6. Trust God's Providence**

After prayerful consideration, act in faith, trusting God to direct circumstances.

## **VII. Misconceptions About Knowing God's Will**

- **Misconception 1:** God's will is hidden and must be discovered by signs.
  - Truth: God has revealed His will in Scripture and guides through His Spirit.
- **Misconception 2:** One wrong step ruins God's plan.
  - Truth: God's providence works even through our mistakes (Romans 8:28).
- **Misconception 3:** God's will is always easy or pleasant.
  - Truth: It may involve suffering, but it is always good and perfect.

## **VIII. Encouragement in the Search**

Knowing God's will is not meant to be a burden but a blessing. Psalm 143:10 prays: "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."

God delights to reveal His will to His children. He is not withholding it but leading step by step.

## **Conclusion: A Knowable Will**

God's will is not an enigma for the few but a clear path for all His children. He reveals it in His Word, guides by His Spirit, answers through prayer, and confirms with counsel.

The key is not mystical techniques but faithful obedience. If we obey what we know, God will guide us in what we do not know. His will is not fragile but firm, not hidden but revealed, not burdensome but life-giving.

To know the will of God is to know God Himself, walk in His Word, and submit daily with the prayer:

“Not my will, but thine, be done.”

## **17 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – Proving the Will of God**

### **Introduction: The Call to Transformation**

Romans 12:2 is one of the most practical and profound verses in all of Scripture regarding the will of God:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

This verse shows us that God's will is not only to be *known* but also to be *proved*. To prove something means to test, experience, and demonstrate it in practice. The Christian life is not theoretical—it is lived out daily as believers demonstrate the reality of God's will in their lives.

In this essay, we will explore what it means to prove the will of God, how Romans 12:2 lays out the conditions for doing so, and how believers can test and experience God's will in everyday life.

### **I. The Meaning of “Proving” the Will of God**

#### **1. The Greek Word**

The word translated “prove” (*dokimazō*) means to test, examine, approve after trial. It carries the idea of testing metal to verify its purity.

#### **2. Application to God's Will**

To “prove” God’s will means to put it into practice, to test it by obedience, and to find it good, acceptable, and perfect. It is not a laboratory theory but a lived reality.

### **3. Faith in Action**

Proving God’s will requires faith. Hebrews 11:6 reminds us: “Without faith it is impossible to please him.” Faith steps out in obedience, and experience confirms that God’s will is best.

## **II. The Negative Command: “Be Not Conformed to This World”**

### **1. The Pressure of Conformity**

The world constantly presses believers to fit its mold—its values, priorities, and standards. Conformity is passive; if we do nothing, we drift into the world’s pattern.

### **2. The Character of This World**

“This world” (aiōn) refers to the present age, dominated by sin, rebellion, and Satan’s influence. Ephesians 2:2 describes unbelievers as walking “according to the course of this world.”

### **3. Separation from the World**

To prove God’s will, we must reject conformity to the world. James 4:4 warns that friendship with the world is enmity with God. The first step in proving God’s will is non-conformity.

## **III. The Positive Command: “Be Ye Transformed”**

### **1. Transformation Defined**

“Transformed” (metamorphoō) is the same word used of Christ’s transfiguration (Matthew 17:2). It means an inner change that manifests outwardly.

### **2. The Agent of Transformation**

Transformation comes not by willpower but by the Spirit through the Word. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says we are changed into Christ’s image “by the Spirit of the Lord.”

### **3. The Renewing of the Mind**

Transformation happens through renewing the mind. This involves replacing worldly thinking with biblical truth. Philippians 4:8 gives the template: think on things true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.

#### **IV. The Purpose: “That Ye May Prove”**

##### **1. Proving by Experience**

Obedience leads to experience. As we reject the world and embrace God’s Word, we experience firsthand that God’s will is indeed good, acceptable, and perfect.

##### **2. The Contrast with the World**

The world promises pleasure but delivers emptiness. God’s will may involve sacrifice but yields joy, peace, and fulfillment. Proving God’s will demonstrates its superiority to the world’s lies.

##### **3. The Testimony to Others**

When believers live transformed lives, they become living proofs of God’s will. Others see the reality of Christ through them.

#### **V. The Threefold Description of God’s Will**

##### **1. Good**

God’s will is morally excellent and beneficial. Psalm 34:8 says: “O taste and see that the LORD is good.” Proving God’s will shows that His commands lead to blessing, not harm.

##### **2. Acceptable**

God’s will is pleasing—to Him and ultimately to us. Obedience brings inner peace and joy. Proverbs 3:17 describes God’s wisdom: “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

##### **3. Perfect**

God’s will is complete, lacking nothing. It is not trial and error but flawless in design. Even when we do not understand, His will is perfect in accomplishing His purposes.

#### **VI. Practical Ways to Prove the Will of God**

##### **1. Through Daily Obedience**

Every act of obedience is a test and proof of God’s will. The more we obey, the more we see His wisdom confirmed.

## **2. Through Renewed Thinking**

We prove God's will as we let Scripture reshape our thinking. Decisions made with a renewed mind demonstrate God's wisdom.

## **3. Through Sacrifice**

Romans 12:1 precedes verse 2 with the call to present our bodies as living sacrifices. Sacrificial obedience proves the worth of God's will.

## **4. Through Trials**

Trials test our faith and reveal the sufficiency of God's will. James 1:2-4 teaches that trials produce maturity, proving God's wisdom.

## **5. Through Witness**

Living distinctly from the world proves to others that God's way is best. Our lives become testimonies of His will.

## **VII. Biblical Examples of Proving God's Will**

### **1. Abraham**

When Abraham offered Isaac, he proved his trust in God's will. The result was God's blessing and provision (Genesis 22).

### **2. Daniel**

By refusing the king's food, Daniel proved that obedience to God's will produced better results (Daniel 1).

### **3. Jesus**

In Gethsemane, Jesus submitted: "Not my will, but thine." The cross proved God's will as the means of salvation and glory.

### **4. Paul**

Paul's missionary journeys proved God's will by opening doors and bearing fruit, even through hardship.

## **VIII. Obstacles to Proving God's Will**

## **1. Worldly Conformity**

If we love the world, we cannot prove God's will. 1 John 2:15 warns: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

## **2. Fleshly Desires**

The flesh resists God's will. Galatians 5:17 describes the battle between flesh and Spirit.

## **3. Fear of Sacrifice**

Many shrink from God's will because they fear losing comfort. But Jesus promised that whoever loses his life for His sake will find it (Matthew 16:25).

## **4. Impatience**

Proving God's will takes time. Impatience leads to shortcuts that bypass His purposes.

## **IX. Encouragements in Proving God's Will**

### **1. God's Will Is Knowable**

Romans 12:2 assumes we can prove God's will. He is not hiding it but inviting us to experience it.

### **2. God's Will Is Good**

Even when it seems hard, obedience brings blessing. Psalm 19:11 says: "In keeping of them there is great reward."

### **3. God's Will Is Personal**

Romans 12 is addressed to individuals. Each believer can prove God's will in their own life.

### **4. God's Will Is Worth It**

No one who obeys God ends up regretting it. Many regret conformity to the world; none regret conformity to Christ.

## **X. Applications for Believers**

- 1. Reject Worldly Pressure** – Refuse to be molded by the age.
- 2. Renew Your Mind Daily** – Spend time in Scripture, letting truth replace lies.

3. **Step Out in Obedience** – Don't wait for certainty before obeying clear commands.
4. **Embrace Sacrifice** – Offer yourself as a living sacrifice.
5. **Persevere in Trials** – Let trials refine your faith and prove God's will.
6. **Live as a Testimony** – Show others that God's way is good, acceptable, and perfect.

## **XI. Misconceptions Corrected**

- **Misconception 1:** God's will is unknowable.
  - Truth: Romans 12:2 says we can prove it.
- **Misconception 2:** God's will is burdensome.
  - Truth: It is good, acceptable, and perfect.
- **Misconception 3:** Proving God's will is a one-time event.
  - Truth: It is a lifelong process of daily obedience.

## **Conclusion: A Lived Reality**

Romans 12:2 calls believers not just to know God's will but to prove it. By rejecting conformity to the world, embracing transformation through renewed minds, and walking in daily obedience, we experience firsthand that God's will is truly good, acceptable, and perfect.

The Christian life is not lived in theory but in practice. Each day provides opportunities to prove God's will by choices, sacrifices, and faithfulness. In doing so, we testify to the world and to ourselves that God's way is best.

To prove the will of God is to live the prayer of Christ: "Thy will be done." And as we do, we discover that His will is not only right but also rewarding beyond measure.

## **18 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Will of God in Suffering**

### **Introduction: When God's Will Hurts**

Few subjects trouble believers more than suffering. If God is good, why do His children endure pain, loss, and hardship? If He loves us, why does He permit trials? Many assume that being in the center of God's will means a life of ease. Yet Scripture paints a different picture: suffering is not outside the will of God but often central to it.

The apostle Peter wrote:

“For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”  
— 1 Peter 3:17

This verse teaches that suffering may indeed be God's will. The question is not whether we will face trials, but how we understand them in the context of God's plan. In this essay, we will explore the biblical teaching on suffering as part of God's will, survey examples from Scripture, and draw lessons for our own walk with Christ.

## **I. The Reality of Suffering in God's Will**

### **1. Promised, Not Accidental**

Jesus warned His disciples: “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). Paul wrote: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

Suffering is not accidental but expected. God never promised exemption but endurance.

### **2. Not Always Punishment**

Some assume suffering is always God's punishment. But Job's story proves otherwise. He was righteous, yet God allowed severe suffering to prove His servant's faith.

### **3. Sometimes for Discipline**

Hebrews 12:6 says: “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” Some suffering is corrective discipline. But not all. The key is discerning whether suffering is punishment for sin, discipline for growth, or providential trial for testimony.

## **II. Biblical Purposes of Suffering**

### **1. To Refine Our Faith**

1 Peter 1:6–7 describes trials as refining fire:

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

Suffering burns away impurities, producing mature faith.

## **2. To Produce Patience**

James 1:3–4 teaches that trials produce patience and maturity:

“The trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

## **3. To Conform Us to Christ**

Romans 8:29 reveals God’s purpose: “to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Suffering shapes us into Christlikeness, who Himself suffered.

## **4. To Display God’s Glory**

John 9 records a man born blind. Jesus explained it was not for sin but “that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” Suffering can display God’s power and glory.

## **5. To Advance the Gospel**

Paul’s imprisonment furthered the gospel (Philippians 1:12–14). Trials open doors for witness that comfort cannot.

# **III. Christ: The Model of Suffering in God’s Will**

## **1. The Suffering Servant**

Isaiah 53 foretold Christ as “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” His suffering was central to God’s redemptive plan.

## **2. Gethsemane**

In the garden, Christ submitted: “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). God’s will for Him included the cross.

## **3. The Cross**

Acts 2:23 affirms Christ’s death was by “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” The greatest suffering accomplished the greatest good.

## **4. The Pattern for Believers**

1 Peter 2:21 declares:

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”

We cannot expect exemption from suffering if our Lord endured it.

#### **IV. Paul: The Apostle of Suffering**

##### **1. God’s Will Declared**

At Paul’s conversion, God said: “I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts 9:16). Suffering was part of his calling.

##### **2. His Catalog of Trials**

2 Corinthians 11:23–28 lists imprisonments, beatings, shipwrecks, hunger, and danger. Paul’s life shows that suffering is not failure but faithfulness.

##### **3. His Thorn in the Flesh**

Paul’s thorn (2 Corinthians 12:7–10) was a constant trial. God did not remove it but gave grace: “My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

##### **4. His Perspective**

Paul declared: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). His perspective transformed suffering into opportunity for Christ’s glory.

#### **V. Types of Suffering in God’s Will**

##### **1. Persecution**

Believers may suffer for their faith. Early Christians faced imprisonment, torture, and death. Today, many still do.

##### **2. Physical Affliction**

Illness, disability, and weakness may be God’s will to teach dependence on His grace.

##### **3. Emotional Pain**

Loss, grief, and loneliness are forms of suffering God uses to draw us closer to Himself.

##### **4. Providential Trials**

Circumstances like famine, war, or disaster test our trust in God's providence.

## **VI. Responses to Suffering**

### **1. Wrong Responses**

- **Bitterness** – Resenting God leads to spiritual decline.
- **Self-Pity** – Focusing inward blinds us to God's purpose.
- **Escape** – Seeking shortcuts undermines growth.

### **2. Right Responses**

- **Submission** – Like Christ, saying, "Not my will, but thine."
- **Faith** – Trusting that God's will is good, even when painful.
- **Joy** – James 1:2 commands us to "count it all joy" when facing trials.
- **Hope** – Looking to eternal glory that outweighs present suffering (2 Corinthians 4:17).

## **VII. Misconceptions About Suffering**

- **Misconception 1:** Suffering means you are out of God's will.
  - Truth: Suffering may be proof you are in it.
- **Misconception 2:** God's will is always comfort and prosperity.
  - Truth: Scripture shows suffering is often God's will.
- **Misconception 3:** Suffering has no purpose.
  - Truth: God uses suffering for refinement, witness, and glory.

## **VIII. Encouragement in Suffering**

### **1. God's Presence**

Isaiah 43:2 promises: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." Suffering never separates us from God's presence.

### **2. God's Grace**

Paul's thorn proves God's grace is sufficient for every trial.

### **3. God's Reward**

Romans 8:18 declares: "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."

### **4. God's Control**

Even suffering is under God's sovereign will. Nothing comes without His permission.

## **IX. Examples from Church History**

- **Polycarp:** Martyred for refusing to deny Christ. His faithfulness proved God's will in suffering.
- **Martin Luther:** Faced persecution for standing on Scripture.
- **Missionaries:** Many suffered sickness and death bringing the gospel to unreached lands.

Their stories echo Paul's testimony: suffering advances God's will.

## **X. Application for Believers Today**

1. **Do Not Be Surprised** – Expect suffering as part of God's will.
2. **Examine Your Life** – If suffering is due to sin, repent. If not, submit.
3. **Trust God's Purpose** – Believe He is working all things for good.
4. **Use Suffering as Witness** – Let trials point others to Christ.
5. **Look to the Future** – Fix your eyes on eternal glory.

## **XI. A Theology of the Cross**

Suffering in God's will cannot be understood apart from the cross. Christ's suffering secured our salvation and modeled obedience. The cross shows that God's will may hurt, but it always heals.

## **Conclusion: Suffering in God's Plan**

The will of God in suffering is one of the greatest paradoxes of the Christian life. Trials that seem destructive are often the very tools God uses to refine, shape, and glorify His people.

Christ submitted to suffering and triumphed. Paul embraced suffering as part of his calling. Believers throughout history have found that the darkest valleys often shine with the brightest displays of God's grace.

The lesson is not to seek suffering but to submit when it comes, trusting God's perfect plan. As Peter wrote:

“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” (1 Peter 4:19)

Suffering is not the absence of God's will but its presence. And when we endure with faith, we prove that His will—yes, even in suffering—is good, acceptable, and perfect.

## **19 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Will of God in Service**

### **Introduction: Saved to Serve**

When people ask, “*What is God's will for my life?*” they often think of career, marriage, or location. But Scripture makes clear that one central aspect of God's will is **service**.

Believers are not saved merely to sit and wait for heaven; they are saved to serve Christ and His church.

Ephesians 2:8–10 lays it out plainly:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

We are saved by grace, not works—but we are saved *unto* good works. God's will is that every believer finds their place in the body of Christ and serves according to the gifts He has given.

This essay will explore the will of God in service, showing how each believer has a role, how the Spirit equips us, and how service glorifies God and builds up the church.

## **I. The Foundation of Service**

### **1. Christ as the Model**

Jesus Himself modeled service. He said in Mark 10:45:

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

If the Lord of glory came to serve, then God’s will for His followers is likewise service.

### **2. Service as Worship**

Romans 12:1 calls believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices, “which is your reasonable service.” Service is not an optional add-on but the natural response of worship to God’s mercy.

### **3. Service as the Will of God**

1 Peter 4:10–11 instructs:

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another... that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”

God’s will is that every believer serves others with the gifts He has given.

## **II. The Body of Christ**

### **1. The Church as Christ’s Body**

1 Corinthians 12 describes the church as a body, with Christ as the head. Each believer is a member with a specific function.

- The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of thee.”
- The foot cannot say, “Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body.”

Every member matters.

### **2. Diversity of Gifts**

Romans 12:6–8 and 1 Corinthians 12 list various gifts—teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, mercy, helps, administration, tongues, prophecy. Not every believer has the same gift, but all are essential.

### **3. Unity in Diversity**

Though diverse, the body is one. Ephesians 4:16 says the body grows “according to the effectual working in the measure of every part.” God’s will is that each believer functions in their role, contributing to the health of the whole.

### **III. Discovering Our Place in Service**

#### **1. Start with Willingness**

God’s will in service begins with a willing heart. Isaiah said, “Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:8). Availability comes before ability.

#### **2. Identify Your Gifts**

Spiritual gifts are given by the Spirit at conversion (1 Corinthians 12:11). Believers discover their gifts through service, prayer, and counsel.

#### **3. Serve Where Needed**

Sometimes God reveals our role by placing needs before us. Acts 6 shows deacons chosen to serve tables so apostles could focus on prayer and the Word. God’s will was revealed through practical need.

#### **4. Confirm with Fruit**

As believers serve, fruit confirms their calling. Jesus said: “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16). Fruitful service aligns with God’s will.

### **IV. Motivations for Service**

#### **1. Love for God**

Service flows from love. Jesus asked Peter, “Lovest thou me?” and then commanded, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17). Love motivates service.

#### **2. Gratitude for Grace**

Paul testified: “By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace... was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Service is gratitude in action.

#### **3. Obedience to God’s Will**

Serving is not optional but commanded. Galatians 5:13 says: “By love serve one another.”

#### **4. Desire for Eternal Reward**

Service done in God's will will be rewarded. 1 Corinthians 3:14 promises: "If any man's work abide... he shall receive a reward."

## **V. Obstacles to Serving God's Will**

### **1. Selfishness**

Many resist service because they prefer comfort or recognition. But Philippians 2:3–4 calls us to humility, esteeming others above ourselves.

### **2. Fear**

Some fear inadequacy. Moses protested, "I am not eloquent" (Exodus 4:10). But God equips those He calls.

### **3. Comparison**

Jealousy of others' gifts hinders service. Paul rebukes this in 1 Corinthians 12. God's will is not uniformity but diversity.

### **4. Laziness**

Some simply refuse. Matthew 25 condemns the servant who buried his talent instead of using it.

## **VI. Biblical Examples of Service in God's Will**

### **1. Moses**

Though reluctant, Moses served God by leading Israel. His weakness revealed God's strength.

### **2. David**

As a shepherd boy, David served faithfully in small tasks before God entrusted him with kingship.

### **3. Dorcas**

Acts 9:36 describes Dorcas as "full of good works and almsdeeds." Her service to the poor was part of God's will.

### **4. Paul**

Paul saw his entire life as service: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you" (2 Corinthians 12:15).

## **VII. Service and Suffering**

### **1. Serving Often Involves Sacrifice**

True service costs. Paul endured suffering for the churches. Jesus washed feet, then went to the cross. God's will in service is often marked by sacrifice.

### **2. Joy in Sacrificial Service**

Yet service brings joy. Paul wrote from prison: "I joy, and rejoice with you all... for the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me" (Philippians 2:17-18).

## **VIII. The Eternal Perspective**

### **1. Temporary vs. Eternal**

Service in this life may go unnoticed, but God sees. Hebrews 6:10 promises He will not forget "your work and labour of love."

### **2. The Judgment Seat of Christ**

Believers will give account of their service at the judgment seat (2 Corinthians 5:10). Only what is done in God's will endures.

### **3. Sharing in Christ's Glory**

Those who serve faithfully will share in Christ's reign. Revelation 22:3 says His servants shall serve Him eternally.

## **IX. Applications for Believers**

1. **Examine Your Heart** – Are you willing to serve?
2. **Discover Your Gift** – What has God equipped you to do?
3. **Start Serving Now** – Don't wait for the perfect opportunity. Begin where you are.
4. **Serve Faithfully** – Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).
5. **Serve with Humility** – Seek God's glory, not your own.
6. **Encourage Others** – Help fellow believers find and use their gifts.

## **X. Misconceptions About Service**

- **Misconception 1:** Only pastors and missionaries serve.
  - Truth: Every believer is called to service.
- **Misconception 2:** Service must be public.
  - Truth: Hidden acts of mercy and prayer are vital.
- **Misconception 3:** Service earns salvation.
  - Truth: Service flows from salvation, not for it.
- **Misconception 4:** Small service is insignificant.
  - Truth: Even a cup of cold water given in Jesus' name has reward (Matthew 10:42).

## **Conclusion: Finding Our Place**

The will of God in service is clear: every believer has a role in the body of Christ. Service is not for a select few but for all who are saved. Christ served, and we are called to follow in His steps.

Finding our place involves willingness, discovery of gifts, obedience to opportunities, and faithfulness in whatever task God sets before us. Whether great or small, seen or unseen, our service is part of His perfect plan.

The church thrives when every member functions. The world sees Christ when His people serve. And the believer finds fulfillment, joy, and eternal reward when they can say with Paul:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”

God's will is that we serve. Let us embrace it wholeheartedly, knowing that in doing so, we not only bless others but glorify the One who first served us.

## **Introduction: God’s Will Beyond the Big Moments**

When most Christians think about God’s will, they often picture the “big” questions: *Whom should I marry? What career should I pursue? Where should I live?* These decisions matter, but God’s will is not only about monumental crossroads. It also governs the countless small choices that fill each day—how we speak, how we work, how we treat others, how we prioritize time, and how we walk with God.

Romans 12:1–2 reminds us that knowing and proving God’s will begins with presenting ourselves as living sacrifices and being transformed by the renewing of our minds. In other words, daily obedience shapes our ability to make wise decisions in major areas of life.

In this essay, we will examine four key areas of God’s will in daily life: **decisions, vocation, marriage, and practical obedience.**

### **I. God’s Will in Decisions**

#### **1. Biblical Principles for Choices**

Even when Scripture does not name every situation, it gives principles that govern decisions:

- **Does it glorify God?** (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- **Does it align with holiness?** (1 Thessalonians 4:3)
- **Does it edify others?** (Romans 14:19)
- **Does it avoid sin or compromise?** (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

Decisions are opportunities to apply God’s revealed will in practical ways.

#### **2. Wisdom vs. Signs**

Many seek mystical signs to make decisions—fleeces, dreams, coincidences. But Scripture calls us to seek wisdom. James 1:5 promises wisdom to those who ask in faith. God’s will is discerned not through superstition but through Spirit-led wisdom.

#### **3. The Peace of God**

Colossians 3:15 speaks of letting the peace of God “rule” (literally, umpire) in our hearts. When decisions align with God’s Word and bring Spirit-given peace, we can move forward in confidence.

## **II. God's Will in Vocation**

### **1. Work as Worship**

Work is not secular vs. sacred; all labor is to be done “as to the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). God's will is that believers approach their vocation as service to Him.

### **2. Calling vs. Career**

Some confuse “calling” with specific jobs. In Scripture, our primary calling is to belong to Christ (Romans 1:6). Within that calling, God gives freedom in career choices, provided they align with biblical principles.

### **3. Practical Guidance**

- Choose work that honors God and does not compromise faith.
- Choose work that allows stewardship of gifts and resources.
- Be diligent and honest, for laziness or dishonesty violates God's will.

### **4. Witness in the Workplace**

Part of God's will is using our vocations as platforms for witness. Philippians 2:15 calls believers to shine as lights in the world, including in their jobs.

## **III. God's Will in Marriage**

### **1. The Biblical Foundation**

Marriage is God's design. Genesis 2:24 declares: “They shall be one flesh.” God's will in marriage begins with His blueprint for it—between one man and one woman, joined in covenant.

### **2. The Priority of Faith**

Scripture forbids being “unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14). God's will is that believers marry in the Lord.

### **3. Qualities to Seek**

Beyond shared faith, God's will points us to qualities: godliness, character, humility, and service. Proverbs 31 and Ephesians 5 describe the mutual love and submission that mark a godly marriage.

### **4. Marriage as Ministry**

Marriage itself is a form of service. Husbands love wives as Christ loved the church; wives respect husbands as the church submits to Christ. God's will in marriage is not self-fulfillment but mutual sanctification.

#### **IV. God's Will in Practical Obedience**

##### **1. Sanctification**

1 Thessalonians 4:3 states explicitly: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Daily life in God's will means pursuing holiness in thought, word, and deed.

##### **2. Thanksgiving**

1 Thessalonians 5:18 commands: "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God." Gratitude transforms daily life into worship.

##### **3. Doing Good**

1 Peter 2:15 says God's will is that by doing good, we silence the ignorance of foolish men. Obedience in daily conduct testifies to Christ.

##### **4. Submission**

God's will includes submission to authority—government, employers, and church leaders—so long as it does not conflict with obedience to God (Romans 13; Hebrews 13:17).

##### **5. Stewardship**

Daily obedience includes stewardship of time, money, and gifts. Wasting resources or hoarding them selfishly opposes God's will.

#### **V. Case Studies in Daily Obedience**

##### **1. Daniel in Babylon**

Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the king's meat (Daniel 1:8). His daily obedience in diet set the stage for later faithfulness in greater trials.

##### **2. Ruth in Bethlehem**

Ruth's daily obedience in gleaning grain placed her in God's will to meet Boaz and become part of the Messianic line.

### **3. Paul as a Tentmaker**

Paul worked with his hands to support ministry (Acts 18:3). His vocation became a platform for gospel witness.

## **VI. Misconceptions About Daily Life in God's Will**

- **Misconception 1:** God's will is only about big decisions.
  - Truth: It is about daily obedience in small choices.
- **Misconception 2:** God's will restricts freedom.
  - Truth: It grants freedom within His principles.
- **Misconception 3:** Vocations are secular and unspiritual.
  - Truth: All work done unto the Lord is service.
- **Misconception 4:** Marriage is about personal happiness.
  - Truth: Marriage is about holiness and Christlikeness.

## **VII. Encouragement for Believers**

### **1. God's Will is Knowable**

Romans 12:2 promises we can prove God's will by renewing our minds.

### **2. God's Will is Practical**

It is not mystical or hidden but lived out in decisions, work, marriage, and obedience.

### **3. God's Will Brings Fulfillment**

Living in God's will brings peace and purpose beyond worldly success.

### **4. God's Will is Daily**

Luke 9:23 calls us to take up our cross daily. God's will is not a one-time choice but a lifestyle.

## **Conclusion: Walking in God's Will Today**

The will of God in daily life is not about waiting for lightning bolts from heaven. It is about walking step by step in obedience to His Word, guided by His Spirit, supported by prayer and counsel. Decisions, vocation, marriage, and practical obedience are all arenas where God's will is worked out.

If we are faithful in daily obedience, we can trust God with the bigger questions. His will is not a mystery reserved for a few but a path revealed for all who seek Him.

The believer who lives daily in obedience will discover that God's will—whether in small tasks or life-changing decisions—is indeed “good, and acceptable, and perfect.”

## **21 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Will of God and Sanctification**

### **Introduction: God's Will Made Plain**

Many wrestle with questions of God's will: *What job should I take? Where should I live?* But the Bible does not leave us guessing on the essentials. In 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Paul writes plainly: “*This is the will of God, even your sanctification.*”

The word *sanctification* means being set apart—made holy for God's use. God's will is not primarily about our comfort, career, or circumstances, but about our character. His will is that we be holy, conformed to the image of Christ.

In this essay, we will explore the meaning of sanctification, its place in God's will, how it unfolds in the believer's life, the dangers of neglecting it, and the hope it brings for final glorification.

## **I. Defining Sanctification**

### **1. The Meaning of the Term**

The Greek word *hagiasmos* means holiness, consecration, separation from sin. Sanctification involves being set apart from sin and set apart unto God.

### **2. Distinguishing Justification and Sanctification**

- **Justification** is God declaring the sinner righteous by faith in Christ (Romans 5:1). It is instantaneous.
- **Sanctification** is God making the believer holy in practice. It is progressive.

Both are part of salvation, but sanctification is the ongoing outworking of God's will in the believer's life.

### **3. The Three Tenses of Sanctification**

- **Positional Sanctification** – At salvation, believers are set apart in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:2).
- **Progressive Sanctification** – In daily life, believers grow in holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1).
- **Perfected Sanctification** – At glorification, believers will be completely holy (1 John 3:2).

God's will encompasses all three.

## **II. The Call to Sanctification**

### **1. God's Will Explicitly Stated**

Unlike many areas of life, sanctification is explicitly called God's will. This shows its centrality.

### **2. Separation from Sin**

1 Thessalonians 4:3 specifies abstaining from fornication—sexual immorality—as a key aspect of sanctification. God's will always includes separation from sin in every form.

### **3. Dedication to God**

Sanctification is not only avoiding sin but devoting oneself to God. Romans 6:19 says: "Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."

## **III. The Basis of Sanctification**

### **1. The Work of Christ**

Hebrews 10:10 says: "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Christ's sacrifice is the basis of sanctification.

### **2. The Work of the Spirit**

2 Thessalonians 2:13 describes believers as chosen "through sanctification of the Spirit." The Spirit applies Christ's work to our daily lives.

### **3. The Authority of the Word**

John 17:17 records Jesus' prayer: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." The Word cleanses, corrects, and directs.

## **IV. The Process of Sanctification**

### **1. Renewal of the Mind**

Romans 12:2 links sanctification to the renewing of the mind. Transformation begins in thought life, shaped by Scripture.

### **2. Mortification of Sin**

Colossians 3:5 commands: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." Sanctification requires putting sin to death.

### **3. Pursuit of Holiness**

Hebrews 12:14 exhorts: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Sanctification involves active pursuit.

### **4. Growth in Grace**

2 Peter 3:18 commands: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Sanctification is gradual growth.

## **V. Practical Areas of Sanctification**

### **1. Sanctification in the Body**

1 Thessalonians 4:4–5 commands believers to possess their vessels in honor, not lust. God's will includes purity in sexuality, rejecting the world's immorality.

### **2. Sanctification in Relationships**

1 Thessalonians 4:6 warns against defrauding others. Sanctification means treating others with honesty, integrity, and love.

### **3. Sanctification in Work**

1 Thessalonians 4:11–12 instructs believers to work with their own hands and walk honestly. God's will includes diligence and integrity in labor.

#### **4. Sanctification in Speech**

Ephesians 4:29 commands: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.” Sanctification extends to words, using speech to edify.

#### **5. Sanctification in Thought**

Philippians 4:8 directs believers to think on things pure and lovely. Sanctification renews the mind as well as actions.

### **VI. The Motivation for Sanctification**

#### **1. The Character of God**

1 Peter 1:15–16 commands holiness because God is holy. God’s will is that His people reflect His character.

#### **2. The Cross of Christ**

Christ died to redeem us from lawlessness and purify a people for Himself (Titus 2:14). Sanctification honors His sacrifice.

#### **3. The Witness to the World**

Sanctification demonstrates the reality of the gospel. Matthew 5:16 urges believers to let their light shine before men.

#### **4. The Hope of Glory**

1 John 3:2–3 says: “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.” The hope of seeing Christ motivates holiness.

### **VII. Hindrances to Sanctification**

#### **1. The Flesh**

Galatians 5:17 describes the flesh warring against the Spirit. Our fallen nature resists sanctification.

#### **2. The World**

Worldly values, entertainment, and philosophies oppose holiness. Friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4).

### **3. The Devil**

Satan tempts believers to sin and discourages them from pursuing holiness. Sanctification requires vigilance.

## **VIII. Encouragements in Sanctification**

### **1. God's Power**

Philippians 2:13 promises: "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." We are not left to sanctify ourselves alone.

### **2. God's Faithfulness**

1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 assures: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly... Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

### **3. God's Purpose**

Romans 8:29 declares believers predestined "to be conformed to the image of his Son." Sanctification is guaranteed by God's eternal purpose.

## **IX. Biblical Examples of Sanctification**

### **1. Joseph**

Joseph fled temptation with Potiphar's wife, proving sanctification in purity.

### **2. Daniel**

Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the king's food, showing sanctification in discipline.

### **3. Paul**

Paul pursued holiness, saying: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

## **X. Sanctification and Assurance**

Holiness is evidence of salvation. 1 John 2:3 says: “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” While sanctification is not the basis of salvation, it is the fruit that confirms it.

## **XI. The Danger of Neglecting Sanctification**

### **1. Loss of Fellowship**

Sin breaks fellowship with God. Sanctification keeps us walking in the light (1 John 1:7).

### **2. Loss of Testimony**

Worldly living discredits the gospel. Neglecting sanctification damages witness.

### **3. Loss of Reward**

At the judgment seat of Christ, unholy living leads to loss of reward (1 Corinthians 3:15).

### **4. Divine Discipline**

God chastises His children to restore holiness (Hebrews 12:6). Neglecting sanctification invites discipline.

## **XII. Final Sanctification**

### **1. Glorification Promised**

One day sanctification will be complete. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 prays for God to sanctify believers wholly at Christ’s coming.

### **2. Christlikeness Perfected**

1 John 3:2 promises: “When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

### **3. Eternal Holiness**

In eternity, believers will be perfectly sanctified, forever separated from sin, and fully devoted to God.

## **XIII. Application for Believers**

- 1. Pursue Holiness Daily** – Sanctification requires intentional effort.

2. **Abstain from Sin** – Especially sexual immorality, as Paul emphasized.
3. **Immerse in the Word** – God sanctifies through truth.
4. **Walk in the Spirit** – Yield to His power, not the flesh.
5. **Stay Accountable** – Fellowship and counsel help guard against sin.
6. **Look to Christ** – He is both the model and means of sanctification.

#### **XIV. Misconceptions About Sanctification**

- **Misconception 1:** Sanctification is optional for super-saints.
  - Truth: It is God’s will for all believers.
- **Misconception 2:** Sanctification happens instantly and fully at conversion.
  - Truth: It is both positional and progressive.
- **Misconception 3:** Sanctification means legalistic rule-keeping.
  - Truth: It is Spirit-empowered transformation from the heart.
- **Misconception 4:** Sanctification is joyless.
  - Truth: Holiness leads to joy and freedom.

#### **Conclusion: The Will of God, Our Sanctification**

Paul could not have been clearer: “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” God’s will is not first about external circumstances but internal holiness. It is about being set apart from sin and set apart unto Him.

Through Christ’s work, the Spirit’s power, and the Word’s truth, sanctification unfolds daily. It requires effort, faces opposition, but is guaranteed by God’s faithfulness.

The believer who pursues sanctification proves the reality of salvation, shines as a witness, enjoys fellowship with God, and anticipates final glorification. Sanctification is not a burden but a blessing, not a restriction but a release into the joy of holiness.

God’s will is not hidden here. It is written in black and white: His will is our sanctification. Let us embrace it, pursue it, and live it, until the day we stand perfected in Christ’s presence, holy and blameless forever.

## **22 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Will of God and Thanksgiving**

### **Introduction: Gratitude as God's Will**

When Christians ask about God's will, they often want answers about the future—what to do, where to go, whom to marry. Yet in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Paul gives a direct statement of God's will: "In every thing give thanks."

Thanksgiving is not a suggestion or a seasonal holiday; it is a daily command and the revealed will of God. Gratitude is not optional but central to Christian living. Ingratitude is not a minor flaw but a serious sin. Romans 1:21 lists it among the marks of a reprobate mind: "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful."

This essay will explore why thanksgiving is God's will, how it transforms our perspective, how it functions in worship and witness, and how believers can practice it in all circumstances.

### **I. The Command to Give Thanks**

#### **1. The Universality of the Command**

Paul says "in every thing." Not some things, not most things, but all things. Thanksgiving must be constant, not conditional.

#### **2. The Authority of the Command**

"This is the will of God." Gratitude is not optional or cultural but divinely commanded. Obedience in thanksgiving is obedience to God's will.

#### **3. The Christ-Centeredness of the Command**

The verse specifies: "in Christ Jesus concerning you." Thanksgiving is rooted in our union with Christ. Gratitude is possible because of Him.

### **II. The Nature of Thanksgiving**

#### **1. Acknowledgment of God's Goodness**

Thanksgiving recognizes God as the source of every blessing. James 1:17 reminds us: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.”

## **2. Expression of Faith**

Giving thanks is an act of trust, even when circumstances are hard. It declares that God is sovereign and wise.

## **3. Atmosphere of Worship**

Thanksgiving is inseparable from worship. Psalm 100:4 commands: “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.”

# **III. Thanksgiving in All Circumstances**

## **1. In Prosperity**

It is easy to thank God when life is comfortable. Yet Deuteronomy 8 warns Israel not to forget God when blessed. Thanksgiving guards against pride and self-sufficiency.

## **2. In Adversity**

The challenge is thanking God in trials. Job models this: “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).

Paul gave thanks in prison (Philippians 1:3). Thanksgiving in suffering proves faith in God’s providence.

## **3. In the Ordinary**

Gratitude is not limited to dramatic moments but should permeate daily life—food, health, family, fellowship. Even small mercies call for thanksgiving.

# **IV. The Theological Basis of Thanksgiving**

## **1. God’s Sovereignty**

We give thanks in everything because God rules over everything. Nothing comes apart from His providence.

## **2. God’s Goodness**

Romans 8:28 assures that “all things work together for good.” Gratitude rests on confidence in God’s goodness, even when we cannot see it.

### **3. God's Grace in Christ**

Above all, we give thanks because of salvation in Christ. 2 Corinthians 9:15 exclaims: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

## **V. Thanksgiving as Worship**

### **1. Old Testament Pattern**

The Psalms overflow with thanksgiving. Psalm 136 repeats: "O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever."

### **2. New Testament Practice**

Jesus gave thanks before multiplying bread (John 6:11) and before instituting the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19). Paul constantly gave thanks in his letters.

### **3. Thanksgiving in Heaven**

Revelation 7:12 shows heavenly worship filled with thanksgiving: "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving... be unto our God for ever and ever."

## **VI. Thanksgiving as Witness**

### **1. Countercultural Gratitude**

In a world of complaining and entitlement, gratitude shines as a testimony. Philippians 2:14–15 commands us to do all things without murmuring, so we may shine as lights.

### **2. Thankfulness in Suffering**

When believers thank God in hardship, the world notices. Paul and Silas sang hymns in prison (Acts 16:25), and their witness led to the jailer's conversion.

### **3. Gratitude as Evangelism**

Thanksgiving points people to the Giver. When we give thanks publicly, it opens doors for witness.

## **VII. Thanksgiving and Spiritual Health**

### **1. Antidote to Anxiety**

Philippians 4:6–7 connects prayer with thanksgiving to the peace of God: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Gratitude guards against worry.

## **2. Cure for Discontent**

Gratitude shifts focus from what we lack to what God has provided. Hebrews 13:5 reminds us to be content with God’s presence.

## **3. Fuel for Joy**

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 links joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. Gratitude fuels joy in the Lord.

# **VIII. Practical Ways to Cultivate Thanksgiving**

## **1. Daily Acknowledgment**

Begin and end each day by thanking God for specific blessings.

## **2. Thanksgiving in Prayer**

Make gratitude a regular part of prayer, not just petitions.

## **3. Gratitude Journal**

Recording blessings helps guard against forgetfulness.

## **4. Public Thanksgiving**

Express gratitude openly to encourage others and glorify God.

## **5. Songs of Thanksgiving**

Ephesians 5:19–20 encourages singing “with grace in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things.”

# **IX. Biblical Examples of Thanksgiving**

## **1. David**

David constantly gave thanks, even in distress. Psalm 34:1: “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.”

## **2. Daniel**

Daniel prayed three times daily with thanksgiving, even when threatened with the lion's den (Daniel 6:10).

### **3. Paul**

Paul's epistles overflow with thanksgiving, often from prison (Colossians 3:17).

## **X. Hindrances to Thanksgiving**

### **1. Pride**

Pride claims credit and withholds thanks. Gratitude requires humility.

### **2. Greed**

Greed focuses on what is lacking rather than what God has given.

### **3. Complaining**

Israel's murmuring in the wilderness angered God. Complaining is the opposite of thanksgiving.

### **4. Forgetfulness**

Failing to remember God's past mercies leads to ingratitude. Psalm 103:2 exhorts: "Forget not all his benefits."

## **XI. Thanksgiving and the Will of God**

### **1. Direct Command**

Unlike many questions, thanksgiving is explicitly God's will. To refuse thanksgiving is to resist His will.

### **2. Thanksgiving and Sanctification**

Gratitude fuels holiness. Complaining fosters sin, but thanksgiving purifies the heart.

### **3. Thanksgiving and Suffering**

It is God's will that we give thanks not only in ease but in trials, proving our trust in His plan.

### **4. Thanksgiving and Witness**

God's will is that our gratitude testify to His goodness before the world.

## **XII. Misconceptions About Thanksgiving**

- **Misconception 1:** We only give thanks when we feel like it.
  - Truth: Thanksgiving is commanded in all circumstances.
- **Misconception 2:** Thanksgiving ignores pain.
  - Truth: It acknowledges God's presence in pain.
- **Misconception 3:** Thanksgiving is optional.
  - Truth: It is the will of God.
- **Misconception 4:** Thanksgiving is natural.
  - Truth: It is spiritual, produced by the Spirit.

### **Conclusion: Gratitude as God's Will**

1 Thessalonians 5:18 leaves no doubt: giving thanks in everything is God's will. Gratitude is not dependent on circumstances but on Christ. It honors God, strengthens faith, brings joy, and witnesses to the world.

The Christian who cultivates thanksgiving will find life transformed. Complaints will fade, joy will grow, and God will be glorified.

To live in God's will is to live in gratitude—today, tomorrow, and forever. Let us then obey His command: *"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."*

## **23 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Will of God and Suffering for Christ's Sake**

### **Introduction: When Doing Good Brings Pain**

Human reasoning expects reward for good behavior and punishment for evil. Yet Scripture teaches that believers may face suffering precisely because they do what is right. The

apostles were beaten, imprisoned, and martyred—not for crimes, but for proclaiming Christ. Christians through history have faced persecution for living holy lives in hostile cultures.

Peter wrote his first epistle to believers scattered and persecuted throughout Asia Minor. He reminded them that suffering for Christ was not a sign of God’s absence but of His will and purpose. In 1 Peter 3:17, he places suffering squarely within the will of God: better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.

This essay will explore the meaning of this verse, biblical examples of suffering for righteousness, the purposes God accomplishes through such suffering, and practical encouragement for enduring it.

## **I. Understanding 1 Peter 3:17**

### **1. The Contrast of Two Kinds of Suffering**

- **Suffering for Evil Doing** – The natural consequence of sin. A thief who is jailed or a liar who is exposed suffers justly.
- **Suffering for Well Doing** – The paradoxical suffering of the righteous for obedience to God.

Peter distinguishes between deserved suffering and undeserved suffering. Only the latter glorifies God.

### **2. The Conditional Phrase**

“If the will of God be so.” Not all suffering is God’s will, but some suffering is deliberately appointed by Him for His glory and our growth.

### **3. The Word “Better”**

Peter calls such suffering “better.” Why? Because it aligns us with Christ, produces eternal reward, and testifies to the world.

## **II. The Pattern of Christ’s Suffering**

### **1. Christ Suffered for Doing Good**

Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, and spoke truth—yet He was hated, betrayed, and crucified. His suffering was not for wrongdoing but righteousness.

## **2. God's Will in His Suffering**

Acts 2:23 declares Christ was delivered to the cross "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." His suffering was not random but God's will for redemption.

## **3. Christ as Our Example**

1 Peter 2:21 says: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." The will of God for His children often mirrors the path of His Son.

## **III. Biblical Examples of Suffering for Well Doing**

### **1. Abel**

Abel offered a righteous sacrifice and was murdered by Cain (Genesis 4). His suffering testified to God's approval.

### **2. Joseph**

Joseph resisted temptation and was falsely imprisoned. His suffering for well-doing prepared him for God's greater plan.

### **3. Jeremiah**

Jeremiah faithfully preached God's word and was beaten, imprisoned, and thrown into a pit. His suffering for truth fulfilled God's will.

### **4. Daniel**

Daniel prayed faithfully and was cast into the lions' den. His suffering brought glory to God through deliverance.

### **5. Paul**

Paul endured beatings, imprisonment, and persecution for preaching Christ. He saw it as part of God's will for his ministry.

## **IV. The Purposes of Suffering for Christ's Sake**

### **1. To Refine Believers**

Suffering purifies faith like fire refines gold (1 Peter 1:6–7). Trials strip away superficial faith and produce endurance.

## **2. To Identify Us with Christ**

Philippians 3:10 expresses the desire “that I may know him... and the fellowship of his sufferings.” Suffering unites us with Christ’s experience.

## **3. To Testify to the World**

When believers endure suffering with grace, they witness to God’s power. Acts 16 records Paul and Silas singing in prison, leading to the jailer’s conversion.

## **4. To Advance the Gospel**

Persecution often spreads the gospel further. Acts 8 shows the scattering of believers led to evangelism throughout Judea and Samaria.

## **5. To Store Eternal Reward**

Jesus promised: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you... for great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:11–12).

## **V. The Nature of Suffering for Well Doing**

### **1. Often Unjust**

Believers may be accused falsely, mocked, or punished unjustly. Yet this aligns them with Christ, who was condemned though innocent.

### **2. Sometimes Violent**

From the martyrs of the early church to modern believers in hostile nations, suffering for Christ may mean imprisonment or death.

### **3. Always Purposeful**

Though unjust in human terms, suffering for Christ is purposeful in God’s plan.

## **VI. How to Endure Suffering in God’s Will**

### **1. With Submission**

Like Christ in Gethsemane, we pray: “Not my will, but thine, be done.” Submission trusts God’s wisdom in appointing suffering.

### **2. With Faith**

Faith believes that God is sovereign over trials. Romans 8:28 assures us He works all things for good.

### **3. With Joy**

Acts 5:41 records the apostles rejoicing “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” Joy transforms suffering into testimony.

### **4. With Love**

Jesus prayed for His persecutors. Stephen forgave those stoning him. God’s will is that suffering for well-doing be endured with love, not bitterness.

### **5. With Hope**

Looking to eternal reward sustains us. 2 Corinthians 4:17 calls present suffering “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

## **VII. Hindrances to Accepting Suffering**

### **1. Prosperity Thinking**

The prosperity gospel falsely teaches that God’s will is always health and wealth. This leaves believers unprepared for suffering.

### **2. Fear of Man**

Fear silences witness. But God’s will is that we obey Him rather than men (Acts 5:29).

### **3. Love of Comfort**

Clinging to comfort keeps us from costly obedience. Yet Christ calls us to take up the cross.

## **VIII. Encouragements in Suffering**

### **1. God’s Presence**

Isaiah 43:2 promises: “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.” Suffering never separates us from God’s presence.

### **2. God’s Example**

Christ’s suffering shows God understands our pain. Hebrews 4:15 says He is touched with our infirmities.

### **3. God's Justice**

Though injustice prevails now, God will judge persecutors and vindicate His people.

### **4. God's Reward**

Heaven's reward outweighs earth's suffering. Believers can rejoice knowing their labor is not in vain.

## **IX. Church History and Suffering**

### **1. The Early Martyrs**

Polycarp, Ignatius, and countless others suffered martyrdom, proving their faith. Their deaths emboldened the church.

### **2. The Reformers**

Men like Luther and Tyndale endured persecution to bring the Word of God to the people. Their suffering fulfilled God's will in advancing truth.

### **3. Modern Witnesses**

Believers today face imprisonment, violence, and death for Christ. Their testimony continues to prove God's will in suffering.

## **X. Practical Applications**

1. **Expect Suffering** – Do not be surprised when it comes.
2. **Examine Suffering** – Is it for sin or righteousness? If for sin, repent. If for righteousness, rejoice.
3. **Endure Suffering** – Submit, trust, and rejoice in God's will.
4. **Encourage Others** – Support persecuted believers through prayer and aid.
5. **Evangelize Through Suffering** – Use trials as opportunities to point to Christ.

## **XI. Misconceptions Corrected**

- **Misconception 1:** Suffering means you are out of God's will.

- Truth: It may mean you are right in the center of it.
- **Misconception 2:** Suffering for Christ is a sign of failure.
  - Truth: It is a sign of faithfulness.
- **Misconception 3:** God's will is always ease.
  - Truth: Sometimes His will is costly obedience.
- **Misconception 4:** Suffering for Christ is pointless.
  - Truth: God uses it for His glory and our good.

### **Conclusion: The Better Path**

Peter's words in 1 Peter 3:17 challenge our assumptions: *"For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing."* The world sees suffering for righteousness as foolish, but God calls it "better." It aligns us with Christ, refines our faith, testifies to the world, and prepares eternal reward.

The believer who embraces this truth can face trials without fear, knowing suffering for Christ's sake is not outside God's will but within it. The will of God may sometimes be the path of suffering, but it is always the path of blessing.

Let us then, like the apostles, rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name, confident that one day, the sufferings of this present time will be eclipsed by the glor

## **24 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Will of God and Eternity**

### **Introduction: Thy Will Be Done, Forever**

From the very beginning, God's will has been the central thread of history. Creation unfolded by His word. Redemption was accomplished by His plan. Sanctification is His present work in His people. And eternity will be the ultimate unveiling of His will.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10), He pointed to the day when heaven and earth would be united under God's eternal rule. That prayer will find its fullest answer in the new heaven and new earth described in Revelation 21–22.

This essay explores the will of God in eternity: what Scripture teaches about His eternal purposes, how His will is revealed in the new creation, what it means for the redeemed, and how this eternal hope transforms our present lives.

## **I. God's Eternal Will Before Time Began**

### **1. God's Will in Creation**

Ephesians 1:11 declares that God works "all things after the counsel of his own will." Before time, He decreed creation, redemption, and consummation.

### **2. God's Will in Election**

2 Timothy 1:9 speaks of His purpose and grace "given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." His will was set from eternity.

### **3. God's Will in Christ**

Revelation 13:8 refers to Christ as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The cross was not a reaction but part of God's eternal will.

## **II. The Consummation of God's Will**

### **1. The Return of Christ**

The climax of history is Christ's return, when God's will is revealed in judgment and restoration.

### **2. The Resurrection**

1 Corinthians 15 shows resurrection as central to God's eternal will. Mortality must put on immortality.

### **3. The Judgment**

Revelation 20 reveals the great white throne judgment. God's will includes the vindication of His holiness and the final defeat of evil.

## **III. The New Heaven and New Earth**

### **1. The Promise**

Isaiah 65:17 foretold: “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.” Revelation 21–22 fulfills this promise.

## **2. The Passing of the Old**

Revelation 21:1 says: “The first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” Sin-cursed creation will be replaced.

## **3. The Presence of God**

Revelation 21:3 proclaims: “The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them.” God’s eternal will is perfect fellowship with His people.

# **IV. The Characteristics of Eternity in God’s Will**

## **1. No More Sin**

Revelation 21:27 declares that nothing defiling will enter the new Jerusalem. God’s will is a realm of holiness.

## **2. No More Suffering**

Revelation 21:4 promises: “God shall wipe away all tears... there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.”

## **3. Perfect Righteousness**

2 Peter 3:13 describes the new heavens and new earth “wherein dwelleth righteousness.” God’s eternal will is perfect righteousness reigning forever.

## **4. Eternal Light**

Revelation 22:5 says there will be no night there, for the Lord God gives light. God’s will is eternal illumination of His glory.

# **V. The Redeemed in God’s Eternal Will**

## **1. Perfect Fellowship**

Believers will see His face (Revelation 22:4). God’s will is unbroken communion forever.

## **2. Perfect Service**

Revelation 22:3 declares: “His servants shall serve him.” Eternity is not idle rest but joyful service.

### **3. Perfect Reign**

Revelation 22:5 promises: “They shall reign for ever and ever.” God’s will is that His people share in Christ’s reign.

### **4. Perfect Joy**

Psalms 16:11 says: “In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” God’s eternal will is unending joy.

## **VI. The Contrast: The Lost and God’s Eternal Will**

### **1. Eternal Judgment**

Those who reject Christ will face eternal separation in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15). God’s will is vindicated in judgment.

### **2. The Justice of God**

God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9), yet those who reject His grace will experience His eternal justice.

### **3. The Triumph of Righteousness**

In eternity, God’s will is perfectly displayed in both salvation and judgment. His holiness is vindicated.

## **VII. The Eternal Will of God and the Glory of Christ**

### **1. Christ as Center**

Revelation portrays the Lamb at the center of eternity. God’s will is that Christ be glorified forever.

### **2. Christ as Light**

Revelation 21:23 says the Lamb is the light of the new Jerusalem. His glory illuminates eternity.

### **3. Christ as Bridegroom**

The eternal marriage of the Lamb and His bride reveals God's will for everlasting union with His people.

## **VIII. How God's Eternal Will Shapes the Present**

### **1. Motivation for Holiness**

2 Peter 3:11 asks: "What manner of persons ought ye to be... looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" God's eternal will motivates present holiness.

### **2. Comfort in Suffering**

Romans 8:18 assures that present sufferings are not worthy to compare with future glory. God's eternal will gives perspective.

### **3. Encouragement in Service**

1 Corinthians 15:58 says labor is not in vain because of resurrection hope. Eternity fuels faithful service.

### **4. Hope in Death**

For believers, death is not the end but entrance into eternal will. Philippians 1:23 calls it "far better."

## **IX. Misconceptions About God's Eternal Will**

- **Misconception 1:** Eternity is boring.
  - Truth: Eternity is endless joy, service, and fellowship.
- **Misconception 2:** Heaven is disembodied existence.
  - Truth: God's will is resurrection and new creation.
- **Misconception 3:** Everyone eventually enters heaven.
  - Truth: God's will includes eternal judgment for unbelief.
- **Misconception 4:** Eternity begins after death.
  - Truth: Eternal life begins now through Christ (John 17:3).

## **X. Encouragements from God's Eternal Will**

### **1. It Is Certain**

God's eternal will cannot fail. Revelation assures its fulfillment.

### **2. It Is Glorious**

Eternity surpasses imagination. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says eye has not seen what God has prepared.

### **3. It Is Near**

Romans 13:11 warns that salvation is nearer than when we believed. God's eternal will is at hand.

### **4. It Is Worth It**

Whatever cost we pay now is nothing compared to eternal joy.

## **Conclusion: Thy Will Be Done, Forever**

From Genesis to Revelation, God's will unfolds—creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. The climax is eternity in the new heaven and new earth, where His will is perfectly realized.

In eternity, His people will be sanctified fully, glorified forever, serving joyfully, reigning eternally, and beholding His face. His will is perfect fellowship, perfect righteousness, and perfect joy.

This hope strengthens us now. It teaches us to live holy, endure trials, serve faithfully, and fix our eyes on what is eternal.

The prayer, "Thy will be done," will one day be answered in full—forever. And the redeemed will rejoice eternally in the perfect, unchanging will of God.

## **25 of 25: Understanding the Will of God – The Perfect Will of God Accomplished**

### **Introduction: From Eternity to Eternity**

We began this series exploring what the will of God is, what it is not, and how it unfolds in salvation, sanctification, service, suffering, and thanksgiving. Now we conclude with the grand finale: the day when God's perfect will is fully accomplished.

The Bible promises that history is not random but purposeful, moving toward the ultimate triumph of Christ. Philippians 2:10–11 declares:

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This final essay will trace the biblical teaching on the accomplishment of God's will: His eternal plan, the triumph of Christ, the submission of all creation, and the eternal glory of God.

## **I. The Eternal Plan of God**

### **1. God's Purpose Before Time**

Ephesians 1:4–5 speaks of God choosing us in Christ “before the foundation of the world.” His will was established before creation.

### **2. The Mystery of His Will**

Ephesians 1:9–10 reveals the mystery: “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ.” The perfect will of God is the summing up of all things in Christ.

### **3. God's Sovereignty in History**

From creation to consummation, God works all things according to His will (Ephesians 1:11). Nothing derails His plan.

## **II. The Triumph of Christ**

### **1. The Cross as the Fulfillment of God's Will**

Hebrews 10:10 says: “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” The cross was central to God's will.

### **2. The Resurrection as Victory**

Romans 1:4 declares Christ “the Son of God with power... by the resurrection from the dead.” His resurrection proved the triumph of God’s will.

### **3. The Ascension and Exaltation**

Acts 2:33–36 proclaims Christ exalted at the right hand of God as both Lord and Christ. God’s will is accomplished in His exaltation.

## **III. Every Knee Bowing**

### **1. Universal Submission**

Philippians 2:10–11 promises every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord. This includes angels, saints, and even enemies.

### **2. Voluntary and Compulsory Confession**

Believers confess willingly now, but one day even the rebellious will be compelled to acknowledge Christ’s lordship.

### **3. The Glory of God the Father**

The ultimate purpose is God’s glory. All confession of Christ magnifies the Father’s will.

## **IV. The Defeat of Evil**

### **1. Satan’s Final Doom**

Revelation 20:10 says the devil will be cast into the lake of fire forever. God’s will includes the final defeat of His enemy.

### **2. The End of Sin**

Revelation 21:27 assures nothing unclean will enter the new Jerusalem. God’s perfect will is a holy creation.

### **3. The End of Death**

1 Corinthians 15:26 declares: “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” God’s will is eternal life for His people.

## **V. The New Creation**

## **1. New Heavens and New Earth**

Revelation 21 describes the new creation where God dwells with His people. This fulfills His will from eternity.

## **2. God's Presence**

Revelation 21:3 promises: "He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people." God's will is eternal fellowship.

## **3. God's Glory**

Revelation 22:5 shows His glory illuminating all. God's will is eternal light and joy.

## **VI. The Church's Role in God's Will**

### **1. The Bride of Christ**

Revelation 19:7–9 presents the marriage supper of the Lamb. God's will is union of Christ and His bride.

### **2. The Reign of the Saints**

Revelation 22:5 promises believers will reign forever. God's will includes sharing Christ's rule.

### **3. The Praise of the Redeemed**

Ephesians 1:12 says believers exist "to the praise of his glory." Eternity fulfills this purpose.

## **VII. How Believers Anticipate the Perfect Will of God**

### **1. Living in Hope**

Titus 2:13 calls us to look for "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

### **2. Living in Holiness**

2 Peter 3:11 exhorts: "What manner of persons ought ye to be... looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?"

### **3. Living in Service**

1 Corinthians 15:58 commands: “Be steadfast... forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” Anticipating God’s perfect will motivates service.

## **VIII. Misconceptions About the Final Triumph**

- **Misconception 1:** Evil will triumph in the end.
  - Truth: God’s will guarantees Christ’s victory.
- **Misconception 2:** Everyone will be saved.
  - Truth: Only those in Christ will share His triumph.
- **Misconception 3:** Eternity is passive.
  - Truth: God’s will includes eternal service and reigning.
- **Misconception 4:** The future is uncertain.
  - Truth: God’s will is sure and unchanging.

## **IX. Encouragements from the Perfect Will of God**

### **1. Assurance**

God’s will cannot fail. His plan is certain.

### **2. Comfort**

Believers facing trials know history ends in victory.

### **3. Motivation**

Knowing God’s will is accomplished fuels obedience now.

### **4. Worship**

The vision of God’s perfect will leads to worship: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power” (Revelation 4:11).

## **Conclusion: The Will of God Accomplished**

From before time, God's will has been unfolding. It reached its center at the cross, advances now through the church, and will be consummated when every knee bows to Christ.

The perfect will of God accomplished means evil defeated, creation renewed, saints glorified, and Christ exalted. History ends not in chaos but in Christ.

Philippians 2:10–11 captures the finale: every knee will bow, every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father.

This is the destiny of the universe—the perfect will of God, fully and finally accomplished. And this is the hope of every believer: to see Christ glorified forever, to share His triumph, and to rejoice in the eternal perfection of God's will.

### **Conclusion: The Glory of God's Will**

We have walked through twenty-five essays, tracing the will of God from the first pages of Scripture to the final triumph of eternity. Along the way we have wrestled with misconceptions, refuted false teachings, examined biblical case studies, and uncovered plain commands. We have looked at sanctification, thanksgiving, obedience, service, suffering, and eternity. And now we come full circle to this truth: **God's will is not a puzzle to be solved, but a path to be walked in faith.**

### **God's Will Is Knowable**

The world treats the will of God like a riddle. Many Christians fear missing it, as though one wrong decision could ruin everything. Yet Scripture never presents God's will that way. Romans 12:2 assures us that by the renewing of our minds we may *prove* His will—experience it as good, acceptable, and perfect. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 tells us plainly: “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18 declares: “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God.” God is not silent, nor is He playing games with His children. His will is revealed in His Word, lived out by His Spirit, and proven in daily obedience.

### **God's Will Is Good**

Every essay in this series points back to this: the will of God is not something to be dreaded, but embraced. It is not a cage that restricts, but wings that lift us into the life we were created for. Even suffering, when it is the will of God, carries purpose and eternal reward. Even trials refine us into the image of Christ. God's will sanctifies us, strengthens

us, directs us, and fills us with joy. As Romans 8:28 reminds us, all things—pleasant or painful—work together for good to them that love God.

### **God's Will Is Christ**

Above all, the will of God is not primarily about places, careers, or circumstances—it is about a Person. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of God's will. He came to do His Father's will (John 6:38). He submitted in Gethsemane: "Not my will, but thine, be done." He accomplished redemption through the cross, the very center of God's eternal plan. To live in God's will is to live in Him, walk with Him, follow Him, and glorify Him.

### **God's Will Is Eternal**

This series ends where the Bible ends: with God's will fully accomplished in the new heaven and new earth. Every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess. Every saint will be glorified. Every enemy will be defeated. Every tear will be wiped away. The prayer "Thy will be done" will be answered in full, forever. Eternity will echo with the perfect, unchanging will of God.

### **Final Exhortation**

If you take nothing else from this series, take this: **God's will is not hidden. It is revealed in His Word, proven in daily obedience, tested in suffering, and perfected in eternity.** Do not wait for signs, dreams, or mystical whispers. Do not chase the world's distortions of prosperity or fatalism. Open your Bible. Walk in holiness. Give thanks in everything. Serve with gladness. Endure suffering with faith. Look to Christ.

In doing so, you will not only *know* the will of God—you will *live* it. And in living it, you will discover the greatest truth of all: God's will is not a burden but a blessing, not a mystery but a marvel, not a dead end but a doorway into eternal joy.

As Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:12, our purpose is "that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." That is the will of God. That is the conclusion of this series. And that will be the song of eternity.

**Thy will be done—on earth as it is in heaven, until the day it is perfectly accomplished forever.**