

# Doing the Will of God

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When we turn to the Scriptures to study out the will of God, we find a surprisingly wide array of topics to cover. We can easily discover a few instances where someone says clearly, “This is the will of God...” But we must look beyond this simple formula and look for our personal responsibilities in response to and in connection with God’s will. When we do so, we find that it is not enough to *know* something of or about God’s will – we must actually *do* God’s will or we will suffer the consequences. The first thing we will find is that God’s purpose in connection with the human race is to make for Himself a family. This purpose entails a design for each individual’s life and it will entail some amount of suffering on our part. Surprisingly, God’s will is inextricably linked to overcoming deception – the work of His enemy who tries to keep individuals from attaining to His family. And whether we adhere to God’s will or not will have great impact on our eternal rewards and even our eternal destiny.

## Brotherhood

“All men are brothers” many well-intentioned philosophers have proclaimed and too many people claiming to follow Christ have embraced this notion as infallible truth with the result that God’s will is resisted, neglected and ignored. It is not that this notion is entirely false or that it contains no elements of truth – it is that this notion has the capability to exalt the human will above the divine will and that this can be done carelessly and without intent to do evil. The end result of evil is accomplished nonetheless. Let us explore the Scriptures concerning God’s purpose to have a family.

John wrote, “As many as received Him [Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, the Christ, the Word that *is* God], to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (Jn. 1:12-13)

This is the core of the gospel of Jesus Christ: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent [on a pole – Num. 21:9] in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man [Jesus] be lifted up [on the cross], that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (Jn. 3:14-16) We have looked at these passages from our own point of view for so long – and it is a wonderful thing to behold! – that we have most often failed to see God’s overarching purpose: to bring into existence a brotherhood based on His Son Jesus. This brotherhood is rooted in the love and will of God, not in one’s existence as a human being. This brotherhood is open and available to any who will believe – God is not *willing* or desirous that *any* should perish (2 Pet. 3:9) – but those who reject this divine brotherhood will perish nonetheless. (Rev. 20:15)

This brotherhood, like all families, is rooted in its fatherhood – and how one lives one’s life demonstrates just who one’s father really is: Adam, God or Satan. (see Jn. 5:30, 8:44, Rom. 5:12) Paul wrote, “God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and ‘Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.’” (2 Tim. 2:19) This solid foundation is also at the core of the gospel of Christ. (also see 1 Pet. 4:17)

Paul wrote, “Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image

[likeness] of His Son, that He [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom. 8:29)

Those whom God foreknew would be born into His family He predestined to be like Jesus. We can turn this around and recognize that those who refuse to be made like unto Jesus are not really in His family – no matter what titles (“pastor,” “elder,” “Christian,” etc.) the person may take unto himself! (Also see 2 Tim. 1:9)

Jesus made this plain when He said, “Whoever *does* the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother [My family].” (Mk. 3:35 - emphasis added; also see Mt. 12:50) We must actually *do* the will of God if we want to actually be in His family.

### **Knowing God’s Will**

Paul wrote, “[God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” (Eph. 1:4-11)

We could easily spend a great deal of time here and be the better for it! But let us simply look at some key words in this passage and relate them back to what we’ve already seen.

- God chose us – we were born again by the will of God when we responded in faith in the Son of God.
- We should be holy and blameless if we’re in His family – conformed to the likeness of Christ, departing from all wickedness.
- We have been adopted as sons – God can be our Father instead of Adam and/or Satan.
- The mystery of His will, His good pleasure – a spiritually “concealed” agenda of God that must be revealed to us by His Spirit of truth. (also see 1 Cor. 2:10)

Paul tells us here that God “works all things according to the counsel of His will.” (v. 11) Some have used this statement as a refutation of our responsibility to choose to do God’s will – combining it with Paul’s argument, “Who has resisted His will?” (Rom. 9:19 - a passage we will examine later). What this overlooks is the nature of God’s purpose. God’s purpose is to have a family – His overall purpose will not be thwarted. He will have His family. (see Eph. 3:11) But whether an individual attains to that family or not is that individual’s choice. God will manipulate circumstances so that the individual has every possible opportunity and chance to choose God’s ways (whether that includes the preached message of Christ or not!) or to reject His truth, light, goodness and/or righteousness. That the message of Christ is not a necessary requirement for eternal life is seen in that the people redeemed come “out of *every* tribe and

tongue and people and nation.” (Rev. 5:9 - emphasis added) Christ’s redemptive work extends *far* beyond the reach of the evangelistic preaching work of His relatively few followers! (also see Rom. 2:6-11)

What we see here is that God works all of human history’s events through the filter of His eternal purpose to have a family – to which He is more than entitled because Christ purchased all humankind with His blood – but nothing here eliminates our need to pursue the will of God for our own individual lives. Again, God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9) but neither is He going to force anyone to enter into His family and partake of eternal life and righteousness. God is not holding a gun to anyone’s head and saying, “Be My son or I’ll kill you.” He is simply saying, “This world is dying but you don’t have to perish along with it in its darkness. You can be My child of love, light, truth, righteousness, peace and joy. But the choice is yours to make – choose wisely!”

Paul thought it necessary to intercede for others to know what God’s will was. Some read Paul’s statements, “...having *made known* to us the mystery of His will...” (Eph. 1:9) and “God *has revealed* them to us through His Spirit...” (1 Cor. 2:10) and concoct a theology that says, in effect, we already know all that we need to know. What then is the purpose of being led - a *process* - into all truth? (see Jn. 16:13) The will of God, especially for our individual lives, is a progressive revelation!

Paul wrote, “We also, since the day we heard [of your conversion to Christ], do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” (Col. 1:9) This is not just a prayer that the Colossians would grasp the concept that God intends to bring into being His family. It is Paul’s prayer that the Colossians would be able to spiritually reason and discern what actions God would have them do so that their individual lives would be in complete cooperation and harmony with His overarching purpose. The human doing only what is right in his own eyes (lawlessness), no matter how “spiritual” or “religious” his activities are (see Mt. 7:21-23 - another passage we will examine later), is carnal (fleshly) and is practicing enmity against God. (Rom. 8:7)

### **Suffering**

Many people who claim to follow Christ think that if you are suffering some sickness or lack of provision or experiencing mistreatment from others then you must be operating outside of the will of God for your life. This only demonstrates how deeply deceived that which claims to be the body of Christ really is.

Peter wrote, “...let those who suffer *according to the will of God* commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.” (1 Pet. 4:19 - emphasis added; also see Acts 21:14) Suffering *according to* the will of God? To some that’s blasphemy or sacrilege! But it is what the Scriptures really say!

Peter also wrote, “For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” (1 Pet. 3:17) In God’s valuation, it is *better* that we suffer for doing good than that we suffer because we have done evil! This is contrary to most people’s notions about suffering.

In Hebrews we find, “For you have need of endurance, so that *after* you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. (Heb. 10:36 - emphasis added) After we’ve done God’s will we have to wait until God gives us what He has promised. This time of endurance and suffering may last for years *after* we’ve already done God’s will! Circumstances of suffering are not necessarily a good indication of being in or out of God’s will – and we should

exercise even greater care that we don't allow someone else's sufferings to be an excuse for us not having to love them where they are at!

Peter also wrote, "For this *is* the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." (1 Pet. 2:15 - emphasis added) When we do good according to the will of God (see Eph. 2:10) the purpose is to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. It is foolish (those who deny God – Psa. 53:1) and ignorant (those who claim to be wise but their thoughts are futile and their hearts are darkened – Rom. 1:21-22) men who most often persecute the followers of Christ. Paul wrote, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:12 - emphasis added) This is a promise not often claimed by the "name it and claim it" clubs!

### **Deception**

Another factor often overlooked about the will of God is that desiring God's will is *the primary defense* against deception. Jesus said, "If anyone wants to do [God's] will, *he shall know* concerning the teaching, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority." (Jn. 7:17 - emphasis added) Jesus here puts His teachings up for questioning, testing and confirmation (where does that leave all those other preachers and teachers claiming to be the untouchable "anointed of God"? ) and tells us that the only way anyone can know if a teaching is from God or men is if they truly want to do God's will (whatever that may be or entail or cost).

Jesus, in teaching His disciples to pray, included the will of God as an integral request. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Mt. 6:10, Lk. 11:12) If this were not a basic element of living for Christ, it would hardly have this prominence in the Lord's instruction regarding prayer. That desiring God's will is the primary defense against deception makes knowing and doing the will of God a dire necessity in these last days.

Jesus, in answering the disciples' questions about the end of the age, said, "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the [anointed one],' and will deceive many." (Mt. 24:4-5) None claim to have God's anointing and none actively deceives the numbers that would constitute "many" than does today's "pastors."

John records the story of the man born blind:

So [the Pharisees] again called the man who was blind and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner!"

He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from."

The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He has opened my eyes. Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing."

They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out. (Jn. 9:24-34)

We could spend a lot of time here too – but let us notice the things pertinent to our current study:

- First, we see the Pharisees – the men learned and studied in the Scriptures and vested with legal power and authority – completely blind and ignorant of the identity of Jesus who was “the express image of God’s person.” (Heb. 1:3) These had so allowed their traditions to war against the word of God that they saw Jesus as a sinner and a threat – not much different than today’s “pastors” who have so institutionalized the “church” that Jesus is almost not welcome – the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind, the orphans and widows and the least of Christ’s brothers are often ostracized as being under God’s judgment and/or outside of His will – and Jesus is certainly never allowed to be in complete control of the “ministry” being done in His name!
- Second, we see a man born blind who is more aware of the spiritual realities at work in the situation at hand. Many people in the world today see the sins of the “church” and the “pastor” more readily than do the people who attend these counterfeits of God’s way. The people of the world are often wiser and healthier in their attitudes and behaviors than many a “church”-ite!
- Third, the Pharisees could know Moses backwards and forwards because Moses was dead. Nothing Moses said was going to change (unless these power mongers re-interpreted his words, conveniently leaving *them* in virtually absolute control over the people). Jesus, being still alive, better able to draw crowds than they were and obviously antagonistic to their hypocrisies, was an unpredictable and uncontrollable challenge to their position and authority. Again, not much different than the “pastors” who take great care to allow only those who agree with their “ministry” to speak in their “church.” All those “self-proclaimed” prophets and dissidents are denounced and pushed away as “divisive” anti-establishment riff-raff.
- Fourth, the blind man teaches truth to the Pharisees – and both the truth and the man are rejected. The man had been born in sin – the obvious judgment of blindness was apparent for all to see – so the Pharisees logically reasons. But their logical reasoning, as it almost always will be, was contrary to the spiritual reality that the man had been born blind so “that the works of God should be revealed in him.” (Jn. 9:3) In the end, the man born blind believed in Jesus (Jn. 9:38) but even the Pharisees who were following Jesus remained blind. (Jn. 9:41) The “pastors” and “church”-ites who think their knowledge of the Bible will save them are no different than these Pharisees. (Jn. 5:39)

“...God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.” (Jn. 9:31) Though this was not preached by one of Christ’s followers, it is a more valid teaching than what one will hear at many a “church”!

Paul wrote, “The time will come when [the people who listen to preachers] will not

endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” (2 Tim. 4:3-4) The truth, sound doctrine, is already not welcome in many a “church.”

Jesus said, “They will put you out of the synagogue...” (Can anyone list any significant differences between a synagogue and a “church”? Other than the differing focus on Moses and Jesus, this author is unable to make such a list!) “...the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.” (Jn. 16:2-3) The Jews know Moses, the Islamists know Allah and the “Christians” know a “Jesus” of their own imagination and manufacture. (see 2 Cor. 11:3-4) but very, very few know Jesus as He really is nor do they know the heavenly Father who is the only real, true God. *Every nation will hate the true followers of the only real Christ (Mt. 24:9) and will come to believe that they are serving God by removing such people as genuinely follow Him in spirit and truth from existence – and God will allow this! (see Rev. 13:7)*

### **Destiny**

Few “churches” or “pastors” seem to have caught the link between doing God’s will and our eternal destiny. Jesus said, “Not everyone who *says* to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does* the will of My Father in heaven.” (Mt. 7:21 - emphasis added) Only those who actually *do* God’s will get to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus clarified His meaning even further when He continued, “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ (Mt. 7:22-23)

This is quite the list of religious activities – practiced most often by men with the title “pastor” nonetheless! But all these things can obviously be done apart from God! Lawlessness, doing what is right in one’s own eyes, has no fellowship, no unity, no commonality with righteousness, doing what is right in God’s eyes. (2 Cor. 6:14)

John wrote, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but *he who does the will of God abides forever.*” (1 Jn. 2:15-17 - emphasis added)

The “pastor” (as but one example) who defrauds his congregation of their “tithes and offerings” so that he might have the latest piece of technology loves the world and the love of the Father is not in him. When the world passes away he – and all his followers who are more attached to him than they are to Christ – will pass away too. But he who does the will of God – whatever that might mean and however much it might cost him – abides *forever*. Let he who has ears hear!

It is in connection with our eternal destiny that we encounter again the argument of “Who can resist God’s will?” Let us examine that passage more closely. Paul wrote:

“[God] says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh,

‘Even for this same purpose I have raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be declared in all the earth.’ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?’ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory?” (Rom. 9:15-23)

We could certainly spend a great deal of time here! But again, let us keep to our focus on doing the will of God.

Some have applied this passage to their concept of eternal salvation and have come away with a theology that says, in effect, “If God has chosen you to be a vessel of His mercy, great! But if God has chosen you to be a vessel of His wrath, there is no hope for you.” This is the heart of the “predestination” arguments and theologies and what a picture of capriciousness it paints God out to be!

But let us consider whom *the Scriptures* say that God has *already* chosen to bestow mercy and compassion upon: “...*whoever* believes in Him [Christ, the crucified King] should not perish but have everlasting life.” (Jn. 3:16 - emphasis added) It is because unspiritual (natural, carnal) men cannot fathom God’s ability to *foreknow* who will choose to receive and who will choose to reject Christ (however He is presented to them) that theologies that distort the image of God gain credence. *God* has put the choice on men – He is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9) – but men love their own darkness more than His light. (Jn. 3:19) When all is said and done, *everyone* will say, “True and righteous are [God’s] judgments.” (Rev. 19:2)

It is in this light that the question – Who has resisted God’s will? – is answered: Many. Many are deceived. Many are perishing. Many are lost or languishing alone in their torments. Many have resisted God’s will that they enter into life – the lost and dying condition of the world is proof of this – the surprising thing is that God permits it all to be so. He bought the whole world, with all its sorrows and pains, just to gain His family. (Mt. 13:44) Yet many times it is the people who claim the loudest to be His children who resist His will the most!

## Conclusion

In Hebrews we find:

Therefore, when [Jesus] came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come – in the volume of the book it is written of Me – to do Your will, O God.’”

Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law), then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Heb. 10:6-10)

We could certainly spend quite some time here! Yet again, let us stick to our focus at hand – doing the will of God. Let us notice only two things here.

First, God took no pleasure in men's efforts to obey even His law. God did not give the law to make men righteous, that is, right in God's eyes. (Rom. 3:20) He gave the law to curb the evil that resides in the hearts of men and to show men they needed a Savior. (1 Tim. 1:9, Gal. 3:24) God's righteous requirements are not satisfied by religious activities (as we clearly saw yet again in Mt. 7:22-23) – His righteous requirements are satisfied when we conform to His will (that we be like Christ – Rom. 8:29)

Second, we see that Christ came only to do God's will. This is readily confirmed in the New Testament (Jn. 4:34, 5:30, 6:38, etc.) but it should also be noted that Jesus chose God's will as being more important than His own life. (Mt. 26:42, Lk. 22:42) It was the doing of the will of God that abolished the rites and rituals of religion and replaced it with an ongoing, intimate relationship with the Father. Knowledge, rites, rituals, sacrifices, positions, rules, creeds, dogmas – none of these were Jesus' highest priority. The will of God was.

This is by no means an exhaustive study on God's will – such a thing would probably be impossible! But it is the major threads as seen in the New Testament. Paul wrote, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both *to will and to do* for His good pleasure." (Phlp. 2:12-13 - emphasis added)

What is God's good pleasure? To conform us to the image of Christ. (Rom. 8:29, etc.) How is He going to do that? Paul wrote that we would "...all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13) This *is* the purpose of God for which He has predestined us – conformity with the likeness of Christ, both individually and corporately! So why do we not see anything like this today?

Because the conditions of attaining to this likeness have not been met. Paul wrote that we would attain to this likeness after "...the equipping of the saints for the work of service, for the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12) *until* we attained to the likeness of Christ. Why is it that we do not see the saints equipped for service and the body of Christ built up? In a word: "church." Instead of *being* the body of Christ too many have settled for routinely going to "church." Why is this?

There are many reasons why (and how) this has occurred – too many for the scope of this study – but let us look at but one, the one which directly precedes the passage at hand. Paul wrote, "He Himself gave [to men] some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers." (Eph. 4:11) By routinely submitting to the "church's" counterfeit role of "pastor," all the fivefold gifts of Christ to His people are neglected, ignored and even ostracized or expelled! Only those who support the "ministry" of the "church" and the "pastor" could possibly be true expressions of these giftings – or so the "pastor" and staff teach! See anything self-serving in that?

It is not that the fivefold giftings get to be the clergy and the congregation should then sit passively under all their preachings. That is merely the "church" paradigm corrupting God's way of maturing His body – and rendering any aspect of life passive is a strategy of the demonic.

Actively "submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21) is God's way. Submit to the Nicolaitan overlord called "pastor" is the "church's" way and, in so doing, God's will is resisted.



The fivefold gifts that God gives to men to mature His body are not officers holding offices to which everyone else is to submit. This too is the “church” paradigm corrupting God’s way. Each of the fivefold giftings is but one aspect, one expression, of the Christ nature in those people. The idea that these giftings must be in men is from the Nicolaitan practice of excluding and lording over women, not from the Scriptures. It is true that many a first work, especially in the days of Paul, was accomplished by men (see Phlm. 24 for a list of Paul’s fellow laborers, for example) but women were by no means excluded (see Rom. 16:1-7. Note that Phoebe and Junia are called *apostles* in the original Greek and that Priscilla is said to be one of Paul’s fellow workers.) We have much leaven (the traditions of men and the deceptions of the demonic) to purge out of our thinking!

God’s way is for His fivefold gifts to simply share their individual gifts (in truth, their lives) in the grace that is given to *each one of us*. (Eph. 4:7) Peter also wrote, “As *each one* has received a gift, serve it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1 Pet. 4:10 - emphasis added)

There is much confusion surrounding this mystery of Christ and His ekklesia because all of the kingdom of heaven among men has become leavened (see Mt. 13:33) with the hypocritical traditions of men (see Mt. 15:3) and the deceptive ideas and teachings of the demonic. (1 Tim. 4:1) The sound doctrine of serving and submitting to one another (Tit. 2:1-15) has been scorned and traded in for stories, often Bible stories! (see 2 Tim. 4:3-4) The “church,” as the vehicle for the great falling away from the faith (Mt. 24:11-12, etc.) is dedicated to keeping you from attaining to the will of God, the likeness of Christ, and instead conforms you into a pew potato. It remains a truth, however – and one spoken by Jesus Himself – that only those who *do* the will of the heavenly Father will be permitted to enter the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 7:21)

Let He who has ears hear.

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