

God's Will

(The following contains some of my own material and input along with copy and pasted commentary from publicly sourced commentaries as well as interpretive tools from logos bible software.)

Definition

God's will is His eternal and sovereign purpose, by which He orders all things (Gill, Calvin, Barnes), together with His revealed commands in Scripture that express what He desires His people to do (Barnes, Cambridge, Pulpit). In prayer, God's will refers to requests that align with His character, His Word, and the redemptive mission of Christ (Meyer, Gill, Cambridge, MacArthur, Piper). In purpose, it is for the sanctification or consecration, Him setting apart those who have faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

We should also note while we generally identify “God’s will” as singular, there are different aspects of it that need defining. While everything does indeed occur by His will, Adam and Eve is different than Uzzah and the Ark. Below is a more rigorous breakdown of different aspects of God’s will as be described in scripture. One Will presented in different ways throughout scripture.

Gotquestions.org

Theme: Examining the Three Aspects of God's Will: Decretive/Sovereign, Preceptive/Revealed, and Dispositional

- The following breakdown of God’s will is found on Gotquestions.org:

1. Decretive/Sovereign Will

- **Definition:** God's unchangeable, sovereign decrees that always come to pass, either directly (efficacious) or indirectly (permissive).
- **Key Points:**

- o God's Redemptive Plan. Jesus was always Plan A even before the foundation of the world.
 - o God's sovereignty ensures that His purposes are fulfilled, even through events that are perplexing to human understanding.
 - o Includes events where God's holiness and justice are displayed, as in the case of Uzzah.
 - o Example: Uzzah's death demonstrates God's sovereign decree regarding the holiness of the Ark and the need for obedience to His instructions (2 Samuel 6:6-7). Though it may seem harsh, it reveals God's unchanging standards.
- **Primary Scripture Texts:**
 - o **Isaiah 46:9-10** – *"I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'"*
 - o **Ephesians 1:11** – *"In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will."*
 - o **2 Samuel 6:6-7** – *"And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God."*

2. Preceptive/Revealed Will

- **Definition:** God's expressed commandments and moral laws that reveal how we ought to live, allowing for human choice and responsibility.
- **Key Points:**
 - God's revealed will provides guidance for living in obedience.
 - Human choices operate within God's sovereign purposes, as seen in the story of Adam and Eve.
 - Example: Adam and Eve's disobedience to God's revealed command not to eat from the tree (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6) illustrates how free will operates under God's sovereign plan, leading to consequences for humanity.
- **Primary Scripture Texts:**
 - **Micah 6:8** – *"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"*
 - **Deuteronomy 29:29** – *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever; that we may do all the words of this law."*
 - **Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6** – Adam and Eve's choice to disobey God's command highlights the role of God's revealed will and human responsibility.

3. Dispositional Will

- **Definition:** God's emotional or attitudinal desire, reflecting what pleases Him, such as the salvation of all people and the flourishing of His creation.
- **Key Points:**
 - Reflects God's love and desire for human flourishing and salvation.

- o Shows what God delights in, though not all His desires (dispositional) come to pass due to human rebellion.
- o Example: John 3:16 reveals God's deep love for the world and His desire for salvation for all who believe in Him.
- **Primary Scripture Texts:**
 - o **John 3:16** – *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*
 - o **Ezekiel 18:23** – *"Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?"*
 - o **2 Peter 3:9** – *"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."*

Heaven-Down not Man-Up

1. Humanity exists for God's glory, not God for humanity.

Isaiah 43:7

7 Everyone who is called by My name,
And whom I have created for My glory,
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

Ephesians 1:11

In Him **11** also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will...

- As Christians Predestination is one of those things we try to avoid at all cost because it is utterly unfathomable that all of the future is already decided. Now by

saying that, that is said from the Divine perspective not OUR perspective. Our Futures are constantly changing and shifting according to the changing of our will. But the fact still remains if God is all knowing and He is perfect in everything, then nothing is “not known” to Him. So, whether He causes things to happen or allows them to occur, ALL THINGS work according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

- Understanding Ephesians chapter one must be done carefully, humbly, and in complete reverence. There are two Biblical viewpoints that both can be defended and have sound biblical basis. That God pre-ordained all things “active tense” by causing all things to come to pass. Meaning He has ordained ALL THINGS. He caused all good things and he allowed all bad things and works all things towards His good purpose (Redemption). Or Through His knowledge of the future, He allowed all things to occur and predestined all things through the knowledge of what would occur (Passive).
- The important thing is that God one way or the other did this because of what Ephesians chapter 1 says.
- Both viewpoints can be defended Biblically. These discussions are “In-House” issues and debates among believers. Sometimes for sake of unity of the Body it is important to acknowledge the common ground of both biblical viewpoints-God is in control of Redemptive History, Present, and Future. I believe that should be the agreeable stance of the church and leave theologians to have their debates and chest thumping.

2. The Lord working IN us FOR us

Isaiah 64:8

8 But now, O Lord, You are our Father,
We are the clay, and You our potter;
And all of us are the work of Your hand.

Romans 9:19-23

19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" **20** On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? **21** Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? **22** What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? **23** And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

- Romans 9 verses are not saying that God created these vessels of wrath solely for destruction because the verse says "he endures them with much patience." But Paul is quoting from Isaiah the same concept. Potter and the clay.
- God as the creator has the prerogative to do what "He wills." That sounds arbitrary when it is detached from the attributes of God. But understood within His attributes it makes more sense:
 - 1) Immutability- He is unchangeable
 - 2) Omniscience- All Knowing
 - 3) Omnipotence- All powerful
 - 4) Love- God is Love
 - 5) Holiness- Uniqueness, otherness, pure utterly distinct from creation
 - 6) Righteousness- Perfectly Right
 - 7) Patient- Perfectly patient, wishing none to perish (meaning their rebellion is according to the creature not the creator)
 - 8) Faithfulness- He always keeps His word.
 - 9) Truthfulness- He always speaks the truth, He cannot lie
 - 10) Wisdom- He always chooses the best ends by the best means
- Whatever He wills is always perfect, righteous, and just.
- Trust in submission to His will. That he cannot make mistakes and all things that occur is for His glory.

Matthew 6:10 & 6:33

10 “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

33 “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

- Jesus teaches His disciples to pray for God’s will to be highest, shaping life on earth just as it does in heaven.
- These are **conditional statements**. Just as in John 14, the condition is “seeking first the kingdom of heaven” then these things will be added to you.
- **Parallels between Matt 6 and 7: Sermon on the Mount**

Matthew 6:25–34 (Do Not Worry)

Do not worry about your life (6:25)

God provides for the birds and the flowers
won’t He care for you? (6:26–30)

Seek first the kingdom of God, and these things
will be added (6:33)

God knows what you need before you ask
(6:32)

Matthew 7:7–11 (Ask, Seek, Knock)

Ask, and it will be given to you (7:7)

If earthly fathers give good gifts, how
much more will God? (7:9–11)

Seek and you will find (7:7)

Your Father in heaven gives good things
to those who ask (7:11)

Matthew 7:21-23

- 21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, **but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.** 22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’
- This is within the context of Teachers who taught accurately the word of God “Pharisees” but inwardly were ravenous wolves. They preached God’s will and

instructed everyone to submit to it. Yet, because they were “important” did not submit to it in their own self-righteousness.

- This is one of the scariest verses in the Bible. These were teachers of the Law, accurately teaching the Bible, yet never fully submitted their hearts to God. They were completely self-righteous because their belief had become their religion. Legalism infiltrated their worship and it became what they did not a true not what God has done or will do. Exposing the lack of true changing of their hearts and submission to God.

John 4:31-34

31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." 32 But He said to them, **"I have food to eat that you do not know about."** 33 So the disciples were saying to one another, "No one brought Him *anything* to eat, did he?" 34 Jesus *said to them, **"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."**

- Another example of Jesus contrasting worldly food and spiritual food.
- If he is the standard bearer, then He is setting the standard.
- We should not confuse this with lacking effort though. James in chapter 2 says “faith without works is dead.” Genuine saving faith produces the believer to act.
- Sin cannot remain stagnant. The flipside of that coin, faith cannot either. Both actively engage, pursue, and enact upon the believer action.

John 5:30

30 "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 6:38

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

- Jesus the standard bearer, setting the standard.

Luke 9:23

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”

- While the phrase “God’s will” is not used here, Jesus directly states that discipleship means denying self not seeking one’s own will.
- The purpose is to align our wills with the will of the Father. Not to neglect things that we do desire but ultimately trusting that if our desires or wants do not come to fruition that God knew best. It was not based upon our lack of faith.
- To say that would be closely tied to works and merit based legalism. Paul sums this up. IF our faith is sufficient enough or good enough then it is no longer on the basis of grace but has become wages that are due to those who did the work.
- Romans 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.... 16 For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all
- Again in Chapter 11 of Romans: 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.- Speaking about God keeping a remnant for himself of Israel.
- The context is addressing different content. However, the concept is concrete throughout.

- If our Faith was strong enough and good enough on its own merit then it would not be on the basis of grace but of works and works are owed wages according to Divine Justice.

From the Gospels:

- **Seek the Kingdom first** → *Matthew 6:33*
- **Seek God's will first** → *Matthew 6:10*
- **Doing the Father's will is the mark of true disciples** → *Matthew 7:21*
- **Jesus Himself sought only the Father's will** → *John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38*
- **Disciples follow by denying their own will** → *Luke 9:23*

Philippians 2:12 – “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;”

Philippians 2:13 – “For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

- Commentators (Meyer, Robertson, Vincent, Gill) emphasize that “*work out*” means **to bring to completion**, not to earn salvation.
- The phrase refers to **the outworking of an already-given salvation**, consistent with Paul's theology (Cambridge Bible; Barnes).
- “for it is God who is at work in you”- Salvation is **God's work from start to finish**, yet believers are called to **active participation** in sanctification. Romans 1:17 says the same concept on redemption being God's work from beginning to end in this way: ...the righteousness of God is revealed from heaven from faith to faith and the righteous shall live by faith.

- The Foundation upon which we build our faith is grounded in Revelation. 1) Natural/General revelation- God's glory is displayed throughout all creation by what has been created, and 2) Divine Revelation- the Gospel. So our faith is always based upon God's work that was done.
- A better way to remember this would be "Faith is something you do BUT it is not something you have done on your own." In other words without God's work in creation and through His word your faith never would have been possible.
- Verse 12 expresses **human responsibility**, while verse 13 provides the **divine foundation** for that responsibility.
- God's work encompasses both **motivation ("to will")** and **empowerment ("to work")**, showing divine sovereignty operating within human agency.

Romans 8:26-28

26 And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes with groanings too deep for words;

27 and He who searches hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.

v.26 "the Spirit also helps our weakness" (συναντιλαμβάνεται)

- The verb means **to take hold with, to support, to come to aid** (BDAG; Robertson).
- Commentaries (Meyer; Barnes; Gill) emphasize believers' incapacity in prayer the Spirit compensates for human limitation.

"we do not know how to pray as we should"

- this refers to the **content** of prayer, not the act itself.

- Human ignorance of God’s perfect purposes necessitates divine aid (Barnes; Pulpit; Cambridge).

“the Spirit Himself intercedes” (αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα ὑπερεντυγχάνει)

- ὑπερεντυγχάνει: “to intercede on behalf of,” with the sense of active advocacy (BDAG; Meyer).
- The Spirit intercedes **within the believer**, not external to them (Barnes; Gill).

“with groanings too deep for words” (στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις)

- Commentators (Meyer; Gill; Pulpit) hold these “groanings” arise from the Spirit’s work in the believer, **not articulate speech**.
- “Unutterable” means beyond human language (Vincent).

v.27 “He who searches hearts”

- A reference to God the Father, who knows the internal working of the Spirit (Barnes; Gill).

“knows what the mind of the Spirit is”

- The Spirit’s intercession always aligns with God’s purposes (Meyer).
- No gap exists between the Spirit’s intention and the Father’s will.

“because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God”

- All major commentaries affirm this phrase as decisive:
 - o The Spirit produces petitions perfectly aligned with God’s will (Barnes; Meyer; JFB).
 - o This explains why such prayers are always effective perfect conformity to God’s purpose.

v.28 “for those who love God all things work together for good”

- “All things” (πάντα) includes sufferings, trials, and even perplexities (Gill; Barnes).
- “Work together” (συνεργεῖ) indicates divinely coordinated activity (Meyer).

“for those who are called according to His purpose”

- “Called” refers to God’s **effectual call** (Gill; Geneva Notes; Pulpit).
 - “Purpose” (πρόθεσις) is God’s sovereign, eternal plan (Meyer; BDAG).
1. **The Spirit compensates for human weakness in prayer**, producing petitions aligned with God’s will.
 2. **The Spirit’s intercession is perfectly effective** because it corresponds exactly to God’s purpose (v.27).
 3. **God orchestrates all events for the ultimate good** of believers—not worldly ease, but conformity to Christ (context, esp. v.29).
 4. **Believers’ assurance** rests not on their prayer ability but on God’s sovereign purpose and the Spirit’s active help.

From Matthew Henry, MacArthur, Piper, and classic expositors:

- Prayer feels inadequate, but the Spirit supplies what believers lack.
- God uses all circumstances including suffering to accomplish His redemptive purpose.
- The greatest comfort of the Christian is that divine intercession and divine sovereignty stand behind every moment of life.
- Assurance comes not from understanding every circumstance but from trusting God’s perfect wisdom and care.

3. Understanding Prayer and Faith within God’s Will

Mark 11:22–24

22 And Jesus answered saying to them, “Have faith in God.

23 Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him.

24 For this reason I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted to you.”

- Faith in prayer is confidence in God, not confidence in the spoken request.
- Answered prayer requires alignment with God’s will, as established by parallel texts (John 14:13–14; 1 John 5:14).
- The promise is not a blank check; classical commentators uniformly reject presumptuous or self-willed interpretations.
- True faith submits to God’s sovereignty while trusting His power to do the impossible.
- Matthew Henry: Faith “rests on God’s power and promise, not on creaturely confidence.”
- MacArthur: Believing prayer is “persistent trust in God’s nature, not the presumption that God will fulfill self-centered desires.”
- Piper: Faith asks God to do what He is inclined to do according to His revealed purposes.

James 1:5–7

5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

6 But he must ask in faith, doubting nothing, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord...

- Faith in prayer is confidence in God’s generous character, especially in giving wisdom.

- Doubting refers to wavering about God Himself His goodness or readiness to give.
- This is not “faith in faith,” but faith in God, consistent with parallel teachings (Mark 11; John 14; 1 John 5).
- Wisdom is always granted when asked with believing trust, because such a request aligns with God’s revealed will.
- The unstable doubter receives nothing, not because God withholds arbitrarily, but because doubting God’s character nullifies true petition.
- Henry: Asking in faith means coming to God “with a firm persuasion of His love.”
- MacArthur: Faith trusts God’s generosity; doubt denies His goodness.
- Piper: Faith-filled prayer leans on God’s willingness to give exactly what He promises—especially wisdom.

John 14:13

“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

John 14:14

“If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”

- The indefinite “whatever/anything” is **conditioned by the qualifying phrase** “in My name” (Meyer; Cambridge).
- **“in My name”** (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου)
- All major commentaries agree this phrase is the critical interpretive key:
- Means in accordance with Christ’s revealed character, authority, mission, and will (Meyer; Barnes; Gill; Cambridge; Pulpit).
- Not a formulaic phrase attached to a request; it signifies union with Christ and alignment with His purposes (JFB; Expositor’s).

- “Name” in Johannine usage refers to the full revelation of the Son (Gill; Vincent; BDAG).
- **“that will I do ... I will do it” (ποιήσω)**
- Jesus Himself is the one acting in response to such prayer (Meyer; Robertson).
- Present-future sense: certain fulfillment of petitions that align with Christ’s mission and the Father’s will (Barnes; Clarke).
- **Purpose clause: “so that the Father may be glorified in the Son”**
- All recognized commentators emphasize this as the governing purpose of the promise:
- Prayer is answered when it promotes the Father’s glory through the Son (Meyer; Pulpit; Cambridge).
- This excludes self-centered or fleshly requests (Barnes; Henry).
- Asking “in Jesus’ name” means asking in conformity to His character, authority, and mission, not merely including the phrase verbally.
- Christ continues His work in the world by answering prayers that align with His redemptive purpose.
- The scope “whatever/anything” is not unconditional; the condition is union with Christ’s will and intent.
- The goal of answered prayer is the Father’s glory, not human enrichment.

1 John 5:13

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may *know* that you have eternal life.”

1 John 5:14

“And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

- According to **Cambridge, Meyer, Pulpit, Barnes, JFB, and Gill**, 1 John 5:13–14 forms part of the epistle’s closing assurance section (5:6–21). John has just explained the witnesses to Christ (vv. 6–12) and now states his purpose: to ground believers in **certainty of eternal life** and to give confidence in **prayer** that aligns with God’s will. This is consistent with John’s themes of assurance, fellowship, and discernment.
- **“if we ask anything according to His will”**
- Commentators (Meyer; Cambridge; Barnes; Clarke) stress that answered prayer is conditioned by alignment with God’s revealed will—not personal desire detached from God’s purposes.
- IF makes the verse a conditional statement. There are conditions attached to it. That condition is “asking things that are in God’s will”
- Present tense indicates habitual prayer.
- “He hears us”
- “Hears” (ἀκούει) conveys not mere auditory hearing but favorable regard (Vincent; JFB).
- Verse 13 teaches **assurance of salvation** rooted in faith in the Son of God. This assurance is viewed as the purpose of the epistle.
- Eternal life is treated as a **present possession**, not merely future.
- Verse 14 highlights that assurance produces **confidence in prayer**, grounded in God’s character.

- Prayer must be “**according to His will**”, meaning consistent with Scripture, the purposes of God, and the leading of the Spirit—never autonomous or presumptuous.
- The combination of assurance (v.13) and confidence in prayer (v.14) reflects the believer’s secure relationship with God through Christ.
- God desires His people to live with settled assurance, not spiritual uncertainty. Confidence in salvation fuels confident praying.
- Boldness in prayer arises from humble submission to God’s will, not self-centered requests.
- Praying “according to His will” encourages believers to align desires with God’s Word, fostering spiritual maturity and trust.
- These verses invite believers to rest in God’s fatherly care, knowing He hears every prayer that flows from a heart shaped by His purposes.
- “**if we ask anything**” (ἐάν τι αἰτώμεθα)
- Present middle subjunctive of αἰτέω—indicating **ongoing, habitual petition** (Robertson; Vincent).
- “Anything” (τι) is universal in scope but **not unconditional**; the following clause limits its meaning (Meyer; Cambridge).
- “**according to His will**” (κατὰ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ)
- κατὰ indicates **conformity or agreement** (BDAG; Robertson).
- θέλημα refers to God’s **desired, intended purpose**, not human preference (Vincent; Gill).
- All major commentaries stress that this phrase is the **governing condition** for answered prayer.
- **What “His will” means (from commentary consensus):**

- **God's revealed will in Scripture**
 - Barnes, JFB, and Pulpit note that prayer must align with what God has already declared He desires (e.g., holiness, obedience, love, Christlikeness).
- **God's moral and redemptive purposes**
 - Meyer states that John is speaking of prayer that fits within God's character and saving intentions.
- **Requests shaped by righteousness and obedience**
 - Gill and Clarke emphasize that prayer "according to His will" is prayer arising from hearts walking in God's commandments (cf. 1 John 3:22).
- **Not arbitrary, self-focused asking**
 - Cambridge and Barnes warn that this is not a formula for obtaining personal wishes but for seeking God's purposes.
- **"He hears us" (ἀκούει ἡμῶν)**
- Means **favorable, responsive hearing**, not bare auditory perception (Vincent; JFB).
- The context (vv. 15–16) shows that "hearing" implies **answering**, though the form of the answer is governed by divine wisdom.
- Prayer is effectual not because of the believer's intensity but because it harmonizes with God's purposes.
- "According to His will" expresses divine sovereignty in prayer; God alone defines what is good, wise, and fitting.
- Genuine Christian prayer seeks God's desires, not the fulfillment of autonomous human agendas.
- Confidence in prayer comes from submission to God's will, not from presuming that God must grant every request.

- Praying “according to His will” reshapes the believer’s heart, teaching reliance on God’s wisdom rather than personal outcomes.
- Assurance of eternal life (v.13) leads to trust, which in turn cultivates prayers that desire what God desires.
- This phrase encourages believers to saturate prayer in Scripture, letting God’s revealed word guide requests.
- The promise “He hears us” assures believers that every God-aligned prayer is received, valued, and answered—though the answer may differ from expectation.

Lastly, just to touch on the act of praying. If we analyze its cadence there is a pattern that emerges. We pray TO the Father, THROUGH the Son, BY the Spirit. There is a trinitarian component to the Christian prayer. When seen through the lens of Romans 8:26-28 the Holy Spirit intercedes according to the will of God constantly in prayer.

The Point and Purpose of God’s Will

1 Thessalonians 4:1-7

1 Finally then, brothers, we ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.

2 For you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;

4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

6 *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*.

7 For God did not call us to impurity, but in sanctification.

8 Consequently, he who sets *this* aside is not setting aside man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

Summary: Understanding God's Will

Understanding God's will begins with recognizing that Scripture speaks of God's will in more than one sense. When we use the phrase "God's will," we often mean one thing, but the Bible reveals that God's will operates in three distinct but harmonious ways.

Together, these help us see how God governs the universe, how He commands His people to live, and what He desires from humanity. To understand prayer, salvation, obedience, and daily life, all three aspects must be held together.

1. God's Decretive (Sovereign) Will

This refers to God's eternal, unchangeable purpose by which He orders all things. Nothing in creation falls outside His sovereign plan. Some events God brings about directly, while others He allows, but both serve His ultimate purpose. Passages like Isaiah 46:9 to 10 and Ephesians 1:11 make clear that God accomplishes all His counsel. Moments like Uzzah's death in 2 Samuel 6 show that God's holiness, justice, and sovereign standards do not change, even when His actions stretch human understanding. This aspect of God's will explains what God ordains.

2. God's Preceptive (Revealed) Will

Unlike His sovereign will which always happens, God's revealed will tells us how we ought to live. Scripture gives commands, moral instructions, and principles that show what God desires from His people. Unlike the decretive will, this can be obeyed or disobeyed. Adam and Eve illustrate this. God revealed His command, and they chose to violate it, bringing consequences not only on themselves but on all humanity. Verses like Micah 6:8 and Deuteronomy 29:29 show that God reveals enough of His will for us to walk in obedience even while His secret purposes remain hidden.

3. God's Dispositional Will

This aspect describes what God delights in, His heart, His compassion, and His desire for human flourishing and salvation. While not everything that God desires comes to pass because people resist Him, His disposition is seen clearly in verses like John 3:16, Ezekiel 18:23, and 2 Peter 3:9. God takes no pleasure in judgment. He desires repentance, life, and reconciliation.

A Heaven Down Perspective

Because God is Creator and we exist for His glory, we must view His will from His perspective rather than our own. Scripture teaches that God is the Potter and we are the

clay. His knowledge, power, holiness, love, and faithfulness shape everything He does. Believers often debate how predestination works, but both major biblical perspectives affirm this essential truth: God is sovereign over creation, redemption, and history, and everything ultimately fulfills His purpose. These are in house discussions among Christians, but all faithful viewpoints agree that God's glory stands at the center.

Submission to God's Will in the Life of the Believer

Jesus models perfect obedience to the Father, repeatedly saying that His food, purpose, and mission are to accomplish God's will. He calls His disciples to the same: seeking God's kingdom first, denying themselves, and submitting personal desires to God's purposes (Matthew 6:10, 6:33, 7:21, John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38, Luke 9:23). True discipleship means aligning one's will with God's. External religious actions, even impressive ones, are meaningless without inward submission, as Jesus warns in Matthew 7:21 to 23.

Paul reinforces this partnership of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. In Philippians 2:12 to 13, believers are called to actively work out the salvation God has already worked within them. God both motivates and empowers His people, yet they remain fully responsible for obedience.

Prayer, Faith, and God's Will

Scripture consistently teaches that effective prayer is not about getting God to fulfill our wishes, but about bringing our requests into harmony with God's revealed purposes. Passages such as Mark 11:22 to 24, James 1:5 to 7, John 14:13 to 14, and 1 John 5:14 all emphasize this: prayers offered in faith are prayers offered in alignment with God's will. Asking in Jesus' name means in agreement with His character, mission, and authority, not merely adding a phrase at the end of a request.

Romans 8:26 to 28 gives believers profound comfort. Even when we do not know how to pray, the Holy Spirit intercedes according to God's perfect will. Because God aligns all things, including suffering, to His redemptive purpose, believers can pray with confidence, knowing that God hears and answers according to infinite wisdom.

Purpose

God's Will is for our sanctification.

In Summary

God's will is not a single concept but a rich, layered reality.

His sovereign will guarantees that His purposes are fulfilled.

His revealed will instructs how we should live.

His dispositional will shows His heart toward humanity.

To understand God's will, we must start with Him, His glory, His nature, and His purposes, not with ourselves. When we live from a Heaven down perspective, prayer becomes confident rather than presumptuous, obedience becomes joyful rather than burdensome, and suffering becomes meaningful rather than random. Ultimately, God invites His people not merely to understand His will, but to delight in it, trust it, and walk in it as Christ Himself did.

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