

God's Will and The Christmas Story



God's will—Three Kinds Found in Scripture

- **God's Decreed “Decretive” Will**—what outcomes on earth that God has determined from eternity past to cause to come to pass by His own sovereign (independent) power and actions -- called in theology the “decrees of God” – not dependent on human obedience, though human obedience is at times involved.
- **God's “Perfect” (Prescriptive) Will**—what God has established as His ways and laws and commands for humanity revealed in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.
- **God's “Permissive” Will**—what God permits to be done on the earth by humans who exercise their freedom of choice, producing the consequences of sin for humanity and the earth.

Scripture: God's Decreed Will

- **Isaiah 46: 9-10** – “Remember the former things long past, for 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 which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established.’ (meaning of “purpose” – decision)
- **Isaiah 48:3**—“I declared the former things long ago and they went forth from My mouth, and I proclaimed them. Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.”
- **Acts 2:23**—“this Man, delivered over by the predetermined (foreordained) plan (will) and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.” (“foreordained—before time—plan”—His decreed will)

God's Perfect Will

- Ps. 19:7-8—“The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”
- Ps. 119: 1—“How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.”
- Matt. 5:24: “So everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who builds his house on the rock.”

Scripture—God’s Permissive Will

- 2 Peter 3:9—“God is not willing for any persons to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance.” Implication: not all will come to repentance and be saved—God permits this because He has given us free will
- Romans 8:28—“God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God, to those called according to His purpose.” For us, God “works around” our sins and brings good into our lives from them (even though our sins cause consequences for us that are not pleasant)

Applications for Our Lives:

1. What God has sovereignly decided/decreed must be accomplished on the earth—His decreed will—**shall surely be accomplished**, either through or apart from the obedience of human beings—and sometimes even through the disobedience of human beings. *God is in control, and He will surely do what He decided to do before the foundation of the world!*

2. God has a “perfect” will He wants to be done on earth (as it is in heaven), based on His precepts and promises found in His word. This is the “high bar” we pray for Him to do when we “ask according to His will.” He has promised in His word that things will go well (not perfectly, but well) for humanity and the planet when humans govern their lives according to His perfect will, and that things will not go well when they don’t. We obey God because we want to because we love Him. But we also obey God because it will “go well” for us when we do!

3. Contrary to the theology of some Christians, God's perfect will is *not* always done on earth. He does not act sovereignly to produce His will being done because He has chosen to limit His sovereign action to be responsive to the actions of humans—good or bad. God has given humanity authority over the earth, so the way humans act determines whether cursing or blessing come upon our planet (except for His decreed will). Though He can, He won't override our choices. This is the answer to the question: why does God cause such horrible evil on the earth? – Answer: God is not the cause: Humans, choosing evil, cause these problems. God is doing all He can to avert them by inviting us to partner with Him to pray for and do His perfect will.

4. The wonderful promise of Romans 8:28 does *not* apply to the unbelieving; their sins or sins committed against them may very well *not* work “for good” in their lives. But for believers in Jesus, even though we often act sinfully and so find ourselves in God’s permissive will, He miraculously and mercifully “works together” our sins and their consequences into His “good” plan for our lives. This is very good news indeed!