

I. Introduction.

II. The Bible speaks of two aspects of God's will. James 4:15,17

- A. God's moral (revealed) will. Js. 4:17 Deut. 29:29b I Th. 4:3 5:18 Eph. 5:17 6:6 I Pe. 2:15 Heb. 13:21 I Jo. 2:17 Ro. 12:2 2:18 Col. 1:9 4:12 Mt. 7:21 12:50 Mark 3:35 John 4:34 7:17
1. This aspect of God's will refers to His commands and His desires. James 4:17
 2. Where do we learn of God's moral will? Ps. 119:105
 3. God's revelation in Scripture is infallible and sufficient. II Tim. 3:16-17
- B. God's sovereign will (His plan). James 4:15 Deut. 29:29a Eph. 1:11 Rom. 9:18-19,22 1:10 15:32 I Co. 1:1 4:19 12:18 II Ti. 1:1 Heb. 10:9 I Pet. 3:17 4:19 Gal. 1:4 Isa. 53:10 46:8-11 Acts 18:21 2:23 21:14 Js. 4:15 Ps. 33:11 Mt. 26:42 John 5:30 6:38-40 Col. 1:27 Prov. 16:9 19:21 Dan. 4:35
1. This aspect of God's will refers to His providentially working all things according to His perfect eternal purpose. Eph. 1:11 Romans 8:28
 2. He is sovereign over any plans we make. Js. 4:15 Pr. 16:9 I Cor. 4:19 Acts 17:26
 3. How can you know God's sovereign will? James 4:15,13 Rom. 1:13 I Cor. 4:19
- C. What is the relationship between God's moral will and His sovereign will?
1. While we are told to study God's moral will, we are warned against prying into God's sovereign will for the future. Deut. 29:29
 2. God's sovereign will sometimes allows and even works through events which violate His moral will. Gen. 50:20 Is. 53:10 Acts 2:23 4:28 Luke 22:42
 3. While it is God's moral will (command) that all people repent and believe, the elect are saved according to His sovereign will. Acts 17:30 Jo. 6:29,39 Eph. 1:3ff
 4. Those who do wrong, according to God's sovereign, will are still held responsible for their violation of God's moral will. Mark 14:21 Ps. 41:9 Acts 1:20 Gen. 50:19
 5. We are to submit to both aspects of God's will just as Jesus perfectly submitted to His Father's will. Js. 4:15,17 Mt. 6:10 Luke 22:42 John 4:34
- D. Does God have a hypothetical "perfect" will beyond His revealed precepts and His sovereign plan?
1. The Bible does not teach that any such hypothetical will of God exists.
 2. What is the harm of seeking a hypothetical "perfect" will of God?
 - a. People want certainty and security which God does not offer.
 - b. People waste time and effort pursuing something which doesn't exist
 - c. People neglect pursuit of God's revealed will which is to guide their choices.
 - d. People live with false regrets about legitimate choices they have made in accordance with God's moral and sovereign will.

III. Should we expect supernatural guidance?

- A. Many seek mystical direction for their lives.
1. Mystical pursuit of God's secret things is explicitly forbidden in Scripture. Deut. 18:9-12 Lev. 19:26-31 Isa. 47:33 II Ki. 17:16 Ezek. 21:21 I Sa. 28:1ff
 2. *Some Christians try to pursue God's will in a way which resembles paganism.* (Waltke)
- B. God has supernaturally revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures. II Pe. 1:20-21
1. The Bible is inerrant (infallible) and sufficient. II Tim. 3:16-17

2. Now that God's final revelation through Christ has been inscripturated, there is no further revelation needed or expected. Heb. 1:1-2 Eph. 2:20
 3. Instead of seeking new revelation, we should devote ourselves to understanding the full and sufficient revelation God has already given. Ps. 1
- C. How should we respond to those who claim that God mystically guides them?
1. In the Bible, supernatural guidance is unmistakable, authoritative, significant, and exceptional. Dt. 13:1-5 18:18-19 II Pet. 1:20f
 2. God reveals Himself to key people at crucial points in the history of redemption.
 3. The main characters in the Bible ordinarily operated upon the revelation they had already been given, rather than constantly seeking special guidance. Acts 15:36 20:16 Phil. 2:25-26 II Cor. 2:12-13 Rom. 15:20-24 I Th. 3:1-2
 4. Now we have a completed Bible which equips us to make wise choices. II Pe. 1:3-4 II Tim. 3:16-17
 5. We are never told to seek or expect mystical supernatural guidance.
- D. In what ways do Christians wrongly seek supernatural guidance?
1. Putting out a fleece. Judges 6:36-40
 - a. Gideon had already received supernatural guidance and knew God's moral will for his life. His desire for a sign was due to a lack of faith. Judges 6:12-16
 - b. The sign sought was supernatural, not merely coincidental.
 - c. Gideon's act is never used in Scripture as an example for us to follow.
 2. Casting lots (rolling dice, flipping a coin). Acts 1:15-26 Pr. 18:18 16:33 Heb. 1:1-2
 - a. The replacement of Judas was a crucial decision in the history of the church.
 - b. Peter knowingly fulfilled Scriptural prophecy. Ps. 69:25 109:8
 - c. Other Apostles had been personally appointed by Jesus. Acts 1:2 10:41 John 15:16 Luke 16:13
 - d. The field of candidates was narrowed from 120 to 2 using God's revealed will. Acts 1:21b-22 I Cor. 15:5-9
 - e. Now with the completed canon and the giving of the Holy Spirit such guidance is no longer needed. Heb. 1:1-2 I Tim. 3:1f Titus 1 Acts 14:23
 3. Asking for signs from God. Mt. 12:39 16:4 II Cor. 11:14
 - a. A wicked generation seeks a sign.
 - b. Satan can produce counterfeit miracles and lying signs. Mt. 24:24
 - c. We are never told to seek signs for guidance, or how to interpret omens.
 - d. Miraculous signs were given infrequently to confirm God's revelation through His prophets and apostles. Ex. 4:1f Dt. 4:34 II Co. 12:12 Ro. 15:19 Heb. 2:3b-4
 - e. Now that the Bible is complete and there are no more prophets and apostles, we should not expect apostolic and prophetic signs. Eph. 2:20 Acts 1:20-21
 - f. Would more people believe if we could work miracles? Luke 16:30-31
 4. Open doors (circumstances). I Co. 16:8-9 II Cor. 2:12-13 Jonah 1:1-3 I Sa. 24:1f
 - a. Some open doors violate God's revealed will. Jonah 1:3 I Sam. 24:4-7
 - b. All circumstances/open doors must be evaluated in light of Scripture.
 5. Dreams and visions. Ezek. 13:1-9 Daniel 2:1ff Genesis 41
 - a. Meaningful dreams in the Bible are revelatory and exceptional and come with prophetic interpretation.
 - b. We are not told to expect significant dreams nor are we told how to interpret dreams.
 6. Relying upon feelings and impressions. Pr. 14:12 3:5-6 28:26 Jer. 17:9 Rom. 8:14-16 Gal. 5:18 Pr. 28:26 Eph. 4:22 Js. 1:14

- a. Scripture tells us to mistrust our feelings. Pr. 14:12 28:26 Jer. 17:9
 - b. Should we ever pay attention to our feelings?
 7. Using Scripture texts out of context “lucky dipping”. II Pe. 3:16-17 II Tim. 2:15
 8. Some claim God speaks directly to them, but they don’t meet God’s perfect standard. Deut. 13:1f 18:18f
- E. Why is it wrong to seek mystical supernatural guidance? Deut. 29:29
1. We want a level of knowledge, certainty and control over our decisions beyond what God offers us.
 2. We don’t want to take responsibility for our decisions and their consequences.
 3. We don’t want to trust God for the unknown future.
- F. What is the harm of seeking supernatural guidance?
1. Many claiming supernatural guidance have made unwise choices and have caused great harm to themselves and others.
 2. People claiming supernatural guidance exercise great sway over others.
 3. The guidance God offers in His infallible and all-sufficient Word is neglected.
 4. People put themselves under bondage, experiencing unnecessary anxiety and delay over simple decisions. Gen. 2:16-17 Rom. 8:28
- IV. How does God guide you? Prov. 3:5-6
- A. God guides you through His Word. Ps. 119:24 II Tim. 3:16-17 II Pe. 1:3
1. The Bible provides infallible and sufficient direction. II Tim. 3:16-17 II Pe. 1:3
 2. Apply texts according to their meaning in context. Psalm 1:2 II Tim. 2:15
- B. God guides you through wise counselors. Prov. 15:22 12:15 19:20 28:26 27:6
1. Select your counselors carefully. Ps. 1:1 I Ki. 12:1f Col. 2:8 Pr. 13:20 Heb. 13:17 Titus 2:3-5
 2. The job of a counselor is to help you to apply the Bible to your situation.
 3. Counsel should to be weighed, not merely counted.
- C. God guides you through the Holy Spirit (The Counselor). Ro. 8:14 John 16:13 17:17
1. No where is the leading of the Holy Spirit referred to as a feeling.
 2. The leading of the Holy Spirit is moral, not mystical.
 3. The Spirit of truth gives you understanding of God’s Word -- illumination. John 14:26 16:13 17:17 I Co. 2:12-14 Rom. 12:2 Col. 1:9
 4. The Spirit helps you to apply the Word to your life. Ezek. 36:27 Ro. 8:4,13 Js. 4:5 Gal. 5:16f Ps. 139:13-14 John 16:8
- D. How does God guide you through prayer? James 1:5
1. Don’t expect a mystical or audible answer to prayer.
 2. Don’t use prayer as an excuse for an irresponsible or selfish decision. Ps. 15:4
 3. Pray that God will give you wisdom to apply the Bible to your situation. Ps. 25:4-5 119:12,26,33,66,73,125 Pr. 2:1-11 Phil. 1:9-10 Col. 1:9-10 James 1:5 II Ti. 2:7
 4. Pray that God will give you the desire and ability to do His moral will. Phil. 2:13
 5. Pray that God will give you the grace to embrace His sovereign will. Js. 4:13f
- E. Is there any sense in which God guides you through feelings?

1. A lack of peace may have causes which need to be understood. Phil. 4:4ff II Co. 2:13
 2. You may lack peace because deep down you know you are doing wrong.
 3. You may lack peace because you are very cautious or anxious by nature.
 4. If your conscience isn't clear, take the safest course. Rom. 14:23
 5. Your desires may legitimately influence your decisions. I Ti. 3:1 I Co. 7:39
- F. God guides you through providence (circumstances) which reveal His sovereign will.
James 4:13-17 Acts 18:21 Prov. 16:9 27:1 Ro. 1:13 I Cor. 4:19 Mt. 6:10
1. You make your plans and decisions, but the Lord controls the outcome. Pr. 16:9
 2. Be careful not to mystically interpret all circumstances as signs from God.
- V. Will you always receive clear guidance from God on every decision?
- A. Many decisions are not as clear-cut and must be made according to wisdom.
1. The Bible does not give you a specific answer for every situation.
 2. Search the Scriptures to find principles of wisdom which apply.
 - a. Marriage. Genesis 2:18-25 Proverbs 31 Eph. 5:22f I Pet. 3:1-7 I Cor. 7:1f
 - b. Finances. Ro. 13:8 Pr. 22:7 I Ti. 6:9f Lu. 14:28-29
 - c. Giving. II Cor. 8-9 I Cor. 16:1-2 I Tim. 6:17
 - d. Education and vocation. Pr. 22:29 12:11 I Cor. 15:33 Pr. 12:11
 - e. Church. Heb. 13:17 I Tim. 3:1-7 II Tim. 4:1ff
 - f. Call to ministry. I Cor. 12:13 I Pet. 4:10-11 I Tim. 3:1f Titus 1:5f II Ti. 2:2
- B. Questions to ask yourself.
1. What is motivating you? I Cor. 10:31 I John 2:15-17
 2. What will show love to others? Phil. 2:3-4 I Cor. 10:33 Romans 15:1-3 14:15
 3. What will contribute to your spiritual growth? I Cor. 6:12
 4. What will best fit your gifts and abilities? Acts 6:2-3
- C. Once you have examined the biblical reasons, you are free to consider your desires.
I Cor. 7:39 I Tim. 3:1 Ge. 2:16-17
- D. Once you make your decision, trust God for the outcome. James 4:13-17 I Cor. 4:19
Acts 18:21 Ro. 1:13
1. It is good to plan. Pr. 21:5
 2. Submit to His sovereign will as it comes to pass. Pr. 16:9 27:1 Js. 4:13-17
 3. Rejoice as you look back upon His wonderful providence. Rom. 8:28 Gen. 50:20

VI. Concluding Summary. Heb. 13:20-21

Discussion questions

1. What is the difference between God's moral will and His sovereign will?
2. How do some Christians wrongly try to get supernatural guidance?
3. How can you find guidance for your decisions in the Bible?
4. What role do counselors play in your decision making?
4. How does the Holy Spirit guide you?
5. Should you ever pay attention to your feelings and desires?
6. What are examples of decisions in which you have freedom?
7. In what areas are you presently seeking God's guidance?