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[What do you mean by being in the will of God?](#)

Submitted by theshovel

[This came from a response to this article](#)

(re: the will of God) It all depends by what you mean by "being in God's will." If you are speaking of God's sovereign will, then ALL things that happen are in the will of God, whether to believer or unbeliever. On the other hand, Ephesians 6:6 commands believers (specifically servants in this passage) to "do the will of God from the heart." 1 Thessalonians 4:3 describes the will of God as being "your sanctification" and then explains the significance of this as being set apart from fornication. In these instances, the will of God seems to be a reference to the revealed or commanded will of God. John

Hello my friend, John,

I appreciate your response. We have grown to take a much different view on things over the years, haven't we? It's definitely not the same as during the Grace Bible Church days. :) But still we have HIM in common!

I remember you teaching a course on Bible Study Methods asking something like, "Do you think God was up in heaven, thinking, 'I have 7000 wonderful thoughts to share with these people', and then commenced to inspire the Bible?" That concept has stuck with me since then (though the wording is probably really messed up, huh? :) and I have a hard time viewing verses independently any more. To me, they are so tied together with the whole of their own context that some of them look so strange individually. I'm not saying this in an attempt to disregard the two verses you brought up, but to give you some background on my thought-processes as I view them. And yes, it does sound to me that you are pulling them out of context.

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the SINCERITY OF YOUR HEART, as to Christ, NOT by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, BUT as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God FROM THE HEART. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and NOT to men, KNOWING that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. And, masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, KNOWING that both their master AND yours is in heaven, and there is NO partiality with Him. Ephesians 6:5-9

Doing the will of God from the heart in the context of the whole letter and in view of what that means in this relationship is contrasted with everything we have learned from the world. We have learned to brown-nose and to be yes-men to those who control our cash-flow in this world. We have learned how to APPEAR as if we are doing what we're supposed to be doing. That is NOT what we have learned in Christ. We have been taught by the Spirit that we are NEW creations, separated from the old futile way of life we used to live.

Paul was not taking this opportunity to reintroduce the commands of God back into their lives, but instead, to bring the REALITY of the very NATURE of God into view ... for this is now that which is *written in their hearts by the spirit and not by the letter*. The context in which you presented it surely appears TO ME to be that of the letter that kills. The will of God is desire of God ... not an outward commanded desire that we need to learn and heed, but the very flow of this desire from WITHIN us.

You employees, don't fall back upon your old habits you learned in this world, those insincere pretenses of doing your job. But instead, do your job as those who have been raised from the dead and have been given the very life of the Spirit within them ... doing the very thing your heart desires, for it is Christ that you serve in all of this.

To use the will of God in any other sense here totally ruins what Paul was saying to them. What do you think? How

would a simple "This is the commanded will of God" fit here?

Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us [added word, instruction] as to how you ought to walk and please God (JUST AS YOU ACTUALLY DO WALK), that you may excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of [literally, through] the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, LIKE THE GENTILES WHO DO NOT KNOW GOD; and than 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. For God has NOT called us for the purpose of impurity, BUT IN SANCTIFICATION. Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man BUT THE GOD WHO GIVES HIS HOLY SPIRIT TO YOU. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

I agree with you that the will of God here is equated to their sanctification which is in direct relation to being set apart from fornication or sexual impurity. I hear from you, though, that this is about God telling us what He wants and so therefore, that is what we are supposed to do. If so, there is no life in that. Paul's wording here, in view of today's teachings on the Christian life seems to validate the revealed or commanded will of God. But taken in context, that wording as we view it, makes it too easy to overlook some of the major things Paul said there.

Since *sanctification* means roughly *set apart* or *separated from*, we have somehow taken this to mean that we are supposed to do this ... or at least initiate it or something like that. But this has no bearing on the reality of the situation. Christ is the one who separated us from our sin. We don't do this. Now, IN VIEW OF THIS SEPARATION, many things can be said as to how we live our lives in this world. Sexual impurity is one of them.

He is not telling them that they need to start walking and pleasing the Lord, but instead, he is requesting and exhorting them to excel still more in this miraculous reality. Based upon this reality of God in our lives we are not what we were. And this is how Paul approaches it ... by way of CONTRAST to the life we used to know ... a life lived in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God. The fact that we know God ... or should we say that God knows us ... is the foundation upon which this will, this sanctification is appealed to. To abstain from fornication as a command does no one any good. But having the good news of Christ declaring to us that to walk and please God is just as you actually DO walk is to demand that our life is from somewhere else ... and to live in sexual purity is the desire of God which has been written on our hearts.

I realize you didn't say a lot of this, but do you take issue with it? Can the will of God be separated in the manner in which you presented it: the sovereign will of God that cannot be changed vs. a revealed will that can? In view of the difference between the old and new covenants as written of in Jeremiah 31 couldn't it be said that the will of God is NEVER kept as an outward command, but that the will of God in the heart of the new creation is ALWAYS kept? How does that fit in to you? I'm curious.

Jim Minker

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