

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Is God A Schizophrenic? Selected Passages

Keywords: Decision-Making, God's Will, Open Theism

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: Before a person can begin to properly approach the issue of decision-making as a Christian he must first understand the nature of God's will. Often there is great confusion regarding passages that mention God's will for mankind and usually it is due to not understanding that there are two aspects to God's will, that which He reveals to us and that which is His alone to know.

I. Introduction.

- A. In Alice in Wonderland, Alice comes to a crossroads and doesn't know which road to take. The Cheshire cat asks, "Well, where are you going?" "I don't know," Alice replies. "Well, if you don't know where you're going," the cat wisely answers, "any road will do very nicely." (From Decision-Making By The Book, Haddon Robinson, p. 43)
- B. This is the life of too many people. They don't think through their actions and reactions because, quite frankly, they don't know where they are going.
 - 1. They have frittered away their lives in silly pursuits that ultimately went nowhere.
 - 2. They have allowed their emotions to be the guiding influence and their own desires and pleasures to be the goal.
 - 3. This is just one reason why it is helpful and even important to seek to understand how to make decisions. We are constantly facing decisions daily. Sometimes we do it well, other times we fail miserably.
- C. One point in all of this, that can be very encouraging for believers, however, is the understanding that God knows everything.
 - 1. There is great hope in that because so often we find ourselves flailing about trying to find direction and stability in a world that has no real answers.
- D. But this has come under attack recently with a concept that is known by various terms, the most common being, "Open Theism" or "Open View of God."

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1. The idea being pressed forward is that God does know everything that is knowable. But God cannot know anything that is not knowable. Since man is created by God as a free agent he is able to make decisions that God could not have known beforehand. The reason is that those decisions and actions did not yet exist, therefore they were not knowable.

One man, Greg Boyd, wrote,

In the Christian view God knows all of reality — everything there is to know. But to assume He knows ahead of time how every person is going to freely act assumes that each person's free activity is already there to know — even before he freely does it! But it's not. If we have been given freedom, we create the reality of our decisions by making them. And until we make them, they don't exist. Thus, in my view at least, there simply isn't anything to know until we make it there to know. So God can't foreknow the good or bad decisions of the people He creates until He creates these people and they, in turn create their decisions.

Another man, Clark Pinnock writes,

Decisions not yet made do not exist anywhere to be known even by God. They are potential — yet to be realized but not yet actual. God can predict a great deal of what we will choose to do, but not all of it, because some of it remains hidden in the mystery of human freedom. . . . God too faces possibilities in the future, and not only certainties. God too moves into a future not wholly known because not yet fixed.

E. The will of God.

1. Note: Make a note of which passages I don't turn to or read so that you can look them up later.
2. Decreed will (Deuteronomy 29:29; Psalm 115:3; Daniel 4:17, 25, 32, 35; Romans 9:18-19; 11:33-34; Ephesians 1:5, 9, 11).
 - a. Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."
 - b. This is the idea that God brings to pass whatever He wills by making a Divine decree. This is called the decretive will of God.
 - c. It is the hidden, secret plan of God, that is not revealed to anyone until it actually happens. Therefore, the decretive will of God is not something we can know ahead of time.

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3. Revealed will (Deuteronomy 29:29; 30:14; Matthew 7:21; 12:50; John 4:34; 7:17; Romans 10:8; 12:2; Ephesians 6:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3).
 - a. Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”
 - b. This is commonly called God’s preceptive, desired, or moral will. It is revealed in the Scriptures through precept (clear statements or commands) and through principles.
 - c. This will can be understood through careful study of the Bible. In addition, God calls us to make decisions of obedience and submission to this will.

- F. But it is when we begin to talk about these two wills that we start to make it sound like God is a Schizophrenic. I aim to show you that there are two wills, or, at least, that is the best way to describe it. My hope in all of this is to open up the glory of God’s mysteriousness and greatness.

- G. Basic assertions.
 1. God does not sin.
 - a. Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord Almighty (Isa 6).
 - b. James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.
 - c. Here we must stand firm. If we don’t then we will go into heresy and blasphemy.

 2. We also see places where the Bible clearly says that God desires or wills things that does not happen.
 - a. 1 Timothy 2:4, “Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”
 - b. This simply doesn’t happen!
 - c. And in the debate about whether God wants to save everyone or not (Arminianism and Calvinism) this passage does not really help us settle the issue. What it does is creates the problem.
 - (1) The question that must be asked is why, if God is willing to save all does it not happen?

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- (2) Is it the free will of man? Is it the sovereign good pleasure of God?
 - (3) Does this passage help us answer it? No. Therefore we need to look elsewhere for the answer.
3. We also must embrace the truthfulness of God's mystery.
- a. Too often, when we enter into a study like this we tend to reject too quickly something, simply because of the vastness of its reality.
 - b. It is interesting that we accept all sorts of mysteries regarding God's person, but often seem to stumble over those related to his sovereignty.
 - c. How does God hear the prayers of millions of believers at the same time?
 - d. Psa 7:11 says that God is angry every day against sin. Yet He is also rejoicing as a sinner repents. How does He take constant pleasure in His people (Psa 149:4) yet be grieved (Eph. 4:29-30).
- H. With these broad points in mind, let's look at the biblical record and try to grapple with what is said.

II. The wills of God.

- A. God is in control.
- 1. We cannot underestimate that truth. It is the basis of all Christian hope.
 - a. Frankly, all around us we see misery and hardship. We see lives that are torn apart.
 - b. We, ourselves, often find ourselves in situations where we feel like everything is spinning out of control.
 - c. It is during those times that we can come to a point of stability as we rest in the knowledge of God's control.
 - 2. Yet there is a huge movement going on today that seeks to destroy this truth.
 - a. Some of the key names in this movement are Clark Pinnock and Greg Boyd.

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- b. There is the argument that the Bible does not teach that God has a plan that is impenetrable and unchangeable. They are also arguing that God's knowledge is not absolute. There are things God cannot know, because we, as people of free will, have not decided.
3. I ask you to simply consider the following quotes from scripture to compare against that reality.
- a. Amos 3:6 If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?
 - b. Isaiah 45:7 The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.
 - c. Lamentations 3:37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?
 - d. 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 no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.
 - e. Isaiah 43:13 "Even from eternity I am He; And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?"
 - f. Daniel 4:35.
 - g. Job 42:2.
 - h. Psalm 115:3.
 - i. These passages make no sense if the reality is that God is thwarted, God does not do whatever He pleases, and that He does not do according to His will.
- B. Examples of these two wills of God.
1. 1 Peter 2:15; 4:2 with 3:17; 4:19 (the 1st two are what we are to pursue; the last two is something God is doing).
 2. Christ's death.

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- a. John 13:2 the devil is seeking to have Judas betray Jesus to kill him.
 - b. Yet, Acts 2:23 says, “this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”
 - (1) Much of the events leading up to the crucifixion involved sin. The betrayal. The denial. The lying witnesses. The mocking laughter and words.
 - (2) Yet the Bible says that these things occurred as part of the fulfillment of prophecy. They were part of the plan of God.
 - c. Hebrews 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.
 - d. Therefore, on one hand, many were violating God’s revealed will of lying, hatred, etc. Yet on the other hand were perfectly living out His sovereign will.
3. The war against the Lamb of God.
- a. Revelation 17.
 - (1) The beast comes out of the abyss (8).
 - (2) The 10 horns are 10 kings (12).
 - (3) They will wage war against Christ (14).
 - (4) They will also betray and destroy the harlot (16).
 - (5) To fight against Christ is sin. Lying, betrayal, and murder are also sin.
 - (6) But notice verse 17.
 - (a) God willed to work in the hearts of these kings to do something that would violate His will in another sense.
 - (b) The Bible does not just portray prophecy as something that God knows will happen, but as

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something that God is working out so that it
actually does occur.

4. God hardens the heart so that it does not obey or believe.
 - a. Notice that as we look at these various passages, God is clearly working in men's hearts so that they do and hold to things that God hates.
 - b. Exodus.
 - (1) Exodus 8:1, Moses says "thus says the Lord....let my people go."
 - (2) Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12-14 with 9:34-10:1
 - (3) Rom 9:18, "So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."
 - c. There are many other times the Bible shows this hardening by God. Look up the word in a good concordance and you will find it to be a consistent point throughout the Bible.
5. Punishing the wicked.
 - a. Ezekiel 18:23 with 1 Samuel 2:25. Same word for desire.
 - b. Psalm 5:5 with Romans 5:8.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Man's decisions in this area are under the controlling umbrella of God's decretive will.
- B. In other words, when you are in obedience and submission to the Word of God you are in harmony with God's preceptive will and decretive will. However, if you are not, then though you are not in harmony with the preceptive will of God, you are still under the decretive will (or it would not have happened).
- C. What is the will of God regarding evangelism?
 1. Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

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2. Learn to look at the nations with the eyes and heart of God. See that God has a real and deep care and compassion for the lost. Tell them of the love of God! And do not lose heart, for God is our shepherd and He has decreed that people from every tribe and nation will repent and come to His Son to His glory.
 - a. There is a heart of compassion and urgency to evangelism.
 - b. There is a certainty to evangelism.
 - c. And both of these truths come out from the reality that God somehow perfectly expresses His will in two unique and non-contradictory ways.

Small Group Questions

- What has changed, or was clarified, through this sermon?
- Look up the passages that I did not read or turn to in the sermon and read them among yourselves. Make sure you keep in mind the point I am making in the sermon notes.
- Think back about various decisions you had to make and you desired to know God's will in them. How many were within God's decretive will or preceptive will? Why does this matter?