

Doctrine of the Will of God

Introduction:

1. That God has the right to do whatever He chooses should never be in dispute. Certainly He can do whatever He wants, whenever He wants. He has, however, chosen to limit Himself by His Word.
2. God has elected to put it all out there on the line for all to see as a self-imposed limitation, and we are so fortunate to have, at least in part, His mind; this so we can know the divine rules.
3. It is always helpful to know the rules of the game before you play or work.
4. With the exception of His self-imposed restrictions, God has the right to do whatever He chooses, and this must never be in dispute.
5. If He elects to save some and leave others to the horrors of hell, without even making known to the unbeliever the gospel, as some hyper Calvinists purport, this would be solely within the purview of God. Let me quickly dispel that horrible assumption, however. He does not do so!
6. As an early writer of the Calvinist persuasion has written, in error, "Out of His great grace He has elected some of the fallen race of men to everlasting salvation ... the rest He leaves in their sins to the praise of the glory of His justice." That would hardly be worthy of praise and a far cry from divine justice.
7. You and I know (from a thorough and scholarly study of the Word of God) He clearly did not do that. Hardly. God went to a great deal of trouble to make the gospel clear to all men.
8. Chafer has written in his *Systematic Theology*:

"The doctrine of election is not without its difficulties-precisely such indeed, as are normal when the finite mind assays to trace the paths of infinity. Within his own consciousness, man recognizes little outside his own power of determination; however, in the end and regardless of the means by which man has reached his destiny, it will be that destiny which was not only foreseen, but was divinely purposed.

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Rom 8:29 For whom He did foreknow i.e. know beforehand, He also did predestinate to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

1Pe 1:20 Who, Christ, was verily known beforehand even before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

“Such must be the conviction of every devout soul that contemplates the obvious truth, that the Creator is as resourceful in executing His purposes as He is in originating them.”

9. Dr. August H. Strong has taught, “... that the reprobate have been left behind because even after the glorious gospel of salvation had been made clear to them they then rejected His so great salvation.”

10. Strong has merely paraphrased Tit 2:11, a verse familiar to us in this church.

Tit 2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

11. Somewhere in between all these pontifications of man lies the truth of what God does, but regardless of your persuasion, be you a Nebuchadnezzar or a Daniel, God will do whatever He pleases with His very own creatures.

Definition and Concept:

1. Generally speaking, everyone in a sense does the will of God because His will is sovereign and irresistible. A case study from the Old Testament will illustrate.

2. Daniel four deals with God's judgment and discipline of Babylon's great ruler, Nebuchadnezzar. As the story begins, the king is seen wandering around his palace consumed with mental-attitude sins.

3. Nebuchadnezzar had seen the power of God in action in the lives of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, but even having seen these miracles he was not overly impressed. However, the king, had apparently not passed the point of no return.

4. God can be relied upon to reveal Himself to all men.

Rom 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, Rom 1:19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

Rom 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities -- his eternal power and divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Joh 1:8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
Joh 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

4.1 It is God the Holy Spirit who is responsible for revealing to mankind knowledge of sin, his minus righteousness and Satan's judgment.

Joh 16:8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Joh 16:9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

Joh 16:10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

Joh 16:11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

5. God will continue to work with the great king, and his salvation will come after loss of part of his kingdom and after a bout with insanity.

6. Daniel, chapter four, is actually a gospel tract written by this king, describing the depths to which he sank before he accepted Christ as his Savior. Let's take a look at Chapter four--Nebuchadnezzar's salvation tract.

6.1 Verses 1-4 are an introduction to his written historical message.

Dan 4:1 King Nebuchadnezzar, To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: May you prosper greatly!

Dan 4:2 It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.

Dan 4:3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

Dan 4:4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous.

6.2 Verses 5-9 describe his predicament. He had a dream and he wanted someone to interpret it.

Dan 4:5 I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me.

Dan 4:6 So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me.

Dan 4:7 When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me.

Dan 4:8 Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.)

Dan 4:9 I said, "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me.

6.3 Verses 10-12 describe the greatness of his kingdom, which began in about 620 B.C. when he took over from his dad, who had defeated the Assyrians.

Dan 4:10 These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous.

Dan 4:11 The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth.

Dan 4:12 Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.

6.4 Verses 13-18 describe the demise of the king: he is likened to a felled tree, but there is hope. In verse 15 the tree is to be wrapped with iron and bronze, a technique in antiquity to keep the tree from splitting, so it could grow again.

6.4.1 There is always hope for the unbeliever until that last sin of unbelief, i.e., after God has done all things possible for him or her in order to motivate salvation faith, that last refusal is called by many the unpardonable sin.

Dan 4:13 "In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven.

Dan 4:14 He called in a loud voice: 'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches.

Dan 4:15 But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. "Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth.

Dan 4:16 Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.

Dan 4:17 "'The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.'

Dan 4:18 "This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

6.5 In Verses 19-27 Daniel interprets the dream, making it clear the Lord was going to move mightily in the life of Nebuchadnezzar.

6.5.1 The brave young Hebrew must tell the king the bad news, and that he does in verses 19-27.

Dan 4:19 Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries!"

Dan 4:20 The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth,

Dan 4:21 with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air--

Dan 4:22 you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

Dan 4:23 "You, O king, saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live like the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.'

Dan 4:24 "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king:

Dan 4:25 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.

Dan 4:26 The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules.

Dan 4:27 Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."

6.6 In verses 28-30 Nebuchadnezzar displays his arrogance. He needs a lesson from the sovereign God of the universe.

Dan 4:28 All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Dan 4:29 Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon,

Dan 4:30 he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"

6.7 In verses 31-32 the pronouncement of discipline is made. The stumbling block for Nebuchadnezzar is his pride, his self-importance.

Dan 4:31 The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you.

Dan 4:32 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."

6.8 In verses 33-35 Nebuchadnezzar refuses to acknowledge the sovereignty of God, and God imposes that which is necessary to motivate salvation faith.

Dan 4:33 Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

Dan 4:34 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

Dan 4:35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

6.9 Verses 36-37 are the king's testimony of salvation. There is joy in heaven, for Nebuchadnezzar has become a member of God's forever family.

Dan 4:36 At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before.

Dan 4:37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

7. So much then for Daniel's salvation testimony. Now back to Definition and Concept.

8. Take note. Nothing anyone does, including the acts of kings, prime ministers, presidents, premiers, etc., can surprise God. Therefore, from God's omniscience God's sovereignty provides a perfect plan for all, even given our imperfect choices.

Eph 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Psa 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

Psa 2:2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

Psa 2:3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

Psa 2:4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

8.1 God is not willing for anyone to perish, but wishes all would accept Him as Savior.

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

9. The Lord wishes only the best for all His people. This was true even for old King Nebuchadnezzar.

10. Daniel four deals with God's judgment and discipline of this great ruler, who was consumed with mental-attitude sins. The Babylonian king would survive and prosper, but only after severe discipline.

11. The will of God is ineluctable and inscrutable--this the king found out, and God used the anecdote to teach much about the nature of the will of God.

12. In time, as family of God, we accomplish the will of the Father by following His handbook, the Bible, or The Mind of Christ as it is called.

13. Compliance with the will of God begins with salvation faith, i.e., to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

1Jo 5:10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

1Jo 5:5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Joh 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

14. After salvation faith, the will of God for the believer becomes a product of cycling the Word of God under the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Rom 12:2 Be ye not conform to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind in order that you might know what is the perfect and acceptable will of God.

15. Conclusion:

15.1 The sovereign will of God and the free will of man coexist in human history.

15.2 The free will of man can and did resist the sovereignty and love of God.

15.3 To resolve the angelic conflict man was given free will and self-determination.

15.4 Therefore, while God has provided salvation by His act of unlimited atonement, man can and does reject His so great salvation.

15.5 God, being omniscient, has seen the entire time line and accommodated all of man's choices by developing a perfect plan for the lives of all mankind.

15.6 This is why, in all confidence, we can thank Him in all things--because He first knew and then provided a perfect plan for each of us.