

The Will of God

Adoring God Chapter 5

Isaiah 46:9-11

I. The Text Opened

A. Isaiah 46:9-11

1. Vers. 9-11.—A FURTHER ADMONITION GROUNDED ON OTHER MOTIVES.
 - a) Israel is exhorted to continue firm in the faith (1) by the recollection of God's mercies in the past (ver. 9); (2) by the consideration of his prophetic power (ver. 10); and (3) by a renewed promise of coming deliverance through Cyrus (ver. 11).
 - b) Ver. 9.—Remember the former things of old; i.e. God's wonderful dealings with Israel in times past—the miracles in Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the deliverances from Midian, and Ammon, and the Philistines, and Zerah, and Sennacherib—which proved him God in a sense in which the word could be applied to no other.
 - (1) *I am God ... I am God. In the original, "I am El ... I am Elohim." El is "the Mighty One," "the Omnipotent;" Elohim, "the Godhead" in all its fulness.*
 - c) Ver. 10.—Declaring the end from the beginning; i.e. "possessed of the very highest prophetic power, able to declare from the very beginnings of history its ultimate issues" (see Gen. 3:15; 16:12; 21:18, etc.).
 - (1) *My counsel; rather, my purpose, or my plan (comp Ps. 33:11; Job 23:13; and supra, ch. 14:24).*
 - d) Ver. 11.—Calling a ravenous bird; rather, a bird of prey.
 - (1) *The imagery is quite natural, and exactly parallel to that by which Nebuchadnezzar is termed "an eagle," both by Jeremiah (49:22) and Ezekiel (17:3).*
 - (2) *There is no need to suppose any allusion to the fact, if fact it be, that the Persians from the time of Cyrus had for a standard a golden eagle, with wings outspread, on the top of a spear-shaft (Xen., 'Cyrop.,' vii. 1, § 4; 'Anab.,' i. 10, § 12).*
 - (3) *From the east (comp. ch. 41:2, 25). Both Persia and Susiana, which were the primary seats of the power of Cyrus, lay to the east of Babylon, the latter due east, the former somewhat to the south-east.*
 - (4) *Even Media might, according to Hebrew usage, be described as east, though lying almost due north-east.*

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: God's will is exclusive, predetermined, comprehensive, and absolute, purposing all things in his governing providence.

1. God's Will is Personal and Exclusive
 - a) God's will is the personal expression of who He is, and everything He does is impeccably aligned with His personal will and effortlessly carried out by Him.
 - (1) *In other words, what God wills, happens.*
 - b) The Bible teaches that *everything* is a demonstration of God's will, including:
 - (1) *... creation and preservation (Rev. 4:11),*
 - (2) *... the government of the world (Dan. 4:35),*

- (3) ... Christ's suffering and death (Luke 22:42),
- (4) ... election and reprobation (Rom. 9:15ff),
- (5) ... regeneration (James 1:18),
- (6) ... sanctification (Phil. 2:13),
- (7) ... the sufferings of believers (1 Pet. 3:17),
- (8) ... men's life and destiny (James 4:15),
- (9) ... and even the smallest and most insignificant occurrences (Matt. 10:29).
 - (a) God was totally, completely, and utterly free to decree one thing and not something else.
 - (i) **Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows Him his counsel? Whom did He consult, and who made Him understand? Who taught Him the path of justice, and taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding? (Isa. 40:13-14, ESV)**

2. God's Will is Predetermined

- a) The Bible is very clear that God determined everything long ago in eternity past, according to His plan.
 - (1) *God ordained everything before the world began.*
 - (a) *John 17:5; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20.*
- b) Everything that has happened, is happening, or will happen is working out as part of His *original* plan.
 - (1) *He knows all things from the beginning, before He even created time, because everything is an aspect of God's singular will.*
 - (a) *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" ... Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it. (Isa. 46:9-11, NASB)*

3. God's Will is Comprehensive

- a) He did not create a general outline of the future and leave the specifics to play out as they may.
- b) Rather, He has planned, in thorough detail, every aspect of His creation – humanity, animals, nature – and every single event that happens to His creation.
- c) In eternity past, He decreed every means, every detail, that would bring about the exact result He wanted.
- d) The same saving God who decreed the salvation of His elect people also decreed that faith would come about in them.
 - (1) *This same God says, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose," (Isa. 46:10, ESV).*
 - (2) *Indeed, God "works all things according to the counsel of His will," (Eph. 1:11, ESV).*
 - (a) *God's will and plan were perfectly laid out, each and every detail, so that men might see His glory in its marvelous design.*

4. God's Will is Absolute

- a) What God wills is certain to come to pass.
- b) It is not subject to change or corrections when something new comes along.
- c) He does not step in occasionally and rework it.
 - (1) *God's plan never changes.*
 - (a) *Num. 23:19; Ps. 102:27; Isa. 41:4; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:17, 13:8; James 1:17.*
- d) To an all-knowing and all-wise God, nothing unexpected ever occurs.

(1) *He is and always has been infinitely wise and all-knowing.*

e) Believers can experience peace, assurance and comfort from this truth, as they rely on a high and lofty Sovereign who loves His people and has worked out a plan for their good and for His glory!

5. God's Will is Providential

a) When God exercises His will all around us and over His creation, this is *the providence of God*.

(1) *God governs all of creation in various ways. Gen. 1:29; Eccl. 5:19; John 6:31; 2 Cor. 9:8-10.*

(2) *God provides everything for creation; consider the poor. 1 Sam. 2:7; Job 5:15-16; Ps. 9:18; Matt. 11:5; Luke 16:22.*

(3) *God's providence. God saved Noah (Gen. 7:1), called and protected Abraham (Gen. 12:1; Gen. 20:3-6), delivered Lot (Gen. 19), took care of Isaac (Gen. 26:2, 3), ordered the accounts of Joseph in saving many people alive during the famine (Gen. 39:2, 3, 23; 45:7, 8; 50:20; Ps. 105:17-22), supplied water, manna and quail for His people (Ex. 16:13-15; Num. 11:31-32; 20:7-11; Neh. 9:10-25), saved David's army (2 Sam. 5:23-25), fed Elijah and the widow (1 Kings 17; 19:1-8), guided the wise men of the east to Christ (Matt. 2:12-13), tends the sparrows (Matt. 10:29), and takes care of His church (Rom. 8:28), to name only a few.*

b) In His glorious providence, He preserves, sustains and governs all things, directing them to the end for which He designed them.

(1) *O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom have You made them all. (Ps. 104:24, ESV)*

c) Every aspect of God's providential will is *perfectly* wise.

(1) *There is no need for men to second guess what God has chosen to do with His universe.*

(2) *He knows what should be done, the order in which it should be done, and only He can see the end of all creation from the beginning.*

(3) *Men should trust in His wisdom and know that He has used the best means to accomplish His ends.*

(4) *People only see a very tiny fraction of God's plan, but they should judge from what they read in Scripture, and see in His providence, that everything is guided by His wisdom, including the ordering of their lives.*

6. God's Will is Purposeful

a) Why does God do what He does?

(1) *God does all things for His own glory.*

(a) *Ps. 33:11; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17.*

b) God has an all-consuming passion for His glory and demonstrates it in every way He pleases.

(1) *For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another. (Isa. 48:11)*

c) Creation, sin, election, the gospel – *everything* is for the glory of God.

(1) *He zealously seeks out every means possible to promote His glory, something He will never share with any creature (Isa. 48:11).*

(2) *Everything He wills is designed by Him to promote the glory of who He is, no matter which attribute it may be, whether holiness, love or justice.*

(3) *And He will never be frustrated in promoting and enjoying His own glory.*

(4) *If He were to fail at this, He would not be God.*

7. What about God's Will Regarding the Existence of Evil?

- a) Many people have difficulty reconciling the existence of evil with the existence of a good God.
- b) Some think that God (ultimate good) and evil somehow do battle with one another in the spiritual realm.
- c) Others suggest the fall of man took God by surprise, and somehow, some way, God has to modify His original plan to incorporate the existence of sin and evil.
- d) Another supposition is that to enable a love relationship, God created Adam and Eve with their own separate will.

(1) *Then God held His breath, so to speak, hoping they would maintain their love relationship with Him, but instead they chose to sin.*

(2) *All these thoughts are biblically incorrect.*

(3) *The truth is that God willed that evil should exist, even all sins and all evil.*

8. Why would God create or allow evil to exist?

- a) The answer is so that *all* of God's glorious attributes would be displayed more fully.

- b) Men must remember that everything and everyone exists to glorify God.

(1) *If God did not allow sin to enter into the garden, and if God had not planned for Adam's fall, then Adam and Eve, and indeed all of men, would never have experienced the outworking of some of God's attributes.*

(2) *If there was no sin, they would never know God's mercy, forgiveness, grace, and salvation or the fear of God's holy anger and wrath.*

(3) *Nor would they have ever had a need for Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.*

(4) *Jonathan Edwards writes: It is necessary, that God's awful majesty, His authority and dreadful greatness, justice, and holiness, should be manifested. But this could not be, unless sin and punishment had been decreed ... If it were not right that God should decree and permit and punish sin, there could be no manifestation of God's holiness in hatred of sin, or in showing any preference, in His providence, of godliness before it. There would be no manifestation of God's grace or true goodness, if there was no sin to be pardoned, no misery to be saved from. How much happiness so ever He bestowed, His goodness would not be so much prized and admired ... So evil is necessary, in order to demonstrate the highest happiness of the creature, and the completeness of that communication of God, for which He made the world. (Sermon on Rom. 2:8-9, Works, 50.)*

- c) Before sin ever entered the world – in fact, before the world was even created – God decided, according to His perfect will, that Jesus Christ would be the Lamb slain for the sins of His people.

(1) *Jesus was ordained to die and was loved by God before anything was created.*

(a) *John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20.*

- d) This means that God willed that evil should exist for His glory.

(1) *"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." (Rom. 11:36).*

(2) *"All things" means just that, "all things," including the Devil, demons, evil men, sin, rebellion and wickedness.*

9. Since God supremely, sovereignly, and perfectly ordained everything that should happen in eternity past, including evil, does that mean that God is a sinner?

- a) Is He the person causing the sin and the evil that men see all around them?

- b) Though God wills that sin take place, God is not, and cannot be, the author of sin.

- c) God is holy (Isa. 6:3) and is incapable of sinning.

- (1) *Scripture offers a perfect illustration of this truth, demonstrating the part God played in hardening Pharaoh's heart.*
 - (2) *Pharaoh was born a sinner, lived a sinner and died a self-avowed heathen and sinner because God never saved him.*
 - (3) *God planned all the events around the life of the Pharaoh (especially those involving the ten plagues of fiery hail, frogs, lice, death of the firstborn, etc.) by which Pharaoh hardened his own heart.*
 - (4) *God so ordered the events where Pharaoh's only choice was to choose to do evil, which he successfully did according to God's plan.*
 - (5) *So, Pharaoh's heart was hardened.*
 - (a) *This was so particularly ordered by the will of God that this process is both described of Pharaoh (who had a wicked heart) and of God, who sealed his fate as a wicked king.*
 - (b) *And all of this was done to show that God's sovereign plan cannot be thwarted by even the most powerful man in all the land.*
- d) God says in His word, "Thou shalt not kill," (Ex. 20:13), but men see death all over the nightly news.
- (1) *God says don't kill, but He ordains countless atrocities all throughout history that demonstrate man's wicked nature in killing others.*
 - (2) *Even from the beginning, when Cain killed Abel, God ordained it.*
 - (3) *When Hitler killed millions of Jews in the holocaust, God ordained it.*
 - (4) *When a person reads the newspaper where the mom killed her baby, or where the son shot his dad with his dad's own gun, God ordained it.*
 - (a) *People might not emotionally like that.*
 - (b) *But if God is sovereign, and He is, and if God has a plan, and He does, then everything that occurs happens as a result of God's eternal counsel and plan.*
 - (c) *And God's eternal counsel and plan are all ultimately very good.*

B. God's Will Regarding Jesus Christ, the Slain Lamb

1. It was God's divine will that wicked, evil, depraved men kill His one and only Son.
 - a) Christ, being "delivered over by the *predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God*, you nailed to a cross by the hands of *godless* men, and have put Him to death," (Acts 2:23, NASB).
 - b) Throughout the book of Revelation John depicts Christ as the *Lamb slain before the foundation of the world*.
 - c) And Scripture makes it evident that the cross is the ultimate objective of God's plan to save men.
 - d) God wants men to clearly understand that He ordained the *most heinous event in the history of the created universe* to show the glory of God in the bride of Christ.
2. God's will regarding the death of His son is directly related to His will regarding the destiny of men's souls.
 - a) According to God's decree, some men and angels are predestined to everlasting life, and others are foreordained to everlasting death.
 - b) The word *predestination* refers to an action applied to God's sovereign will, and is found in passages like Rom. 8:29-30 and Eph. 1:5, 11.
 - c) It means to *determine beforehand*, or *decree from eternity*.
 - d) In eternity past, God decreed the salvation of some angels and His chosen people.

- e) And the number of those He has chosen is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.
- f) By His power, God upholds His chosen angels so they can never fall.
- g) And He designed the work of Christ to save fallen humanity from their sin and misery.
- h) Before the foundation of the world, according to His eternal and immutable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, God determined His chosen people in Christ to everlasting glory, out of His free will, grace and love.
- i) Not only did God appoint His chosen to glory, but He also appointed the means by which they would be saved.
 - (1) *Everyone who is elected, being fallen in Adam, is redeemed by Jesus Christ.*
 - (a) *Eph. 2:10; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2.*
 - (2) *They are successfully called to faith in Christ by God's Spirit working at the proper time in their life.*
- j) On the other side, the rest of mankind God passes by, and He leaves them in their original sin and misery.
- k) These are ordained by God to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.
- l) God never gives them the tools they need to come to faith, as it is His will to leave them to their depraved nature.
 - (1) *They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. (Titus 1:16)*
- m) In line with God's perfect will, He has determined that some men would be left to their own sinful hearts, to perish in their wickedness.
 - (1) *But keep in mind that God does not damn people because they sin.*
 - (2) *For Rom. 3:23 reminds us that "All have sinned."*
 - (3) *Rather, He damns some people to everlasting punishment because it is His sovereign will to make some vessels of honor and some for dishonor (Rom. 9:1-33).*
 - (4) *As bad as eternal hell will be, however, it will be worse for those who commit greater sins. Jesus said such sinners will receive greater damnation.*

III. The Text Applied

A. You Must Repent and Believe

1. If you are not a Christian, do not say to God, "I am not chosen, so what's the use?"
 - a) You may be tempted to say, "If I am elected, I shall be saved, no matter what I do. If not, I shall be condemned, no matter what I do."
 - (1) *It is no excuse to say that God has not provided a means by which men must be saved.*
 - (2) *Men voluntarily remain in their own sin.*
 - b) What does God say?
 - (1) *"Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," (Acts 3:19).*
 - (2) *"If you mortify the deeds of the body you shall live," (Romans 8:13).*
 - (3) *"Believe and be saved," (Acts 16:31).*
 - (a) *What can be plainer?*
 - (4) *Cry to God for converting grace.*
 - (5) *Whatever God's purposes are, be sure to know that His promises are true.*
 - (6) *Whatever the decrees of heaven may be, you must say to yourself, "With faith in the promises of God and Christ's work on the cross, I am sure that if I repent and believe I shall be saved. And that if I do not repent, I shall be condemned."*

(a) This is as plain as Christ's Gospel can be, therefore, repent and be saved!

2. Then you will be able to worship and adore Christ

a) If you are a Christian, then praise Him for the glorious plan He has ordained in eternity past!

b) It is His will that you, as a Christian, are conformed to the image of His Son and your Lord.

(1) 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. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? (Rom. 8:28-31).

(2) The "all things" of Paul's exhortation here relates to calling, justification, and glorification.

(3) It is God's will that His church reflects His glory, and so Paul says, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

(4) God is in control and rules everything by His will and eternal decree for His glory and the good of His people.

(5) We should be thankful that everything is determined by our God of infinite wisdom and goodness!

3. Is this a settled conviction in your heart?

a) Does it give you the peace that it should, knowing that everything that comes to pass is God's will?

(1) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, (Eph. 1:3-5, ESV)

4. God's will from all eternity was to glorify as well as justify His elect.

a) His will from eternity was to deliver them from the power of darkness, and translate them into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1:13).

b) His will from all eternity was to make Christ a curse for His people as the Lamb who was slain, that He might redeem them from the curse (Gal. 3:13).

c) God made covenant transactions between the Father and Son from eternity, in which Christ engaged as the Surety for His people to redeem and justify them (Zech. 6:13).

d) God willed to justify sinners as a result of Christ's suffering and making satisfaction for them.

e) "By His knowledge," or by faith in Him, "shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities," (Isa. 53:11).

(1) This should be a cause of the highest excitement and greatest joy for the believer.