

WD July 25, 2022

Title: A Battle of Wills

Ever see a toddler melt down at the grocery store? Some smile. Some shake their heads. Parents of older children discover their PTSD has been triggered. It's like a grudge match of wills. "In this corner weighing in at 41 pounds....Jr. His challenger....the wearer of many hats, the pregnant momma of two (almost three), and the fiercest shopper of in aisle five...mom. Folks it promises to be a match for the ages. Jr. has had his mind made up since mom forced him to sit in the cart. No he is going to walk rather than ride today, so he thinks. He has thrown many tries at trying to convince mom to let him out of the cart so he can walk. So far, she has dodged the cute face and the pouty face. She has dodged his persistent asking and two-year old reasoning. But she will not forget how Jr. took advantage of her grace last time—running up and down the aisle until the vein started pulsing from mom's angry face. Not this time Jr. Not this time. But Jr. is not finished yet. All the stops are out not. With an arch of his back, a deep breath, Jr. begins a full-frontal assault...oh it's a total melt down ladies and gentlemen. Loud cries and big tears. But mom is standing firm. Will she give in? Will she finish her shopping? Will her face get stuck that way? Stay tuned."

In the Lord's prayer we pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." But do we really seek God's will. Because of our sin it is usually a battle of wills. Somewhere from deep inside a toddler's voice shouts "My will be done!" This then is the contest within ourselves.

The will of any human being is an expression of one's desire. When we write out a last will and testament we are expressing our final wishes. Usually this means writing down who we want to get our stuff when we die. When it comes to a Christian life the problem we face is that our will is still in bondage to sin. If not for the Grace of God we would never know God's will which is plainly stated in God's Word. Our nature is always chafing against God's desire for us to live holy lives. This is a problem that goes all the way back to the beginning when free will was still free. Then came the fall. The fall was a result of Adam and Eve placing their desire/will above God's. God's response was a new Adam, Jesus coming to keep that will perfectly.

Perhaps in one of Jesus' most human moments Jesus maintained the will of His Father. In Luke 22:44 hear that Gethsemane was so intense that Jesus sweat blood. In Matthew 26 we read the account of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

³⁹ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹ "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

⁴² He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

God wanted this. The Father wanted Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. It was the Father's will to allow His son to be spit upon and punched in the face. It was the Father's will to allow the scourge to tear Jesus' back to shreds. It was the Father's will to allow the disciples to abandon Jesus, even deny Jesus three times. It was the Father's will to allow battle-hardened soldiers to callously nail another perceived criminal to the cross—they had done it before and death was their business. As the lots were cast for Jesus clothes It was the Father's will for Jesus to suffer the cruel words of the mockers. It was the Father's will to forsake Jesus as our sins saturated His person and darkness covered the land. It was the Father's will for Jesus to drink the cup of His wrath down to the very dregs. This is what God wanted.

It is not what his mother wanted—no mother should have to see her son die. It was not what Peter wanted even when He was denying him. It was certainly not what the other disciples imagined when they gave up everything to follow Jesus. I can just hear the disciples; "So, now what do we do?" "Do...?" "Hide in the

upper room because there is nothing we can do.” This was not only God’s plan but God’s will. The death of Jesus was what God wanted because it was necessary for us to have the forgiveness Jesus’ death brought. It is now God’s will that we know Jesus through His Word—this is what the Father wants most for us and from us. “Father, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

By the way, God’s will is done whether we agree with the Lord or not. It is done no matter how much Satan chaffs against or acts to undo it. As evidenced in the cross the very actions Satan takes against God’s will in effect in the end serve God’s will. Evil men crucified Jesus for selfish reasons and in so doing they served the desire for the cross to pay the penalty for sin. We also know that in our weakest moments Jesus seeks out the lost, or in the case of Adam and Eve, he goes searching for us when we try to hide—in order to bring grace in our weakness—so His power as 2 Cor 12:9 puts it is made perfect in our weaknesses.

We see this in a very real way when Jesus enters the Garden of Gethsemane. God’s grace makes God’s will not only possible but a reality. Jesus believes that the Father’s desire and intention is good, the highest good. For us we too faith says that the Father wants us to have it good in the highest way even if in the short turn our tribulation is painful. We are invited to not only call upon the grace of God but actually count on it to be given when our weaknesses strike us. Because of our weakness faith will always be a battle of wills not so different from the toddler in the grocery store squaring off with his mom.

Finally, is it really possible, to know the will of God in more specific situations? Who should I marry? Which occupation should I pursue? Which college should I choose? When we seek the will of God we should remind ourselves that because of our sin we will not seek it perfectly. The goal of God’s will is not to ordain every choice in life but to make you holy. God’s will isn’t for you always to be successful or even happy. Grace gives you the freedom to know what God’s will is in your life and the ability to discern your options. We already know the big picture—to come to a knowledge of the truth and to be saved through a relationship with Jesus Christ. What we do in life is meant to highlight that purpose. By God’s grace we pray that God’s will is not only done in our lives but experienced with a heart that welcomes the Father’s will. As long as you are making that will a priority; even the simplest things such as telling the truth or in tough choices such as a career move—you know grace is at work in your weakness and God’s will is accomplished in and through you. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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John 3:30