

THE WILL OF GOD: PRECEPTIVE AND DECRETAL

1. God's preceptive will¹ is that which He commands, in accordance with what He approves as inherently delightful, pleasant, and consistent with His holy character, regardless of whether or not He has eternally decreed such a thing to come to pass in time.²
2. God's preceptive will is distinct from His decretal will (or eternal decree),³ by which He has, for His own glory, eternally and irresistibly foreordained whatsoever comes to pass,⁴ including that which displeases Him by violating His preceptive will.⁵
3. While God does ordain desirable things to a desirable end,⁶ and undesirable things to a desirable end,⁷ He never ordains anything (whether desirable or undesirable) to an undesirable end.⁸
4. God's preceptive will expresses His holy evaluation of a thing as inherently desirable or undesirable *in itself* (Atomistic Micro-Essence), whereas God's decretal will expresses His holy purpose for that thing in relation to everything else (Holistic Macro-Purpose).
5. God's preceptive will reflects His sincere approval of (and inherent pleasure in) all obedience to His Word, as well as His readiness to grant every corresponding blessing which He has attached to the observance of His Word.⁹
6. God's preceptive will reflects His sincere disapproval of (and inherent displeasure in) all disobedience to His Word, as well the corresponding negative consequences stemming from that disobedience.¹⁰

7. God's preceptive will applies no less to the commands and benefits of the gospel than to the commands and benefits of the law.¹¹
8. The violation of God's preceptive will — whether in relation to the law or to the gospel — greatly angers and displeases God,¹² but it cannot frustrate the eternal purpose and good pleasure of His decretal will.¹³
9. God's preceptive will as set forth in Scripture is the only rule of our obedience, and must never be superseded or supplemented by any supposed knowledge of God's eternal decree, even when such knowledge of future events has been revealed in Scripture.¹⁴
10. While the certain knowledge of future events (derived from Scripture) should never diminish our commitment to *loving, doing* and *praying* God's preceptive will, we must never pray for God's revealed will in direct opposition to anything *known* to be God's decretal will (e.g. praying for the salvation of Satan, the demons, or anyone known to have committed the sin unto death).¹⁵
11. While it is not possible for anyone, by their sinful choices, to depart from the decretal will of God, yet they may depart from God's preceptive will, thereby forfeiting some degree of usefulness and blessedness, yet still accomplishing His decretal will.¹⁶
12. Far from portraying God's preceptive will as a bare or detached command with no corresponding reality in the divine being, Scripture presents it as no less intrinsic to God's nature than His decretal will.¹⁷
13. We may be comforted, as believers, that no matter how displeasing the violations of God's preceptive will are to Him and to us, they are part of His eternal purpose to glorify Himself and save His people.¹⁸

¹ Ezra 10:11; Mt. 7:21; 12:50; 21:31; Rm. 12:2; Col. 1:10; 1 Thes. 4:3; 5:18; Heb. 10:36; 13:21; 1 Pet. 4:2; 1 Jn. 2:17.

² 1 Sam. 15:22; Ps. 11:7; 51:5-6; Pr. 11:1; Isa. 1:11-15; 56:4; 61:8.

³ Mt. 7:21; 12:50 vs. Rm. 9:18-19.

⁴ Job 23:13; 42:2; Ps. 33:10-11; 115:3; Dan. 4:35; Isa. 14:24; 46:11-12.

⁵ John 17:12; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28.

⁶ Eph. 1:3-6; Php. 2:13.

⁷ See Footnote #5 above; Also: Gen. 50:20; Ex. 9:16 (Rm. 9:17-24; 11:30-36); Ps. 76:10; Pr. 6:17f (2 Sam. 12:24-25); Isa. 63:9; Lam. 3:33 (Heb. 12:10-11).

⁸ Ps. 145:9-10; Rm. 8:28.

⁹ Dt. 5:29; 32:29-30; Ps. 81:13f; Isa. 48:18f; Mt. 23:37 (Lk. 19:42f).

¹⁰ Jer. 44:4-7; Ezk. 18:23, 32.

¹¹ Dt. 5:29; Ps. 81:13f; Ezk. 18:23, 32; Mt. 23:37 [vs. 11:25-26]; Rm. 10:21 [1Tim. 2:4? 2Pet. 3:9?]

¹² Ps. 11:5-6; Isa. 1:11-15; Jer. 44:4; Mal. 2:16.

¹³ See Footnote 4. Also: Rm. 8:28-39.

¹⁴ Deut. 29:29; Mt. 26:31-34, 40-41.

¹⁵ Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 1 Jn. 5:16. [Caution: Ex. 32:10; 2Ki. 20:1f; Jer. 18:7f].

¹⁶ Isa. 48:18-19; Jer. 6:16-17; Jon. 1-4.

¹⁷ Dt. 5:29; 32:29-30; Ps. 81:13f; Isa. 1:14; 48:18f; Jer. 44:4; Mt. 23:37.

¹⁸ Rm. 8:28.