

# What is the Lord's Will

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- [ 0 : 00 ] You're listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. To learn more about us, visit our website at [gracereformed.org](http://gracereformed.org).
- And now, today's sermon. As Curtis pointed out in his prayer this morning, we don't celebrate the resurrection of Christ on one Sunday, but we celebrate it every Sunday.
- And therefore, it's appropriate to say he is risen. Amen. For those of you that were ready for that, thank you. One of the advantages and joys of preaching verse by verse through a book is that I don't have to wonder about what I'm going to preach next.
- I've never gone to bed on a Saturday night thinking, I don't know what I'm going to say tomorrow. The text dictates that. It's also a wonderful reminder to you that whenever I stand up here, I'm only going to preach what the text has.
- Being that this is tax week, this is not me picking a passage to preach to you because of that. In this particular section, Peter mentions the will of God.
- [ 1 : 14 ] Everyone faces this question, right? If not once, often. What is God's will for me? What am I to do with my life in this situation?
- We don't normally ask that question unless it's significant. It's important to us. And when we ask it, we imagine ourselves on the top of a mountain cliff.
- The wind is blowing our hair. The music slowly rises to a crescendo. And bursting out of the sky comes a voice pointing us in the way of the promised land.
- And then we pick up the phone and call our mom and ask what we should do. In all seriousness, everyone here deep within them longs for the significance of knowing this is what God wants for me.
- This is what I am to do. Some of us decide to find it for ourselves. Sometimes we'll even blame God for our decisions, not knowing if it really is from him.
- [ 2 : 19 ] Peter is switching from who they are in Christ, which has been the first few chapters, all of chapter 1 and some of chapter 2, to what they are now going to do with their life.
- Because their identity has changed, they now have a new purpose for life. And it is God's will, not their own, that they pursue. This is why he says, put away the deeds of the flesh.
- That was your will before. To the free-spirited American, fulfilling the will of another than yourself is not what movies are made of.
- Live your dream. Fulfill your desires. Whatever it is that you want to do, you can make it happen. We care about the rebel who fights against the system to win his freedom from the tyrant.
- But that's just the problem. In the text, what we learn very quickly is we're the tyrant. We're the ones who need to be freed from ourselves. We need to be saved from ourselves.
- [ 3 : 31 ] So we no longer, as Peter says, you are free. You no longer serve your flesh. Not only that, you no longer serve the evil realm. Because our king has not only paid for our ransom, but now has come to live within us.

If you have your Bibles open, please turn back and look with me at verse 9. Reading this context will make sense of what Peter says in the following verses. If you don't read it all together, it won't really make sense.

So let's begin in verse 9. This is where he's reminding us of our identity. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. A people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. I remember the story of Hosea.

That was so good. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul. What a wonder to believe that the king you now serve is the most powerful creator.

[ 4 : 48 ] The creator of the universe. And your king knows your name. He loves you. He died for you. He freed you from yourself and from the evil rebellion.

And then he gave you a purpose beyond trying to save yourself. The way Peter describes it is his blood washed over you and cleansed you.

So we no longer live in a state of guilt. But he says you are robed as a royal priest. As a holy representative of God. So every day we are called to walk in faith trusting in our good father's gifts towards us.

His love and his kindness. And we are guaranteed by him that there is nothing that will ever pull us away from him. That's the freedom that Peter is talking about.

You no longer are obligated to try and gain the eye of God's favor. Because it's been given to you. You have a new life. So those living under the persecution of Rome.

[ 6 : 01 ] Hearing this at this time are thinking to themselves. I don't have to be under the pressure of this emperor. This king.

Because I now have a new king. Because I'm a part of a new nation. And I'm a new people. You see how Peter has to go. Hold on. One moment.

Before we go too far. This is true. He is ruling and reigning. And he will bring all under his feet. But.

You have been left here for a purpose. And this is why he says in verse 13. So jump with me down to verse 13. Be subject for whose sake?

The Lord's sake. In other words. Your Lord is doing something with your current position in Rome. Or wherever you are. Reading this.

[ 7 : 01 ] You need to remain there. And be a part of the system of that government. For the sake of God. Not for your sake. Did you notice this? He isn't saying for your benefit. Or for your purposes.

He's saying for the purposes of God. I want you to remain. You know when a spy goes into another country. I've been fascinated by this. I was watching a documentary recently.

About a man who worked for the CIA for many years. He was talking about spy craft. It's terrifying. You shouldn't watch that. Anyways. What do they do? Is they go into another country.

And they become a citizen there. And they follow the rule of life. Some of them get married. They blend in. So that they can be a part of the system. And then be valuable to the country that they're representing.

In many ways we're not spying on people. So that we might turn against them. But we are here to influence them. This is how Peter describes it.

- [ 7 : 58 ] Our desire is only brought from God. Is a representative. Taking the concept of a royal priest. The representative of God to the people.
- Look at verse 13. Be subject for the Lord's sake. To every human institution. Whether it be to the emperor as supreme. Or to governors as sent by him.
- To punish those who do evil. And to praise those who do good. At every level. It doesn't matter what situation. Whatever level you find yourself at. You're submitting to these leaders.
- For the sake of God. Now this is important. At this point. I'm going to go ahead and let you know. The rest of the sermon. So you don't start thinking about that.
- And not hear what I say now. This is what I would have done. If I heard this sermon. So. I am going to answer the questions. Of. What if the government's evil?
- [ 8 : 56 ] What if the government's asking us to do something. That is sinful. And against scripture. How do we. Is there ever a moment we should rebel? So that's all coming. So we can all relax.
- And know that I'll answer those questions. Probably not to your liking. That's fine. I don't like my answer either. But it's God's answer. So let's go to the text.
- When Peter writes this. This first letter. He is dealing with a very hostile city. So he does not write this saying. You submit to them if.
- They are worthy of your submission. If they're fulfilling their role. Perfect. That's not what he says. Which is interesting. A great example of this is the.
- Story of Daniel. If you turn with me. We'll look at one verse. In Daniel chapter 4. In verse 17. Some of us know the story of Daniel. He's captured. He's brought into captivity. And he's told what he is going to do.
- [ 9 : 57 ] And he ends up rebelling against it. But he does so in a way. That is honoring. But he obeys God rather than man. But what I want to point out.
- Is something that Daniel said. We'll look at his life in a minute. I want you to pay attention to something. That Daniel says on behalf of God. So Nebuchadnezzar the king has a dream.
- He has proclaimed himself to be the most powerful being. He's claimed himself to be a God. And so he asks Daniel to interpret the dream that he has. And so he comes back. And tells him the interpretation of the dream.
- It's not good. He's about to receive punishment. For his pride and his arrogance. Notice what he says here. In verse 17. The sentence is by the decree of the watchers.
- The decision by the word of the holy ones. Now several passages in the Old Testament describe this council. This group of watchers. Working on providing judgment on the behalf of God.
- [ 10 : 57 ] This is not obscure to the Bible. God uses humans for the work here on earth. He uses churches. Deacons. Elders. You. The body of Christ. In the heavenly realm. In the spiritual realm.
- He also has a group of people that he uses. This is what Daniel is describing. So the judgment was brought before the watchers. This judge of angels if you want to call it. And they looked at what he did.
- And they presented back to God. Saying this is the judgment he deserves. He's going to be turned into an animal for seven years. So just to give you context of what he's saying. Read it again.
- The sentence is by the decree of the watchers. The decision by the word of the holy ones to the end. That the living may know. The most high rules the kingdom of men.

And gives it to whom he will. And sets over it the lowliest of men. That's what I wanted you to see. Daniel is explaining the dream.

[ 11 : 53 ] And in the dream to the man who has claimed to be the most powerful being in the world. He says, oh you do not understand. You were put here by God.

Now the phrase I want you to notice is this one. He will and sets over it the lowliest of men. This guy is a great description of a bad leader.

The lowliest of humans. It's the scum of the earth. Yes, it is possible that God will put leaders in places. And they're not good leaders.

So, if you go back to Peter and understand what Peter is saying. Is that he's calling you to submit. Not because these men are worthy. But because God has put them in that place.

And ultimately, God will be their judge. Of whether they do right or wrong. It's also true that in our case.

[ 13 : 04 ] We can vote. For who will be our leader. This is known as the doctrine of second causes. Or the doctrine of concurrence. It's in our confession.

That God uses our acts. Our works. In concordance with his. To accomplish his will. But yet we're still accountable to do the right thing. And so, when we vote.

We vote in such a way. That's a representative of God and his character. What I am not saying is. Just sit back and do nothing. When Daniel was in the country.

In Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. You'll notice. That in the proper places. Which they could. They produced that which was holy. That which was favorable for the people.

So, this is not a let go and let God. Well, God's going to do whatever he wants. So, you don't do anything. We should vote. Am I clear? Alright. I don't want to hear that later.

[ 13 : 58 ] Are you saying we shouldn't vote? No. No. This is more about us understanding. That we are called. Because of the will of God.

And the mission of God. We are called to submit. Because our country. And our king. Is not consuming the earth at this moment. It's a spiritual presence. That one day when he returns.

And puts everyone under his feet. Will be a present kingdom. But that kingdom is not here yet. So, this is why we then go. To then verse. 15. 1 Peter 2.15.

For this is the will of God. That by doing good. You should put to silence. The ignorance of foolish people. So, I think it's important to understand.

Peter's perspective at this moment. We serve only one God. And it is his will. That we submit to the rulers. Of this world. And our life here.

[ 14 : 57 ] As aliens and sojourners. Has a purpose beyond our salvation. So, we have been redeemed. And set free. But you'll notice. When he describes us. In the prior verses. You're a chosen people.

A royal priesthood. Why? To proclaim the excellencies. Of the one who saved you. Right? This isn't an escape plan. This is a rescue plan.

Using the people he rescued. So, the leaders we're submitting ourselves to. Are the very ones who we are sharing the good news of Christ.

This is why he's saying. They will see your good deeds. They'll be observing the way in which we act. So, as we fulfill this purpose. We will push back against the culture around us.

They will mock us and slander us. Because we decided to do what is morally correct in honoring of the Lord. And those who are enslaved in their sin. Will openly slander us.

[ 15 : 52 ] And lie at us. And lie about us. And mock us. And if not persecute us. Which is what the church in Rome was experiencing in Peter's letter. But I want you to take notice. God is the one who brings the judgment.

This is why he says. That by doing good. You shall put to silent the ignorance of foolish people. God's the one who sees your good works.

And he silences it. You may not experience that in this life. This is why he says. Many will suffer for my sake. And then die. He switches back to their identity for a little bit.

In verses 16 and 17. Helping them understand how to use. This idea of submission for the king. And look at verse 16. Live as people who are free.

Not using their freedom as a cover up for evil. But living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

[ 16 : 50 ] Fear God. Fear God. Fear God. What he means by this is. You've been set free. From not only the sinful flesh. But you've been set free from the evil realm.

Driven by the adversary. And now that you have this freedom. He says don't use it to cause problems.

Don't use it in essence to. I don't have to do what anybody tells me. Because my king is your creator. This is why he says.

This is my will. This is for my sake. You're not set free to go do whatever you want. You're set free to be a part of the kingdom. To be a part of God's mission in life.

For you. So we take this new freedom that we have. From our bondage. So that we can then set others free. Thankfully this is not the only section in scripture.

[ 17 : 50 ] That speaks about this. If you turn with me to Romans chapter 13. Paul also has a lot more to say about this. I think we should work through it. It's a good parallel passage. So turn with me to Romans chapter 13.

When I first started preaching 20 something years ago. I knew I could read the passage. Because I heard the pages stop turning. I don't hear as many pages anymore. So I just give you a few minutes.

Of how many taps it might take. This is what it says. Romans 13. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. But there is no authority except from God.

And those that exist have been instituted by God. Well that sounds like Daniel 4.17. Doesn't it? Paul just go ahead and just takes the concept. And puts it right in his letter.

I do. I want to point this out. That in this time and season. In our country. This is a good reminder. That when Paul wrote to the Romans.

[ 18 : 54 ] It was almost at its pinnacle. Of disaster. It was a horrendous place. And Paul writes in such a way.

That that would be hard for people to stomach. Because some of their loved ones are imprisoned and dead. Because of what's happening. Peter makes this phrase. He says honor the emperor.

I think the idea of that is do not mock. Don't make a mockery. Don't slander. But that being said. When Jesus was told to pay his taxes. He held up the coin and says.

Whose face is on this coin. Render to Caesar what is Caesar's. But when talking about Nero. In Luke 13.32. When they came to ask him a question.

He says. Go back to the fox and tell him. He called him a fox. It's not because he was wise. Acknowledging that we have evil.

[ 19 : 49 ] Evil in government. Or evil in power. Is not wrong. There's a difference between acknowledging it. And mocking it. Honoring it. And disgracing it. Do you understand the difference?

So. He isn't writing to people who live in a. Technically live in a very safe country. For Christians. It's very unsafe. Look at verse 2.

Romans 13.2. Therefore whoever resists the authorities. Resists what God has appointed. And thus. Who resist will incur judgment. And I think here. He doesn't mean necessarily. Judgment under the wrath of God.

For like losing your salvation. Or not going to heaven. But judgment from the government. Because God put it in place for this. For instance. You don't pay your taxes. You go to prison. Well.

He kind of even just says that. Verse 3. For rulers are not a terror. To good conduct. But bad. Would you. Have no fear. Of the one who is in authority. Then do what is good.

[ 20 : 47 ] And you will receive his approval. For he is God's servant. For your good. But if you do wrong. Be afraid. For he does not bear the sword. Or the glock. In vain.

For he is the servant of God. An avenger. Who carries out God's wrath. On the wrongdoer. Therefore. One must be in subjection. Not only.

To avoid God's wrath. But also for the sake of conscience. For because of this. You also pay taxes. For the authorities. Are ministers of God. Attending to this.

Very thing. Pay to all. What is owed to them. Taxes. To whom taxes are owed. Revenue. To whom revenue is owed. Respect. To whom respect is owed. Honor. To whom honor is owed.

I did find it ironic. That this passage fell on this week. I'm not going to lie. It was funny. It was funny. I want to go back.

[ 21 : 47 ] To a little bit of the introduction. I did several months ago. When we started the book. The reason why there was a conflict. In the city. And it was rising all the way up to Nero. Was that the city was built.

On its core foundation. On polytheism. They worshipped any and all gods. Especially the gods. That would give them favor and power. And so they had temples.

And statues erected around the city. And it was part of being a Roman citizen. That you would worship. And celebrate all the festivals. Because they wanted the favor of the gods.

Well when the gospel of God. Starts circulating in Rome. It becomes a problem. Because the gospel is. You will serve no other.

I mean the commandment is. You will serve no other god. God. As a matter of fact. What's the first commandment? You shall have no other gods.

[ 22 : 44 ] Before me. Well they were afraid. That if only one god. Who they did not know. They even had a statue. In case there was a god.

They didn't know about. And they didn't want to make it angry. There was a statue. To the unknown god. Just to cover all our bases. So these people.

Were being persecuted. Thrown in prison. Lied about. Because. They were proclaiming. That there is only one god. To whom we serve. And this kind of leads us. To the situation of.

What Paul is dealing with. And Peter. If you turn with me. To Acts chapter 5. Peter who wrote. The first letter.

Also brings some clarity. For us as well. Do we obey. In all situations. We'll finally get to this part. The bible does provide.

[ 23 : 40 ] For us examples. Of when we should go. Against our rulers. When they require us. To go against our king. That's the caveat. So Acts chapter 5.

Verse 27. And following it. Says this. And when they had brought them. They set them. Before the council. And the high priest. Questioned them. Saying. We strictly charge you.

Not to teach. In this name. Yet. Here you have filled. Jerusalem. With your teaching. And you intend. To bring this man's blood. Upon us. But Peter.

And the apostles. Answered. We must obey God. Rather than man. God. And. God. God. Amen. Amen. Wow. That's helpful. To obey God.

Would mean. To submit to our leaders. To the point. Until they would ask us. To then violate our king. Which we would not do. But there's also a flip side.

[ 24 : 35 ] Of this as well. When people rebel. Against the rulers. Because they dislike their policies. We also ought to obey God. Rather than man. When we're being pressured.

To join a movement. A coup. A rebellion. Because we don't like a particular way. A government is doing something. It's at that moment. We still obey God.

Rather than man. It works on either side. We use the system. As God intended. We do not try to get. What we want out of it.

So we obey God. Rather than the revolutionists. Who want their way. There's many examples of this. We won't look at all of them. But I will name them. Daniel. When he was told. To pray to no other God.

All of a sudden. Had a public prayer life. That was very evident. For people to see. Rahab. Hiding of the spies. Lying. Is it ever okay to lie? According. There's a greater ethic.

[ 25 : 31 ] And Rahab was praised. For protecting the spies. Shadrach. Meshach. And Abednego. Honoring their vows to the Lord. And serving their king. At the same time.

And the Lord ended up using it. And blessing it. But here's a question. I know that some of you will ask. What about removing evil rulers? Are Christians involved.

In this type of action. As it relates to. Remember our mission. Is the proclamation of the gospel. We are representatives of the king. We're sweet aroma. We are royal priests. This is our job.

It's not cultural transformation. Our job is not to put Christians in every area of leadership around the world. That would be wonderful. But that's not what we're told to do. We're told to submit and proclaim.

But what about when we have a ruler who is not doing as God has intended. Which is to protect the people. And govern them. Sometimes God will use other authorities or nations to remove tyrants.

[ 26 : 30 ] We've seen this. Not only in the Bible. But in modern history. During the reformation. The reformers held to a doctrine that was called the lesser magistrate. I'm not going to teach on this.

I'll put available in the app later. I did a whole lecture on it last year. But the idea. Is that if you have a leader who does not have the good people's intention in mind. Is not fulfilling his role. But is actually destroying and being destructive of humans.

The lesser magistrate. That means those who are in authority and government. Below him have the right to remove him. Because he is not fulfilling his position. And the reformers utilized this at times.

And promoted it amongst the church. And many of the pastors were involved in it. Because they saw themselves still submitting to the government. For the good of the people. For the honor of the Lord.

And removing a tyrant. It is never okay for the church to become their own militia. To then become their own self-governance. Why?

[ 27 : 33 ] Well that's because our God was very clear. He has a system that he wants us to use. The church. It does not use the sword. It's just healthy for us to remember.

So what is our mission in life? Well our mission in life is God's will. And God has made his will clear. Here in this passage. Sometimes we make it a big mystery. What is God's will for my life?

So if you ever come into my office. Young person. And you're just wondering. What does God want me to do? I'm going to say. Submit to your parents. And then.

Your governing leaders. In your church. Submit. Submit. Doesn't sound very exciting does it? It's actually wonderful. Because it frees you to do the very work he wants you to do.

To be who you are. Peter is going to get into this. What does this look like in every area of our life. From our jobs. To our marriages. To slave and slave owners.

[ 28 : 40 ] He gets into this over the next few chapters. But what he keeps referencing throughout both letters. Is the idea of who you are. There's a new spiritual nation.

With a king who's over it in spirit here. And the war. As Paul says twice. The war we fight. As we submit to the governing authorities.

The war we fight is not of flesh. We're not fighting the people we see. He says. The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. But of divine power. We wrestle not against the flesh.

But against a force of evil. Multiple forces of evil. That are not who you see. But it's the people behind it. How is it you set people. Real humans.

Free from the real war. By being who you are. Royal priests. A part of a nation of God's people.

[ 29 : 36 ] Who proclaim the excellencies of God. And as they hear. Which is the weapons of this war. As they hear it. Their eyes are opened. And they now see the king and savior.

And they move from wrath. And wretch. To loved. And son and daughter. You see.

If we're fighting the government. We don't have the energy and time. To do what we're really fighting for. All the leaders. To whom we hate. And mock. And have horrible things to say about.

Is the very person. To whom God has sent you here. To share. The light. You did not. Come to the light. Because you were smart enough.

Paul reminds us. Oh those to whom God saves. Are the weak. The frail. The least. The lowest. Christ. And then he turns us loose.

[ 30 : 33 ] With the power of God. And says. Go submit to your rulers. And as. Literally he says. As they see your good works. It will glorify me.

If you disconnect. The whole letter. And you disconnect. The whole concept of church. From Peter's words. Then it's this weird. Cringy idea.

That I got to submit. To a bunch of people. Who in our opinion. Don't know what they're doing. I guarantee you. There's over a hundred of you in here. And there's probably a thousand opinions. On what should be done.

And we get distracted. By the physical. And we forget. Why we're here. Now some of you have come. From horrible countries. Countries that.

Have practiced. And done things. That you've shared with me. That are just. Unspeakable at times. I am not downplaying that.



[ 31 : 33 ] I am not telling you. That you shouldn't have the struggle. Of watching what. These countries have done. To not only Christians. But human beings in general. I think you need to find comfort.

That Paul and Peter. Are writing to people. In similar situations. To where many of them. Are fleeing. Out of the country. Because of the situations. That they find themselves in. So please do not take.

My tone as exacting. And shaming you. Or guiltting you. Saying that you should be excited. About serving your country. There's nothing here. That says be excited. About serving your country. Other than. Be excited about fulfilling.

The will of God. For his sake. And suffer enduring it. Because. Do you guys remember. Who Philip was? He was a jailer. Who imprisoned.

Apostles. Who heard. The gospel. And his whole family. Got saved. Do you remember this story? The Philippian jailer. We don't know.

[ 32 : 33 ] Who God may use. As we are submitting. To do his work. And I believe. That this is the perspective. We have to have. Every time.

We go into Peter. Peter is trying to pull us. Out of the flesh. And into the spirit. Paul says it plain. Walk by the spirit. You will not fulfill. The lust of the flesh. Our flesh.

Wants safety. And power. And significance. The spirit says. We don't have to have that. Because we have God's power. God's love.

And God's acknowledgement. We are significant. In the eyes of God. So we wear those robes. We wear that identity. We house ourselves. In that spirit.

So that when we meet someone. Who is enslaved. To their sin. And to the evil one. We can proclaim. The excellencies. Of our king. And say. He can set you free too. Well.

[ 33 : 34 ] We are going to speak more of this. As we go throughout the text. But my encouragement to you. In this time. This particular section. If we want to know.

How to endure. A country. No matter what country we live in. And remind ourselves. Of why it is that we are here. Go back and read. The first two chapters of Peter.

Because he is going to remind you. Of the divine power. That has granted you. Your entire life. And your purpose in life. Is not to live in a utopian city. But your purpose in life.

Is to set people free. And he uses. Your obedience. Your kindness. He uses. The sweet aroma. As Paul describes it.

He uses. The simplicity of our life. To set people free. Let's pray. Our father. We are so thankful. That.

[ 34 : 32 ] You are not. Just saving. Those who are smart. Who are wise. Who have figured it out. For I would not be here today. And many of my brothers and sisters.

Would not be here. Lord you rescued us. When we were dead in our sins. You made us alive. When we could not.

You have cleansed us. Then you have robed us. With a righteousness. That is far beyond our comprehension. Lord may we use this. As our hope. To set others free as well.

To encourage. Our brothers and sisters as well. In Christ's name. Amen. Thanks for listening. To the sermon podcast. Of Grace Reformed Church.

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[ 35 : 39 ] Good night.