

Decree and Desire: Does God have Two Wills?

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[0 : 0 0] notices we're starting a new sermon series this week i'm always excited about a new series you guys are too that's great well the series we're starting is called the path and it's about the will of god in your life so uh this is a series in speaking to andrew when andrew first came around i this is something that i really wanted to look at for a long time because i believe that this issue this theological issue of the will of god is one of the most confusing one of the most uh complex issues that we come across in christian theology and there's a few reasons for that um namely as we're going to see that we use the term the will of god in many different ways and we're not consistent in the way that we use it and so it confuses us we're not sure exactly what people mean when they say the will of god additionally the vast majority of times i catch up with you guys is to discuss decisions that you need to make that are big decisions that you're concerned about and most of often what your primary concern is is that you would make the decision most in line with the will of god and so i think it's going to be a really practical series for us in just figuring out what is the will of god and then practically how do we make decisions that honor the will of god um the the kind of structure for the series is going to be it's three weeks and we're going to start pretty broad and pretty theological so there's going to be some big words if you remember last year's series we did on tulip on salvation there are a lot of big words and um it was pretty heavy going tonight might be a little bit like that i'm going to read a lot of the bible um you've got the notes there hopefully and you've got references but i'm just going to read it for you don't have to turn it up but we're going to start broad we're going to start theological and my plan is that next week and the week after we get really practical really practical and all of that practicality all of that practical outworking is going to come from tonight's sermon so i need you to tune in really really well um i just want to plug this book it's not the bible it's just do something it's got a book called just do something a liberating approach to finding god's will i found this really really helpful um preachers don't get their material out of a vacuum what we want to do here at the church is is is be under the bible at all times soaking ourselves in the bible and then there are a few really good books that come along every now and then this is one of them i reckon this is the best will of god book among the millions that there are um and i've got a box of them coming over from overseas at the moment we're going to sell them for under cost price at 10 bucks a pop so get in early and if we need to we'll get some more they'll be available whenever they arrive i don't know next week or the week after um but just to plug that book it's really really worthwhile reading and just so you know i'm taking a lot of material from this book which is taking a lot of material from the bible so we're all right um having said all that we're going to dive into week one which is titled decree desire and direction so we're looking at uh the three wills of god if you like uh the two major ones from scripture and then the one you really want to hear about so before we do that i want to pray for us um and then we'll dive in let's pray together father please please help us now as we tackle tackle a pretty complex subject but one that is so so important for us it's a subject that is really misunderstood and so i pray that you would give us clarity of thought that you would ensure that i am utterly biblical and that your holy spirit would really strengthen us um in our inner being as we

hear these words in jesus name amen all right so we're going to start off tonight uh if you look in the notes i'm going to be tackling what is known as god's will of decree then we're going to be going to the god's will of desire and then going to talk a little bit about what would be called i guess god's will of direction and for those first two god's will of decree and god's will of desire i've got a bunch of bible passages i think personally um it's better not to try and speed turn up the bible and try and read along just hear me and you've got the references there to go and check it out afterwards if you like but first of all god's will of decree this is the truth the very solid biblical truth that we kind of raised in that salvation series but that we hear in the bible time and time again that all things

happen according to god's will our term for this is the sovereignty of god we say that god is sovereign over all things he works all things for the good of those who love him and this has really become uh for people in our kind of churches a really familiar term the sovereignty of god i was talking to someone the other day and he said um you know how we kind of joke and say when you're in sunday school it doesn't matter what the question is you just answer with bible god jesus and you're probably going to get it right he said the adult equivalent is god bible jesus and god is sovereign and we should be able to get away with anything if we say those things and i think it's probably true um part of that is a good good thing that we're talking about the sovereignty of god part of it though is troubling because i wonder if we really know what that means to say that god is sovereign is to say that god always gets his way that all things happen according to god's will anything that happens happens because god willed it you're going to find this all through scripture and i'll start off with a great passage of phesians chapter 1 verse 11 it says in christ we have also obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will so that little passage in ephesians is talking a lot about predestination election that god chooses those whom he will save it's apart from anything they've done any good that's in them they are unconditionally elected by him and he wills that they will be saved and so they are saved but it goes further than that in that passage because it says not only uh have we been predestined but it is according to that predestination is according to the purpose of him that's god who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will so god causes all things to happen according to his plan i think spurgeon said uh had an illustration of you know when you're doing the dusting i've never done it but when renee's doing the dusting and it's a sunny day and you see all those little bits of dust he says that every little particle of dust moves and flows according to god's will it's that detailed god's will all things happen according to god's will nothing that he wills to be can be thwarted if he says it's going to happen it will happen let's move on matthew 10 i'm just going to be chucking a lot of bible at you okay and i know for a fact from studies that when someone starts quoting something people tune out so tune in tune in watch me as i say this matthew chapter 10 verse 29 to 30 are not two sparrows sold for a penny yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived or unnoticed by your father and even the hairs of your head are counted that's jesus speaking there i wonder how you feel about micromanaging bosses oh i hate micromanagers i hate my i hate being micromanaged i hate having someone look over my shoulder like literally i can't stand that and metaphorically i can't stand anyone micromanaging me and this is the great thing about andrew because he just gives me a paddock and i'm allowed to run around and knock myself out and run into the fence and and he's okay with it that's i love that but we see here that god is actually a micromanaging god it's tempting when we talk about the sovereignty of god to think yep okay he elects maybe he causes jesus to die on the cross 2000 years ago he gets the big landmark events but things like sparrows falling out of trees head on head he's not really bothered but we see here that god actually micromanages everything that happens a bird doesn't fall from the tree apart from his will which is another way of saying that nothing drops dead apart from god saying so i'll drop dead right now if god says so and if he doesn't i won't i'll make it and it's the same with the birds it's the same with all creation he superintends all things it's the same with your hairs not one of them falls out apart from god's will he knows exactly how many you have let's keep going psalm 139 verse 16 the psalmist says your eyes beheld saying to god your eyes beheld my unformed substance in your book were written all the days that were formed for me when none of them had yet existed this is what we call uh in theological terms providence that before we even come on the scene god has our days mapped out he knows when you're going to be born he knows when you're going to die he knows where you're going to live and every day unfolds according to his providential plan this is the will of god the will of decree god says it and it happens it is absolute determination of all that happens isaiah 46 9 to 10 stay with me isaiah 46 9 to 10 this is from our reading i am god and there is no other i am god and there is none like me declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done saying my purpose shall stand and i will fulfill my intention god's will of decree cannot be thwarted if he says it it will happen that's his will of decree even rulers even kings prime ministers presidents it's the same thing for them it doesn't matter how powerful you are check out proverbs 21 1 the king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the lord he turns it wherever he wills doesn't matter how powerful you are god is in control of what you do when you do it the king's heart is turned by god and finally and perhaps most puzzlingly we've got acts chapter 4 verse 27 to 28 this will blow your mind if you haven't heard it before he says this i think this is peter standing up he

says for in this city in jerusalem in fact both herod and pontius pilate with the gentiles and the peoples of israel gathered together against your holy servant jesus whom you anointed to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place he said all those bad guys who conspired to get jesus killed that wasn't an accident god had predestined god had planned for that to happen god had planned for those men to murder jesus the biggest sin that's ever been created the greatest tragedy that's ever been created and this for us should be a great comfort we know that our trials our tribulations the sin and suffering in our lives is overseen by god we should take comfort that it's not satan who's throwing darts at us so much as god superintending what happens even if it is satan who he is using to accomplish his will we can talk more about that a bit later on it's also very puzzling how can god be sovereign over sin without being a sinner himself how can god plan for sin to happen without causing that sin to happen because god is no sinner you know from james that god never tempts anyone to sin this is a puzzling question there's a lot of mystery bound up in this question we can't fully grasp how god achieves these things how god works these things there is a certain amount of mystery there but at the very least we need to see from the bible if you want to take it seriously that god's will of decree cannot be thwarted if he says it will happen if he's planned it it will come to pass no one can change the will of god so that's the will of decree sometimes when we talk about god's will we mean all things come about according to god's will and we're talking about the will of decree then there's another will of god in the bible using the same term the will of god which is the will of desire god's will of desire this is god pointing out the way for us it's the sort of the other side of the coin from god's will of decree so there is another side and it fits together and it's they're both biblical and if god's will of decree is the way things are then god's will of desire is the way things ought to be check it out one john two fifteen to seventeen this is from our reading as well john says do not love the world all the things of the world the love of the father is not in those who love the world for all that is in the world the desire of the flesh the desire of the eyes the pride in riches comes not from the father but from the world and the world and its desire are passing away but those who do the will of god live forever what can we see from that god's will of desire can be thwarted god's will of desire can be disobeyed god commands us do not murder do not commit adultery do not be worldly do not indulge the desires of the flesh the desires of the eyes the pride in riches and yet we do it don't we god's will is that you live a certain way and yet we contradict his will we disobey his will so god's will of desire is different to god's will of decree there's more this is from this morning's text if you're here in church this morning andrew preached a cracking good sermon on honoring god in with sex in sex and this is from 1 thessalonians 4 verse 3 to 4 see if you can pick it as i read he says for this is the will of god your sanctification that you abstain from fornication that each one of you knows how to control your own body in holiness and honor not with lustful passion like the gentiles who do not know god so god's will is that you be sanctified and that means honoring him in sexuality honoring him in the way that you treat others sexually and we can obviously from other texts broaden that to just the way that we live moral lives that's the will of god and yet we don't do it so again it's contradicted his will is resisted it is disobeyed maybe one last one matthew 7 21 jesus says not everyone who says to me lord lord will enter the kingdom of heaven but only one but only one who does the will of my father in heaven again it's just clear there are people who can do the will of the father in heaven and there are people who can disobey it and they'll pay the penalty but they've still disobeyed it god's will of desire has been thwarted in that case so you have the will of decree which encompasses all things and then you have the will of desire which can be thwarted and when we thwart god's will of desire it's all part of god's will of decree but they're two different wills we need to understand that they're two different wills otherwise we'll just see contradiction after contradiction and we'll miss what it means to obey god's will you guys confused good now here's what i really want to get at all of that is absolutely true i dare you to find anything that contradicts what i've said in the bible you won't that is pure biblical theology gold all right you can choose to disagree with it but you'll be wrong now what what's really important though is our response to that isn't it how do we what do we do with that god is suffering over all things he he wills all things to come about we can disobey him he's given us commands and certain ways to live our response trust and obedience trust and obedience man you get around older christians we'll talk about this next week about the generational differences um on christians but you get around older christians and they they can be pretty pretty simple when it comes to their faith i don't mean that in a derogatory sense i mean they're just about trust and obedience they don't want to meddle with the word of god they don't want to argue with god they just want to trust and obey there's a good old hymn that maybe we can sing one day trust

and obey and that's what it's about that's what our response to this should be that god is sovereign over all things therefore we can trust him if we have a good loving heavenly father who determines what happens throughout our life we can trust him and i mean through the bad times through the cancer through the miscarriages we can trust him that's the trust aspect and then of course the obedience god has given us commands and he has a world in front of him in which we can disobey them but our the call on us from the bible is to obey god's will of decree obey his commands trust and obey the bible does fit these two things together in a couple of places you won't see them often side by side but a couple of the really good places is this we've got deuteronomy 29 29 easy to remember 29 29 says this the secret things belong to the lord our god but the revealed things belong to us and our children forever to observe all the words in this law isn't that great the secret things god's will of decree that we often can't see we can't understand

[20 : 10] how he's working all these things together for good his sovereign decrees that we don't always see they're his they belong to him we're not to argue with him but the revealed things that we find in the bible god's word to us revealed in scripture they're for us his commandments his word they're for us to obey and for our children to obey forever to observe the words of that law see how that fits together we trust that god has secret purposes that we can't always see or understand and we obey the word that he has revealed to us in the bible one other passage or a couple other passages this is my you know this is my top 10 romans 8 28 you know it i hope he says we know that all things work together for the good of those who love god and are called according to his purpose that somehow in the secret will of god in his will of decree he is working all things what does the all mean in the greek it means all all things not just the good things not just the christian things all things like the sinful things like the terrible things he's working all things to the get together for the good of those not everyone but the good of those who love god and are called according to his purpose if you love god if you're a christian if you're trusting in jesus you can trust that promise that because god is sovereign because he works all things he can work all things together for your good for his glory there's one more matthew 6 this is jesus matthew 6 31 to 33 says this therefore do not worry saying what will we eat or what will we drink or what will we wear for it is the gentiles who strive after all these things and indeed your heavenly father knows that you need all these things but strive first for the kingdom of god or seek the kingdom of god and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well god is sovereign he can provide for your needs he can work things for good your job is to seek the kingdom that means obeying his will of desire obeying his commandments obeying what's been revealed to you in god's word seeking first the kingdom of god and his righteousness god will take care of the rest he's going to work all things for your good now that's all true and it's precious and i believe it all with all of it with all of my heart and i think you probably do too but when it comes to the will of god what people really want to hear about is not so much god's will of decree not so much god's will of desire but really what we really want to know is god's will of direction don't we if the publishers are on the money then that's true because most books will talk about how to be in god's will in your life in your circumstances what job to take whether you should get married what university course to take these are the questions that you guys and that i'm asking right should we have kids should we not should i take that promotion should i be a lawyer or a doctor should i be a carpenter or a plumber like what should i do how do i make sure that i'm in god's will when i'm making all of these decisions am i right is that are they legitimate questions to be asking are you asking them thanks sweetheart i know you're asking them and i'm asking them everyone is asking them and the reasons

that you're asking them we're going to discuss next week but some of them are just the fact that you want to please god you want to be obedient to god you want to be where he wants you to be the problem is i think that many of us are frightened at the prospect of not making the right decision many of us are paralyzed to the point where we won't make a decision because we are worried that we're going to make the wrong decision next week we've got a sermon called cowards and cowboys and we're talking about attitude and decision making we're going to address that but for now i want to ask the question does god have a plan for your life there's a really famous evangelistic tract that says god has a wonderful plan for your life is that true is that true i think it is i believe in providence with all my heart i believe that god does have a plan for your life he knows everything that's going to happen ahead of time we've seen that in god's will of decree now the the further question is does he expect you to know it before you make decisions does he expect you to think and pray and divine what it might be that he wants you to do i don't think so does god have a

secret will a secret path for you to take that's going to lead you to be in his will and fulfill all of your potential and it's your job to find it out i don't think so in fact i know that that's not the case and i know that if you believe that that's the case then you'll be paralyzed for fear of making the wrong decision so often we see the will of god as like a tightrope or a bullseye that we've got to hit you know a tightrope that we've got to walk and if we fall off then we're goners or i don't know if you guys ever read especially the boys ever read choose your own adventure novels they were great books just if you don't know if you've been born in the last decade or something there's um there's these books there's these books made out of paper and um and these particular books uh were great i've got stacks and i think i might bring one in next week and um it's basically you read part of the story and it comes to a kind of splitting in the road a fork in the road where you can either i think um kevin de young mentions it in this book too and you can either hide in the cave or you can flee the country and it says if you want to hide in the cave turn to page 57 and you hide in the cave and it turns out to be a volcano and you're dead and that's the end of the book and if you had fled the country you would have maybe made it to the end but there's these decisions all on the way and it's life or death and i think so often we think about being in god's will like that like i've got a choice i can be a doctor or a lawyer and if i make one decision this way to be a doctor then i'll be in god's will and i'll fulfill my potential and god will be happy and but if i choose to be a lawyer i'm dead at least in terms of fulfilling my potential or being god's will and i just want to say that is not the case just take a deep breath and relax because that's not how god works god is so much bigger than that and your life has so many more possibilities than that there's no bullseye to hit there's no tightrope to walk there's no choose your own adventure god has given us

brains he's given us his word and he's given us something called wisdom that we're going to talk about in the third week and he wants us to make decisions bold decisions seeking first the kingdom and trusting that he will take care of everything else that's what the will of god's all about that's what following god's will is all about now listen i'm not saying for a second that you cannot spend time in prayer and ask god to reveal something to you to guide you i'm not saying that for a second in the third week we're going to look at prayer we're going to look at fasting which i think is linked to this as well we're going to look at counsel and scripture i'm not saying that and i'm not saying that god doesn't care if you become a become a doctor or a lawyer or a plumber or a carpenter i'm not saying he doesn't care i'm just saying that we have far more freedom to make decisions than we think that god is bigger than our decision making we've seen that god has a will of decree and all things will come about according to that will you hear often actually i don't know if you do hear it that often here but when i was in the states when i was living in america i heard very often someone say something like this coming out to a situation like i was when i was working there i didn't know whether to fly to the uk and do six weeks backpacking by myself or fly home to australia and someone was saying to me you know you should just go for it go to the uk and then he said claim a claim a promise of protection claim a promise of protection from god that you would be safe when you're overseas i wonder what you think about that i don't think you're going to find that very often in the bible god never promises to protect us god never promises that we will live long and avoid all kinds of suffering sure we should pray that god would keep us safe but god never promises it if i had have gone to the uk and been killed does that mean that i was out of god's will and i should have gone to it no it doesn't work like that we've seen that god wills when we live and when we die i think so often we are so paralyzed in indecision that it means that we don't take risks for god we'll talk a lot about this next week what does it mean to be a risk taker for jesus what does it mean to be so seeking after the kingdom that we are just jumping off buildings metaphorically in order to be the king's man you will not take risks if you think that any time you can jump out of god's will and be doomed here's the truth we've seen from god's will of decree god never takes risks therefore we can god has never taken a risk he's never made a bad move he's never needed a plan b all things happen according to his will he never takes risks therefore we can we're going to talk about that as i said next week i know we've we've had a lot of scripture thrown at us tonight we've had some big theological theories and truths themes presented to us i know that it's hard to reconcile some of what i read from god's word so what i'd like to do and i'm not promising that i'll be able to answer your questions but it'd be really good i think just to have a few minutes for q a some of your questions will

be answered in following weeks i've deliberately kind of structured this to be inductive so that means you kind of set them up now and knock them down in the next couple of weeks but if you've got questions and i don't think that it'll ruin next week's sermon by answering them i'd love to hear

them so we'll do that and then i'll pray for us all right oh oh it's i think it's really important to get the terms clear we're talking about this because a priori like before anything else we know that god is not evil that god has never done evil god is no sinner but god does plan bad things that happen read osiah 53 it was the will of the god of god to crush his son so here everything that happened to jesus unfolded according to the plan that god predestined to happen so there is plan but there is no agency in that plan um i remember reading let me get this right jonathan edwards is an american guy dead guy all the best ones are dead um but he he's a he's a theologian and the analogy that i've heard from him is is really well it helped me um because he faced this question he was asked this question about god's if god plans for these things to happen which are evil which do include sin how is he not a sinner himself and he said it's a bit like it's always a bit like with analogies in god it's a bit like the sun right sun gives us warmth and light but when it disappears when it sets and darkness and cold come it's not the sun that has produced darkness or cold but the absence of the sun you see that darkness cold they don't come from god but when he's absent they plague us and in a similar way when god removes his hands of blessing when god allows these things to happen it's not because of his agency it's because of sinful men satan demons these agencies that cause these things to happen but they're not outside of his plan they're not outside of his uh his plan so is that analogy helpful it's just an analogy but i think it's the truth i think it speaks of the truth of the situation here's what happens if you start saying that god doesn't plan these things to happen it's a god in heaven who's got his hands tied and he'd like to stop your kid from getting hit by a car but he just can't and you can't trust that god yep it's an option onder them and i think he's going to like to go ahead and get fuck me right now hmm

Thank you.

[36 : 20] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Sorry.

[37 : 58] This isjä. Thank you. It's a matter of time crying. inevitably sin would come about in terms of his effectual kind of planning and predestining of that i just don't think i think it's really very a hot one to handle and one that i don't want to go on record saying one thing or the other but i think i think that's part of the secret things of god and we need to trust and we know that god is good god is loving and before anything else before any theological speculation those things are true christopher um if i had a decision to make not is every decision i've made uh a bit of a whole direction or are there some decisions i can make that actually strange other areas how do i for example you know i want to do something against totally against how do i get to know what no um like going about my day-to-day life are there some decisions yeah that's a good question i think um again we're going to talk about this next week but we're talking about categories of decision making that are in the moral sphere that's really important to god uh so should you um okay here's a here's a hot one should you become a doctor if it means you're going to perform abortions i think no that's a moral decision you've got to make and god's very keen that you make the right decision um what's a ridiculous one should you buy the paper or hold someone up and steal it that's a moral decision otherwise buying a paper i just don't think god cares if you buy the the herald son of the age they're both pretty awful he probably prefers that you buy the australian uh but there are decisions like uh should i have worn this spectacularly suave jacket tonight or should i have worn a t-shirt i don't think god really cares um but when it comes into the moral sphere that's where god really really cares what you do and we've seen that in those passages on god's will of desire his desire is that you live godly lives his his will is that you be sanctified that means that you live each day as jesus would and become more and more like him so again we'll hit that next week i might get uh i'll get two more yeah yep within god's will that they would die when they did god uh acts chapter 17 says that god determines when and where we live that our days unfold as we saw in the psalm 139 or 137 was it uh our days unfold as god plans and you the great quote from a missionary in the days where missionaries got killed on a daily basis he said uh i think it was john patten actually which is uh one of andrew's buddies from from vauvatu anyway he was a presbyterian minister and every day he would be surrounded by mobs of people with machetes that were going to kill him and his his wife and his child had died since landing on the island he was there by himself and every day could have been his last and he his words were i am immortal until my work for god is done that

is yeah

i i mean i would sit with them and i hope i would cry with them and i would want to have compassion with them but the same situation came to jesus when uh remember when they came to him and said what happened at the tower of siloam we got that right uh it fell killed a bunch of people and jesus had compassion but there comes a point where you just need to tell people the truth and he said don't worry about them and whether they're sinners you repent otherwise you'll likewise perish and so i've been told by people you know my golden verse romans 8 28 i've been told by people that you never say that to someone who's suffering i disagree if i'm suffering i want to know that god can use this for my good so i would say no that the maniac who killed them is responsible for it i i would also want to say that god wasn't powerless in the situation that he he knew what was going on and he's a good god and if they're believers i could say he's going to work this for your good and if they're not the promise doesn't stand so that's a that's a big deal all right let me take one more Ross hmm hmm hmm hmm hmm hmm hmm yep yep yep that's that's job's a good case study because you see the secondary causality of satan in job's suffering so god has determined that job will suffer but whose fault is it satan afflicts him and so god isn't in heaven going ah satan at it again wish i could wish i could get that guy no satan's on a leash and god determines how far he goes and in that situation in god's good perfect will for job's good he allowed satan to afflict him in that way but he was never wringing his hands he was never thinking of a plan b we must trust in a sovereign god otherwise i tell you what when it does come to suffering you won't know who to go to because god won't be able to help you why do we pray because god can do something we're going to be here all night listen um hold on to those sheets if you didn't get a sheet with the references take one just do this in your own bible study this week go through those passages read them in the bigger context if you like and see what you think if you want to ask me questions you can email me um just go to the website you can get my email if you don't have it and um some of these things will be addressed in the next couple of weeks all right so i really want to pray because this is this is big stuff and we need god's help so let's pray our father in heaven please help us as we come to these big issues of your will of your sovereignty of your decrees your desire your direction we are finite we are the pots you are the potter lord please help us to know that some things happen according to your secret will and that our responsibility is to busy ourselves knowing and loving and working out of your revealed will in scripture so lord please make us a people of the bible so that we might know the bible well and make wise decisions that flow out of the wisdom in your word i also pray lord that you would please sanctify the people in this room who know you and trust in you please make all of us more like jesus more trusting more obedient and for those who are here aren't believers lord i pray with all my heart that you would reveal yourself to them that in your sovereign plan you would save them and snatch them out of the fire and into your eternal kingdom i pray this in jesus name amen and and and