

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL

The mystery of His Will (Eph. 1:9-12 cf. Gen. 2:16, 17; Jn. 3:16-18; 6:39, 40; 7:14-18; Rom. 8:28-30; 12:1, 2; 1 Thess. 4:1-3; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Rev. 4:11; 13:8; 17:17; etc.) where through His redemptive work, God is gathering all things together as one accepted family in Christ - both in heaven and on earth - to the praise of His own glory (Eph. 1:3-19 vv. 9, 11-12). This Counsel or eternal plan of God which undergirds our great Salvation is predetermined but now made known through the Person and Work of Christ (Heb. 2:3, 4; 13:20, 21). The Will of God is hence the expression of the love of God in the Son, the Lord Jesus to save us (Deut. 10:15-18; Ps. 33:11; Jn. 3:16-18; 6:27, 39, 40). He effectively now executes the Will (Gk. *thelema*) through the gospel in saving individuals (Eph. 1:6-20) and placing them together in the Church (Eph. 1:21-23; 3:4-6), which is His family (Eph. 3:14-21 cf. Heb. 12:22-24). The Bible teaches God is not willing that any be lost but that all come to salvation in Christ (1 Tim. 2:3-7; 2 Pet. 3:8, 9). We notice, immediately that such plan of Salvation hinges on faith and obedience that come by the *grace* of God not the Law and also produces a completely new set of people that find **grace** and **mercy** as a result of Christ (Heb. 4:14-16).

God's dealings with the redeemed under the New Covenant where the blood of Jesus is constantly speaking forgiveness, blessings, acceptance, glory, etc (Eph. 1:3-14) is hence very different from His dealings with Israel (Ex. 19:4-6; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10 compare Heb. 12:18-21 and 22-24). Within the broad context of the mystery of His Will, therefore, God's Will - Sovereign, Moral and Individual (Perfect or Directive and Permissive) Will(s) - for all nations, people groups and individuals are included. Example is seen in the call and ministry of the apostle Paul (Acts 9:9-15; 22:1-21; 2 Tim. 1:11). This mystery is such that everybody can position himself to enjoy God's love and goodness in fulfilling the destiny of humanity in Christ - Rev. 17:5-18. God is able to use all things of creation - all human beings including kings like Cyrus (2Chro. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1-8; Is. 45:1-8), even the devil and the wicked who perpetrate evil (Prov. 16:4; 1 Cor. 2:8; Rev. 17:17) and death (Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 3:22, 23; Phil. 1:20, 21) - to fulfil His eternal purposes (Rom. 8:28-32).

The disclosure of God through His Will

God is **Sovereign** and hence has the **Directive or Active or Perfect Will**. That means that he makes his own plans and carries them out in his own time and way. His sovereignty in willing and working is simply an expression of His supreme intelligence, power, foreknowledge and wisdom. God's Will is not arbitrary, but acts in complete harmony with His character. It is the forth-putting of his power and goodness and is thus the final

determinant of all existence for the divine glory. Thus, God's eternal purposes are willed in Jesus Christ, His Son towards the redemption of humankind, deliverance from Satan's kingdom into the Son's kingdom and ultimately the emancipation of creation (Rom. 8:17-32; Col. 1:9-20; Eph. 1:9-11; Rev. 4:11). We must understand that doing God's **Active Will** is always **good, acceptable and perfect** (Rom. 12:1, 2) and is not beyond our finding out if we would hear from Jesus (John 7:14-18). It is, however, not normally conformable on the part of humans, including believers, to comply with or by wholly doing the **Perfect Will** of God even if divinely and clearly communicated. It is only Jesus who came to the earth to do God's Perfect Will – Heb. 10:5-7; and we (all Christians) do well if we follow his example in doing His Will as peculiar people of God and as individuals (1 Pet. 2:21).

In His dealings with us, and within His **Active or Perfect Will**, God has also outlined His **Moral Will** revealed throughout the Bible for all human beings and more especially believers (Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Thess. 4:1-3; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; Rev. 4:11). However, God in his nature and character – being both Sovereign and Love in relationships - permits his **free moral agents** to act and make responsible choices to do his **divine will**. God, therefore, permits the outworking of what may be called His **Permissive Will** regarding the consequential outcomes of human behaviour in respect of **God's sovereignty** (Gen 2:16, 17; Jn. 3:16-18, 36; etc) as evidence of the "must" of **worship** of the Father (Jn. 4:23, 24). Thus, the loving Sovereign Lord or God works together with man, created in His image, as on a two-rail track from Creation to Consummation of time on planet Earth. One rail is the Sovereignty of God and the other rail is the involvement of man in human responsibility per his will as a free moral agent or a finite created being. Hence, the Directive Will of God for us as individuals is a combination of His Sovereign Will, Moral Will and Individual Will for each of us, and it usually has to be processed by our active involvement.

It is a proven fact that though the process of doing His **Directive Will** is often unpleasant in a fallen and evil world, the outcome is always perfect (Gen. 37-39; Job. 42; Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 2:7-9; Phil. 2:1-11). It always reveals ways of pleasantness and paths of peace in the end (Prov. 3:17)! On the contrary, the consequential outcomes of His **Permissive Will** may be flawed with imperfections if we choose our own way instead of His way (Prov. 14:12).

It is necessary for all humans, particularly Christians to make decisions or life's choices in submission to both the **Sovereign will** and the **Moral will** (which runs on human responsibility) of God (Ps. 119:97-104; Matt. 26:39; Lk. 1:38; Gal. 1:15-16; Js. 4:13-16); and must always be motivated by love (Lk. 10:25-38). Thus, to be a true worshipper, one must obey the **Active or Directive Will** of God as revealed within the constituent components of the **Declared Will** of God in the Scriptures.

The Declared Active Will of God for all Christians or Disciples of Christ

The Scriptures seem to capture about nine-tenth of the Perfect Will of God for every individual [and hence the Church] as already revealed in the Bible, the Holy Scriptures. Namely, that:

1. Eternal Life or Salvation is Available for All (not a select few) – Jn. 3:16; 2 Pet 3:9
2. Salvation (eternal life, the mystery of his Will) is through Jesus only – Jn. 4:10-14; 22-26; 6:39, 40; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Eph. 1:3-14; Col. 1:9-20
3. Believers' Sanctification in morality and Ethical living in the Church and Society – 1 Thess. 4: 1-12 [3]
4. Continual Infilling of Believers of the Holy Spirit – Eph. 5:14-21 and hence also by extension intake of the fullness of the Word of God – Col. 3:8-17
5. Thanksgiving as a way of life in everything for Believers – 1 Thess. 5:18
6. Believers' Suffering if it is for Christ's sake – 1 Pet 3:17; 4:19
7. Believers' Trust in the Lord as of first importance – Pro 3:5, 6
8. Productivity or Fruitfulness in life and ministry – Jn. 15:1-5; 8, 16; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 Pet 2:15 [as both Creation (Gen. 1:26-28) and Redemptive (Eph. 1:3-14) Stewardship Principle (Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3, 7; Ps. 89:20f; Is. 53:10-12; Matt. 25:21; 28:18-20; Gal. 1:3-5; Eph. 3:4-6; Heb. 13:20, 21)]
9. Believers' commitment first to God and godly Leaders – 2 Cor. 8:5
10. Believers' devotion and renewal of mind – Rom. 12:2
11. Believers' Calling, Election, and Gifts – 1 Cor. 1:1; 12:28-31; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1 cf. Rom. 11:29

Naturally, God is more than willing to reveal the remaining one-tenth of His Perfect Will to the individual in making life-choices affecting (geographical, viewpoint, and operational) categories of His Will for us (Gen 1:26-28; Ps 25:12; Eph. 1:9, 10; 3:4) as we seek to do it (Jn. 4:34; Rom. 12:1, 2; Eph. 5:17; 6:6). It is also important that we pray concerning His Will for our lives and others daily or regularly (Matt. 6:10; Col. 1:9; 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:1-6; 2 Pet. 3:9).

The mystery of His Will in the eternal plan of God of salvation

In the eternal plan of salvation, God made the provision and then purposed, designed and packaged everything in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ through the gospel and the coming of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 1:1-5, 9-18; 3: 13-16; 10:10; 16:7-15, 23-31; 17:1-3; 20:20-23, 26-31; Acts 1:1-8; 2:38, 39; Eph. 1:3-14). The plan of salvation has through the vicarious death of the Lord Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit effectively granted believers repentance and forgiveness of sins unto life (Acts 5:29-32; 11:13-18). The plan has made several divine provisions available as virtues or graces and made them effective through their

intermarriage in two main *wheels, means, bases, rails, pillars and the like* that make eternal salvation possible (Acts 5:29-32; 11:13-18). Some of these are the two:

- a) **wheels of grace and faith** (Acts 15:6-11; Eph. 2:8, 9),
- b) **sources of grace and truth** (Jn. 1:14-17; Col. 1:5-6),
- c) **means of grace and mercy** (Eph. 2:4-7; Heb. 4:14-16),
- d) **bases of righteousness and true holiness** (Eph. 4:23, 24),
- e) **fountains of wisdom and prudence** (Jn. 1:1-5, 14-18; Eph. 1:3-14; Js. 1:5-6; 3:17-18),
- f) **rails of God's Sovereignty and human responsibility** (Jn. 3:13-18; Eph. 1:3-14), and
- g) **pillars of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love towards all the saints** (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Tim. 1:13; Phm. 1:5; 1 Jn. 3:23, 24) that make eternal salvation possible (Acts 5:29-32; 11:13-18).

When all these divine provisions with all other promises in Christ come together to provide believers in the Church eternal life as promised by God in Christ through the gospel (Gal. 3:11-17, 22, 29; Eph. 3:4-6; Tit. 1:1-4; 1 Jn. 2:24, 25), the pillars of **faith and love** give proof of salvation (Eph. 1:15; 1 Jn. 3:23, 24) or as experienced in the Church through the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:15-16). This is why sound or good doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6, 16; 6:3, 5, 11; Tit. 1:9) rooted in the gospel is the only way to promote and practice doctrine (Heb. 6:1, 2) as the doctrine according to godliness (1 Tim. 6:3) in the Church (Acts 2:38-47; Eph. 4:11-16). As the gospel and the active presence of the Holy Spirit that make the intermarriage of two main wheels, sources, means, bases, fountains, rails and pillars of eternal salvation or Christianity available (Acts 5:29-32; 1 Pet. 1:10-12), all the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love are also adequately placed at our disposal (1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5, 6; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8).

The mystery of His Will is about the pillars of the faith and love

As soon as Repentance and Forgiveness of sins are granted by the Lord Jesus through the gospel (Acts 5:30, 31), *Repentance from dead works* and *Faith towards God* are received as foundations in the doctrine of Christ (Heb. 6:1, 2). This is the Will of God in Christ (Eph. 1:3-23 vv. 9, 11-12) who is the seal for eternal life in God's Everlasting Covenant (Jn. 6:27, 38-40; Heb. 13:20, 21). Through that all who repent and believe the gospel receive the salvation package (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 10:43, 44; 11:13-14, 18; 13:38, 39; 19:4, 5; 20:21). Since Pentecost, salvation is witnessed by God Himself, the Church, the believer and even on-lookers through the outpouring and receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:6-11 v. 8 see Acts 2:1-11, 33; 8:12-20; 10:44-46; 11:15-18; 19:4-6). The Holy Spirit provides divine inner witness of salvation (Rom. 8:1-16 v. 15) and divine public witness to ascertain the authenticity of salvation (Acts 2:1-4, 16-21, 31-36 v. 33; 15:1-11 v. 8; 1 Jn. 5:6-8).

The Holy Spirit as the third Person of the triune God, is the One who also comes into our hearts as the seal and earnest (Eph. 1:3-15 v. 14; see 2 Cor. 2:20, 21; 5:5). When both grace and faith from Christ released and in an intermarriage to produce salvation (Eph. 2:8-10), therein is repentance and faith also practically coming together (Acts 20:21; 22:16). With repentance and faith coming together, several divine virtues or graces are provided beginning at the cross for believers (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 6:6-12). After the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, there is the divine intermarriage of these virtues or graces as the **two main wheels, sources, means, bases, fountains, rails, pillars and the like** that make eternal salvation possible in the believer (Acts 15:6-11; Eph. 1:3-23; Tit. 2:11-14).

We have first the **wheels of grace and faith** to be saved or and to inherit the kingdom of God (Acts 15:9, 11; Rom. 5:1, 2; Eph. 2:8, 9; Tit. 1:1-4; 2:11-13; 1 Jn. 5:1-13, 18-20; Jd. 1:20, 21). There are **sources of grace and truth** from Christ through the gospel (Jn. 1:14-17; Col. 1:5-6); the **means of grace and mercy** at the throne of grace (Heb. 4:14-16); and the **bases of righteousness and true holiness** received through Christ (Lk. 1:75; Rom. 6:19; Eph. 4:23, 24). Repentance from dead works is done once from the purging of the blood and the eternal Holy Spirit for forgiveness of the sin of unbelief (Jn. 16:8-11; Heb. 3:12-14; 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:1-5) and must attract faith towards God in the interplay of the **two-way rail of His Sovereignty and human responsibility** by the enabling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:29-32; 1 Jn. 3:18-24; 4:12-21). Thereby, the repentant believer will produce fruit worthy of repentance (Acts 26:18-22) with multiplied grace, mercy, peace, truth and love from God (Rom. 5:1-5; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:2; 2 Jn. 1:3). This becomes the way to live in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort or refreshing of the active presence of the Holy Spirit to do His Will (Acts 3:19-26; 9:31; Phil. 2:12-15; 1 Jn. 3:18-24). All these which also provide obedience to God and His Will are verified in genuine or biblical Christianity on the **pillars of faith in the Lord and love for the brethren** (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4; Phm. 1:5; 1 Jn. 3:23).