

“How To Live The Will Of God”

1 Peter 4:1-2

October 29, 2023

INTRO: *How are your wants & God’s will related?*

(That’s a really deep, even eternal question, if you think about it.)

What does God want **for** you... and **from** you?

What is God’s will?

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3).

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

~ 1st Peter... *“No Matter What!”*

~ Beloved... Suffering Savior... Harmony

~ *How to live the will of God*

BIG IDEA: We need to arm ourselves
Christ’s way... to live the will of God!

(We CAN arm ourselves Christ’s way AND live the will of God!)

PREVIEW:

- (5 steps to living God's will.)
1. **TRUST** Christ's Cross & Cup
 2. **ARM** Yourself Christ's Way
 3. **CARRY** Your Own Cross
 4. **CEASE** From Loving Sin
 5. **LIVE/BE** For God's Glory

TEXT:

*Since therefore, Christ suffered in the flesh,
arm yourselves with the same way of thinking,
for whoever has suffered in the flesh
has ceased from sin; so as to live,
no longer for human passions
but for the will of God.*

I. **TRUST** Christ's Cross & Cup (Truth)

Since therefore, Christ suffered in the flesh,

1. **"Since therefore"**
 - a. Therefore connects the previous & present...
 - b. Both insight & action are being called for...
 - c. We must not disconnect what God unifies!

2. ***“Christ suffered”***

- a. Scripture declares & explains His suffering
- b. Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 53:10; Romans 5:8; etc.
- c. Recognize the cup was worse than the cross!
- d. **Never forget** Hebrews 12:3 & 1 Peter 3:18!
- e. Don't jump over the two words too quickly...
 - i. Suffered is the obvious...
 - ii. Christ is the overwhelming reality!

3. ***“suffered in the flesh”***

- a. This is Christ's cross and much, much more
- b. Pay very close attention... this is the key!
- c. We will unpack this phrase below...
- d. It is repeated **for Christ AND for Christians!**

T/S: Concentric Circles of Context: the 3 P's

1. Proximity

2. Principles

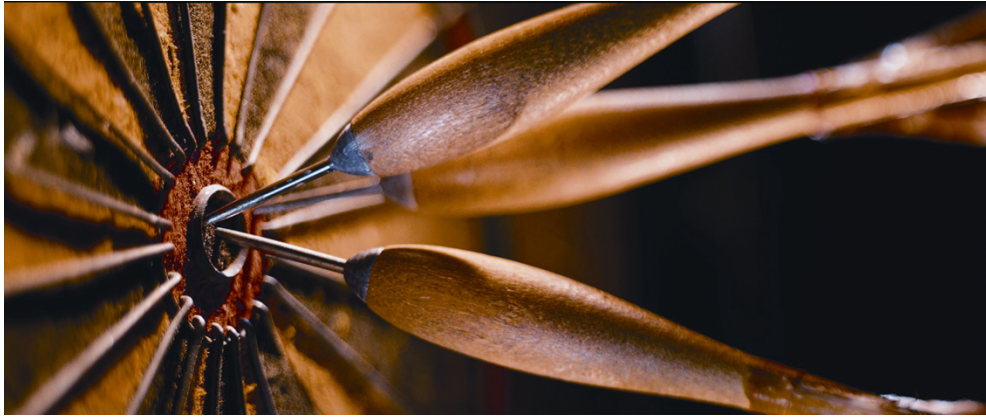
3. Particulars

i. *People, Problem, Place, Genre, Culture, Timing*

ii. *Literary devices, Distractions, Definitions...*

II. ***ARM*** Yourself Christ's Way (Love)

arm yourselves with the same way of thinking,



1. ***“arm yourselves”***

- a. To ready for war;
- b. To enter into a state of hostility;
- c. To equip with weapons;
- d. To activate; to cover protectively;
- e. To prepare for action; make fit; *make ready!*

1 Peter 1:13

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:11

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

VIDEO: *Mahali Safi – Muhammad’s Family Moves In*

~ **Your thought-life is a battlefield...**

- Beware the doubt-bombs...
- Beware compromise & corruption...
- Beware rationalizing's rubbish...
- Beware temptation's traps...
- Beware of grumbling's garbage...
- Beware of your own stinking thinking...
- Beware of your analysis paralysis...
- Beware your fear's faintheartedness...
- Beware of coveting cancers...
- Beware of pride's poison...
- Beware of unteachable stubbornness...
- Beware of both the liars and their lies...

~ Your thoughts are weapons...

~ *Who is supplying your arsenal?*

~ **What/who are your weapons pointed at?**

~ *Take every thought captive...*

~ **Proverbs 3:5-6...**

B. ***With the same*** = ***Right***

a. The parallel and model is Christ!

b. Thus, ***“with the same”*** = Right & Righteous!

- c. See [Ephesians 6:10-20](#) (thinking abounds!)
 - i. **Helmet** protects the head's thoughts
 - ii. **Belt** of Truth girds up right thoughts
 - iii. **Breastplate** protects thought's heart
 - iv. **Cleat's** peace is from processed thought
 - v. **Shield** of Faith is all trusted thoughts
 - vi. **Sword** of the Spirit is God's thoughts
 - vii. **Prayer** is our relational thoughts to God

C. ***“way of thinking/attitude/purpose/mind”***

Your heart cannot love...until your head thinks.

- JDP

- a. **Question:** What is God's way of thinking?
- b. **Answer:** **A biblical worldview!**
- c. **God's Word, will, and ways** (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- d. Come And See Christianity's **“FLOW”**
 - a. **1 Devine Design**
 - b. **3 Divisions**
 - c. **5 Disciples**
 - d. **7 Details**
 - e. **12 Disciplines**
 - f. **24 Distinctives**
- e. To be more specific:
 - 1. His commands
 - 2. His teachings
 - 3. His prayers

4. His blessings
5. His examples
6. His exhortations
7. His priorities
8. His character
9. His attributes
10. His pleasures
11. His anger
12. His hatred
13. His enemies

f. NOW... what are your thoughts?

1 Peter 3:15

but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Note: *Christ is BOTH our Model AND our Messiah!* -JDP

T/S: Hold that thought... cause thinking isn't enough!

2 Peter 3:1

*Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.
(stir up your sincere mind)*

John 4:34

Jesus said to them: 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.'

III. **CARRY Your Own Cross** (Warfare)

for whoever has suffered in the flesh

1. ***“for whoever”***

- a. Hear the grace of The Gospel (cf. John 3:16)
- b. Hear the conditional exclusivity (John 3:36)
- c. Hear the response of your heart...
- d. Hear the very personal application here...
- e. Hear the heart of The Gospel

2. ***“has”***

- a. Here's where The Gospel gets personal!
- b. “Has suffered in the flesh” is being repeated.
- c. Don't miss the declared point & condition...
- d. ANYONE who HAS suffered like Christ...
- e. See a unification with Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-21)

3. *“suffered in the flesh”*

a. We must contextualize these words...

b. First, Peter in application to Christ:

i. 1 Peter 2:24

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

ii. 1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God...

c. Second, Paul in application...

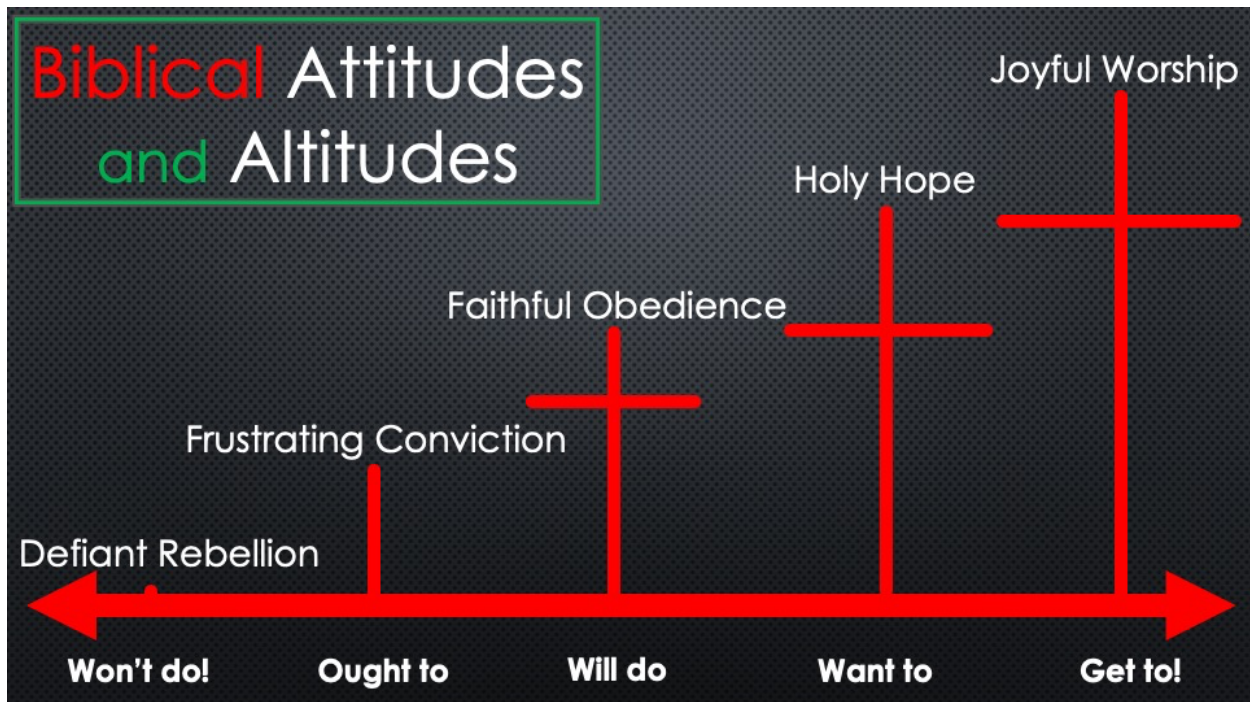
iii. Romans 6:5-7

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7For one who has died has been set free from sin.

iv. Philippians 2:1-5

1So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in

humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.



IV. **CEASE** From Loving Sin (Repentance)

*has ceased from sin; so as to live,
no longer for human passions*

Christian's progressive relationship to sin:

Justification	=	freed from penalty of sin...
Sanctification	=	freed from the power of sin.
Glorification	=	freed from the presence of sin!

VIDEO: *Loving God*

1. ***"has ceased from sin"***
2. ***"so as to live"***
3. ***"no longer for human passions"***

A. *Has ceased* = *Cease*

- a. We must understand and define this word...
- b. Sinful, living humans are not yet perfected...
- c. Thus, context tells us, this is a principle...
- d. "New creation" is not "perfected creation"
- e. See Paul:
 - i. Follow me as I follow the LORD...
 - ii. Oh, wretched man that I am...
- f. Hear God's Word:
 - i. 1 John 2:6
 - ii. Romans 8:1

B. *From* = *From LOVING*

- a. The Gospel does not guarantee the Christian will abstain from sin and win every spiritual battle... BUT... what it DOES do is guarantee

that EVERY SINGLE spiritual battle the Christian faces CAN be WON! (2 Peter 1:3 & Philippians 4:13; & Acts 1:8 & Matthew 28:18-20)

b. The Gospel does not put passion away... No! The Gospel purifies and refines the Christian's passions.

i. **Titus 2:13b-15**

*our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, **14**who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. **15**Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.*

ii. **John 15:8**

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

c. See the harmonizing of Head, Heart, Hands!

If the heart hasn't changed, nothing's changed! -JDP

C. **Sin** = **Sin!**

a. **1 Peter 4:1**

b. **Galatians 2:20**

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

c. John 3:36 & 14:15

v.2 *(no longer for human passions)*

- ~ “no longer” = NO MORE!
- ~ No more what? Definitions are critical!
- ~ God’s passions are grace-based & holy.
- ~ Man’s passions are fleshly & sin-filled.
- ~ Out with the old & in with the new!

V. LIVE For God’s Glory
(Repeat)

(but) so as to live for the will of God.

1. *“but so as to”*
2. *“live for”*
3. *“live for the will of God”*

VIDEO: *God’s Will For My Life*

5 Progressive Wills of God:

Deuteronomy 29:29

*“The secret things belong to the LORD our God,
but the things that are revealed belong to us
and to our children forever, that we may
do all the words of this law.*

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Sovereign (Deut. 29:29) | Secret & Sure |
| 2. Revealed (2 Tim. 3:16-17) | Commanded |
| 3. Pleasing (Beatitudes) | Preferential |
| 4. Directive (Acts 1:8) | Spirit-led |
| 5. Discerned (Prov. 3:5-6) | Presumptive |

1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

***16**Rejoice always, **17**pray without ceasing, **18**give thanks
in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ
Jesus for you. **19**Do not quench the Spirit. **20**Do not despise
prophecies, **21**but test everything; hold fast what is
good. **22**Abstain from every form of evil.*

If God is real and true, His will is real and true.

If God can be known, His will can be known.

If God still speaks, His will is still spoken.

If God can be heard, His will can be heard.

5 Corresponding/Progressive Hearing Levels:

1. Silence *(Christ's second coming...)*
2. Scripture *(Great Commandments/Commission)*
3. Supports *(Paul & Silas in the Philippian jail...)*
4. Spirit *(Paul, Peter, Philip, Cornelius, & us)*
5. Self *(Scripture; Prayer; Witness; Circumstance)*

The Gospel Coalition:

Ironically, we're prone to overlook God's revealed will and hyper-focus on his secret will. We often want to know God's hidden will for the future, while walking contrary to his revealed will in the present.

*Instead, we ought to diligently study and seek to understand God's revealed will. As we sit under good preaching and teaching, reading and studying and memorizing our Bibles in **a covenant community**, we will grow in our ability to know God's revealed will. And as we renew our minds, the Spirit of God will help us not only discern God's will (Rom. 12:2), but also apply it to the circumstances and moments of our days.*

Romans 12:1-2

1 Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

We all need to Learn, Love, and Live the will of God.

1 Peter 3:15

but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Think... Love... BE... the will of God!

1. *Great Commandments*
2. *Great Commission*
3. *Great Church*
4. *Fruit of The Spirit*
5. *The Beatitudes*
6. *Full Armor of God*
7. *BRIDGE Manifesto*



One FAITH. One FAMILY. One FOCUS.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will BE My witnesses (locally, regionally, and globally).” – Acts 1:8

One Question: *WHAT DO YOU WANT?*

One Offer: *COME AND SEE.*

One Promise: *TRUTH IN LOVE!*

Our Truth-in-Love Distinctives: We are...

- 1.** Responding to grace & repenting of sin...
- 2.** Trusting the Bible & obeying God's Word...
- 3.** Growing in-Christ & living Spirit-led...
- 4.** Praying for guidance & following by faith...
- 5.** Dying to self & carrying our cross...
- 6.** BE-ing the Church & loving one another...(*truly loving* one another)
- 7.** Equipping the saints & exemplifying supernatural unity...
- 8.** Ministering as ambassadors & discerning matters shrewdly...
- 9.** Worshipping God vertically & experiencing Him horizontally...
- 10.** Proclaiming the Gospel (*no matter what*) & fishing for men...
- 11.** Making disciplined-warriors & winning spiritual-warfare...
- 12.** Loving our King & serving His kingdom!

CLOSE:

*You have a Model and a Messiah (One in the Same)
who has given you a miracle and a mission.
It's time to learn, love, & live His will
No excuses. No matter what!*

Your cross is at the heart of God's will!

*Your cross, defined as the exemplified embodiment
of God's will, is your greatest offensive weapon!*

PRAYER

WORSHIP: *In Christ Alone & Christ Has Risen*

STUDY NOTES:

New American Standard Commentary: Schreiner

4:1

The word “therefore” draws a conclusion from the previous verses (3:18–22)...

...where Christ’s victory over hostile powers by virtue of his death and resurrection is featured.

The connection between the two sections is this:

since Christ’s suffering is the pathway to glory, believers should also prepare themselves to suffer, knowing that suffering is the prelude to an eschatological reward.

The main point of the verse is that believers are to arm themselves (hoplisasthe) with the intention to suffer.

The term “*arm yourselves*” has military connotations, and in other texts the Christian life is compared to the life of a warrior (Rom 6:13; 13:12; 2 Cor 6:7; 10:4; Eph 6:11–17; 1 Thess 5:8). The martial language indicates that discipline and grit are needed to live the Christian life, particularly in view of the suffering believers encounter. Indeed, believers must *arm themselves with the “attitude” that suffering is inevitable.*

The word translated “attitude” (*ennoia*) can be translated “intention” (NRSV) or “thought” (RSV). In most cases a translation like “insight,” “thought,” or “knowledge” suffices.

The connection with “arm yourselves,” however, indicates that the insight becomes an “intention” and so the latter probably is the best translation.

Like soldiers preparing for battle, believers should prepare themselves for suffering.

The first clause in the verse explains the reason the Petrine **readers should expect to suffer. Christ also “suffered in the flesh” (NRSV). The wording hearkens back to 3:18, where both the verb “suffer[ed]” (paschō) and the noun “flesh” (sarx) occur (in NRSV).**³⁴⁸

We have further evidence confirming the interpretation of v. 18, for the “flesh” of Christ refers to his bodily suffering (cf. NIV). We noted in v. 18 that the verb “suffer” was a favorite of Peter’s, and in both texts he links the suffering of Christ to the suffering of his readers, acknowledging, of course, the distinctiveness of Christ’s suffering as well.

Christ’s suffering here focuses on his death as in 3:18 and 2:21–24. Further, as in 2:21–23 Christ’s suffering is exemplary for believers, providing the pattern they should imitate.

The most difficult part of the verse is the last phrase, “because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.” Once again the NIV translates *sarx* (“flesh”) as “body,” so that the connection between Christ’s suffering and that of believers is preserved. Still the NIV captures the meaning by rendering both as “body.” Some scholars also understand the word “because” (*hoti*) as an explanation of the word “intention” (NRSV) rather than causal.³⁴⁹ But a causal meaning seems more likely syntactically. Fortunately, the meaning is not affected significantly either way since **a reason is given for why believers should prepare themselves to suffer.** Scholars debate, however, on what reason is supplied. **Three different interpretations are quite possible.**³⁵¹

1. **First, the one who suffered could be identified as Jesus Christ.** The objection to this view is that Jesus never sinned (cf. 2:22; 3:18), so how could it be said that he had ceased from sin? This interpretation could still be defended if sin is understood in terms similar to Rom 6:8–10. By virtue of his death and resurrection, the power of sin was broken, and Christ ceased to have any relationship with sin. At the cross the sinless one took sin upon himself, but now that he has suffered, he no longer deals with sin. His triumph over it is complete. This interpretation is attractive in that it removes any implication that believers could somehow be sinlessly perfect. **It is difficult to see how believers are done with sin in this life, but it makes good sense to say that Christ was done with sin once for all at the cross.** Nevertheless, this interpretation should be rejected. It is scarcely clear that the phrase “he who has suffered” refers to Christ. The subject is almost surely believers, for the syntax of the text indicates that those who arm themselves are to be equated with those who suffer. The singular form here is generic and should not be pressed as if the reference were to a solitary individual. **The need to posit Christ as the subject can be eliminated if we show that there are plausible ways of speaking of Christians as ceasing from sin without importing any idea that believers are sinless.**

Both of the following interpretations fit this requirement.

2. Second, the one who suffers in the flesh refers to Christians, but it should be understood in terms similar to **Romans 6:7**, *“Anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”*

In Romans 6 believers died with Christ, via baptism, to the power of sin. Similarly, the verse here says that the dominion of sin has been broken in the lives of those who have died with Christ.

The advantage of this interpretation is that it coheres with Paul and sensibly explains how believers cease with sin.

Still, the interpretation should be rejected.³⁵⁵ We must beware of imposing the Pauline writings on 1 Peter, and the two contexts are quite different. It is apparent in Romans 6 that the believer dies with Christ, but no such language is used in 1 Peter. Indeed, the word “suffered” in the last phrase of v. 1 cannot be equated with dying. As Elliott argues, Paul spoke metaphorically of dying with Christ whereas Peter had in mind actual suffering. We should note that the verb used is “suffer” (*paschō*), not “die” (*apothēnskō*). The notion here is not that believers have died with Christ but that they should follow Christ in their daily lives by consenting to suffering. Further, Peter did not use the word “sin” (*hamartia*) to designate a power, something that is quite common in Paul. The word “sin” in Peter is used of acts of sin (cf. 2:22, 24; 4:1, 8).

3. The third interpretation is most persuasive. “He who has suffered” refers to believers and relates back to the imperative to prepare themselves for suffering.

Peter explained why they should prepare themselves to suffer, seeing the commitment to suffer as evidence that they have broken with a life of sin.

The point is not that believers who suffer have attained sinless perfection, as if they do not sin at all after suffering.

What Peter emphasized was that those who commit themselves to suffer, those who willingly endure scorn and mockery for their faith, show that they have triumphed over sin.

They have broken with sin because they have ceased to participate in the lawless activities of unbelievers and endured the criticisms that have come from such a decision.

The commitment to suffer reveals a passion for a new way of life, a life that is not yet perfect but remarkably different from the lives of unbelievers...

in the Greco-Roman world.

4:2

The NIV understands the clause in this verse to designate result — “As a result,” but **more likely it is a purpose clause.**

Christians should arm
themselves with the
intention to suffer,
(No matter what!)

so that they live the
remainder of their lives in
carrying out God’s will
instead of fulfilling the
human lusts that
dominated their lives
before conversion.

The purpose clause provides confirmation for the interpretation proposed for the last clause in v. 1.

Believers are summoned to suffer in the sense that they are called to do God's will and to turn away from a life of sin.

Some scholars think the remaining time on earth is understood as the short time before the second coming of Christ rather than the rest of one's life before death. But we need not choose between these two options, for the text is not specific enough to warrant one or the other.³⁶³

Peter realized that some Christians would likely die before Christ returned while still anticipating the imminent return of Christ.

Whatever the span of life God grants, believers are to live zealously for God as long as life endures.

New Bible Commentary: [D.A. Carson](#)

4:1–6

Suffering in the body is therefore to be accepted because: it follows the example of Jesus; it unites the believer with his *attitude*; and it enables the sufferer to live *for the will of God*.

It is important to weigh passages like this against some of the contemporary teaching on **'health and wealth'**. Nowhere in the Bible are we taught that the Christian will always be prosperous and avoid suffering; rather, Jesus suggests the opposite may often be true (see Lk. 6:20–26; Jn. 16:1–4).

Mention of baptism in 3:21 may have prompted Peter to follow the same sort of argument as Paul uses in Rom. 6.

Baptism symbolizes the believer's entry into the benefits obtained by Christ's suffering and death. In undergoing it the person baptized is regarded as mystically sharing those sufferings and death.

The consequence of such a death in Rom. 6:11 is to *'count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus'*. This is what Peter is stating here, adding a note of urgency by contrasting time spent in the past on indulging oneself with the opportunity for serving God in the future.

Those whose behaviour and habits are so changed become the targets for persecution.

However, the Christian must remember that it is to God that all must give account of their conduct. The comprehensiveness of this judgment (5) leads Peter to make an aside remark that the death of Christians proves the value of preaching the gospel to people while they are alive. Though now in death they have received in their bodies God's judgment on sin, their spirits are still alive with him. (For other interpretations of this verse see the Notes below.)

In this section, therefore, Peter encourages Christians who are facing suffering (and possibly even martyrdom) by showing them from the example of Jesus that God's plan can be worked out through such suffering and that it will ultimately lead to victory (see 4:11).

4:1

The same attitude (lit. 'intention') appears, from the context, to refer to Christ's experience of suffering.

His sufferings led to the death of his flesh and enabled his spirit to enter a new mode of existence. This should also be seen in the life of the believer.

He who has suffered need not refer to those who undergo physical suffering, but includes all who, in the mystical union symbolized by baptism, share the sufferings of Christ.

This union should be made effective by claiming deliverance from sin and a new life of service to God. **2** The plural *desires* suggests the diversity of interests pulling a person in different directions (v 3 gives a catalogue of some of these). By contrast *the will of God* in the singular shows that only in obedience to God can the human personality be truly and properly integrated.

Bible Commentary: [Wayne Grudem](#)

For a Christian who has suffered for doing right has made a clear break with sin (4:1–2)

1.

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh resumes the theme Peter had begun in 3:18, the value of imitating Christ's example of willingness to suffer, if necessary, in order to do God's will.

But whereas there his concern was to encourage his readers to give a good Christian witness, here his emphasis shifts to the related theme of willingness to suffer in order to avoid sinning.

Arm yourselves with the same thought

means to think as Christ did about obedience and suffering: to be convinced that it is better to do right and suffer for it than to do wrong (cf. 3:17–18).

The word thought means here not so much an attitude of mind but the insight which one has gained into the nature of God's dealings with people.

There is a motive for this: they should be willing, like Christ, to suffer for doing right for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. As a general statement, without qualification, this would not be true, for there are many people who have suffered physically and yet still sin very much. Nor is Peter simply saying that physical suffering somehow purifies and strengthens people—it strengthens some, but others become rebellious toward God and embittered.

Rather, we must read the sentence in the light of the theme of suffering for doing right which is found in the preceding context (3:14, 16–18). The kind of suffering in the flesh which Peter means is defined by 3:17: ‘For it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God’s will, than for doing wrong.’

Therefore *whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin* means ‘whoever has suffered for doing right, and has still gone on obeying God in spite of the suffering it involved, has made a clear break with sin’.

The phrase *has ceased from sin* cannot mean ‘no longer sins at all’, for certainly that is not true of everyone who has been willing to suffer for doing right, and several passages in Scripture rule out the idea that anyone can be absolutely free from sin in this life (1 Kgs 8:46; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Jas 3:2; 1 John 1:8).

It rather means ‘*has made a clear break with sin*’, ‘has most definitely acted in a way which shows that obeying God, not avoiding hardship, is the most important motivation for his or her action’.

Thus, following through with a decision to obey God even when it will mean physical suffering has a morally strengthening effect on our lives: it commits us more firmly than ever before to a pattern of action where obedience is even more important than our desire to avoid pain.

2. Peter now explains ‘*ceasing from sin*’ in more detail.

It is for the purpose of living a life governed not by human feelings but by God's will: one breaks clearly with sin *so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh* (i.e. the rest of one's life on earth) *no longer by human passions but by the will of God*. (See note on the word for *passions* at 1:14.)

Of course the initial repentance from sin which is part of any genuine conversion to Christ is also in some sense a 'clear break with sin' and a resolve to live 'not by human passions but by the will of God'. But Peter here seems to be saying that obeying God, even though the price is physical suffering, involves an even stronger moral commitment than that first decision of the will. Yet we must be careful not to make this into some kind of uniform 'second experience' which all mature believers must experience in the same way. Rather...

Peter is speaking of something which may happen many or few times in a Christian's life, and with many different degrees of intensity. For Christians living under hostile governments the suffering endured may be great indeed; for those living elsewhere something related to such suffering 'in the flesh' may be seen in less intense form in physical weariness or other discomfort which one endures in order to be obedient to God's will.

Puritan Matthew Henry:

The apostle here draws a new inference from the consideration of Christ's sufferings. As he had before made use of it to persuade to patience in suffering, so here to mortification of sin.

Observe,

- I. How the exhortation is expressed. The antecedent or supposition is *that Christ had suffered* for us in the flesh, or in his human nature. The consequent or inference is, *“Arm and fortify yourselves likewise with the same mind, courage, and resolution.*

The word flesh in the former part of the verse signifies Christ’s human nature, but in the latter part it signifies man’s corrupt nature.

So, the sense is...

“As Christ suffered in his human nature, do you, according to your baptismal vow and profession, make your corrupt nature suffer, by putting to death the body of sin by self-denial and mortification; for, if you do not thus suffer, you will be conformable to Christ in his death and resurrection, and will cease from sin.”

Learn

1. Some of the strongest and best arguments against all sorts of sin are taken from the sufferings of Christ. All sympathy and tenderness for Christ as a sufferer are lost if you do not put away sin. He dies to destroy it; and, though he could cheerfully submit to the worst sufferings, yet he could never submit to the least sin.

2. The beginning of all true mortification lies in the mind, not in penances and hardships upon the body. *The mind of man is carnal, full of enmity; the understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God, Eph. 4:18. Man is not a sincere creature, but partial, blind, and wicked, till he be renewed and sanctified by the regenerating grace of God.*

II. **How it is further explained, v. 2.**

The apostle explains what he means by being dead to sin, and ceasing from sin, both negatively and positively.

A. Negatively, a Christian ought *no longer to live the rest of his time in the flesh*, to the sinful lusts and corrupt desires of carnal wicked men;

but,

B. Positively, he ought to conform himself to the revealed will of the holy God.

Learn,

1. The lusts of men are the springs of all their wickedness, Jam. 1:13, 14. Let occasional temptations be what they will, they could not prevail, were it not for men's own corruptions.

2. All good Christians make the will of God, not their own lusts or desires, the rule of their lives and actions.

4. True conversion makes a marvellous change in the heart and life of every one who partakes of it. It brings a man off from all his old, fashionable, and delightful lusts, and from the common ways and vices of the world, to the will of God. It alters the mind, judgment, affections, way, and conversation of every one who has experienced it.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh - Since he as a man has died for us. See the notes at [1 Peter 3:18](#). The design was to set the suffering Redeemer before them as an example in their trials.

Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind –

That is, evidently, the same mind that he evinced - a readiness to suffer in the cause of religion, a readiness to die as he had done.

This readiness to suffer and die, the apostle speaks of as armour, and having this is represented as being armed.

Armour is put on for offensive or defensive purposes in war; and...

the idea of the apostle here is that:

that state of mind when we are ready to meet with persecution and trial, and when we are ready to die, will answer the purpose of armour in engaging in the conflicts and strifes which pertain to us as Christians, and especially in meeting with persecutions and trials.

We are to put on the same fortitude which the Lord Jesus had, and this will be the best defense against our foes, and the best security of victory.

For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin -

Compare the notes at [Romans 6:7](#).

To "suffer in the flesh" is to die.

The expression here has a proverbial aspect, and seems to have meant something like this:

"when a man is dead,
he will sin no more;"

...referring of course to the present life.

So if a Christian becomes dead in a moral sense - dead to this world, dead by being crucified with Christ (see the notes at [Galatians 2:20](#)) - he may be expected to cease from sin.

The reasoning is based on the idea that there is such a union between Christ and the believer that his death on the cross secured the death of the believer to the world. Compare [2 Timothy 2:11](#); [Colossians 2:20](#); [Colossians 3:3](#).

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered – Even the ignominious and painful death of the cross, with all those previous and concomitant evils, which rendered his death peculiarly bitter; *for us* – And that from a pure and disinterested principle of love; *arm yourselves likewise with the same mind* – With a resolution such as animated him to suffer all the evils to which you may be exposed in the body; and particularly to suffer death, if called by God to do so for your religion. For this will be armour of proof against all your enemies. *For he that hath* – In conformity to our Lord Jesus; *suffered in the flesh* – Or, who hath so suffered as to be thereby made inwardly and truly conformable to Christ in his sufferings, *hath*, of course, *ceased from sin* – From knowingly committing it. “He hath been made to rest,” says Macknight, “from temptation to sin, consequently from sin itself. For if a man hath overcome the fear of torture and death, no weaker temptation will prevail with him to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.” *That he no longer should live in the flesh* – Even in his mortal body; *to the lusts* – The desires, *of men* – Either his own or those of others; should no longer be governed by those irregular and inordinate affections which rule in unregenerate men; *but to the will of God* – In a holy conformity and obedience to the divine precepts, how contrary soever they may be to his carnal and sensual inclinations, or apparently to his worldly interests.

Meyer's NT Commentary

[1 Peter 4:1](#). Χριστοῦ οὖν παθόντος [ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν] σαρκί] In these words the apostle returns to chap. [1 Peter 3:18](#), in order to subjoin the following exhortation.

σαρκί is not: “in the flesh” (Luther), but: “*according to the flesh*,” comp. [1 Peter 3:18](#). This is made prominent because the believer’s sufferings, too, under persecutions, touch the flesh only; comp. [Matthew 10:28](#). παθόντος is not to be limited to the suffering of Christ *before* His death, but comprehends the latter also. It is, however, incorrect to understand, with Hofmann, παθόντος at once as identical with ἀποθανόντος, and in connection with σαρκί to explain: “that Christ by His life in the flesh submitted for our sake to a suffering which befell Him—that for our sake He allowed His life in the flesh to come to an end”(!).

καὶ ὑμεῖς τὴν αὐτὴν ἔννοιαν ὀπλίσασθε] καὶ with reference to Christ; “*ye also:*” the disciple must be like the master.

It lies to hand to translate ἔννοια (besides here, only in [Hebrews 4:12](#)) as equivalent here to “disposition of mind” (de Wette; Weiss, p. 288); but ἔννοια means always “*thought, consideration*” (Wiesinger, Schott).[231] There is here also no reference to the mind of Christ in His sufferings, *ΤΗΝ ΑὐΤΗΝ ἘΝΝΟΙΑΝ* refers back to the *ΠΑΣΧΕΙΝ ΣΑΡΚΙ* of Christ Himself, so that the sense is, that since Christ suffered according to the flesh, they too should not refuse the thought of like Him suffering according to (or on) the flesh, *ὍΤΙ* gives the ground of the exhortation. Hofmann, Wiesinger, and Schott take *ὍΤΙ* as explaining *ΤΗΝ ΑὐΤ.* ἘΝΝΟΙΑΝ. Incorrectly; for the *ΠΕΠΙΑΥΤΑΙ ἈΜΑΡΤΙΑς* will not admit of an application to Christ, inasmuch as the expression does not presuppose generally a former “relation to sin,” but former sinning itself.

The verb *ὀπλιζέσθαι*, in the N. T. *ἌΠ. ΛΕΓ.*, is in classical writers often construed with the accus. (Soph. *Electra*, v. 991: θράσος ὀπλίζεσθαι); while applied to every kind of equipment, e.g. of ships, it here refers to the Christian’s calling as one of conflict.

ὅτι ὁ παθὼν ἐν σαρκὶ ΠΕΠΑΥΤΑΙ ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑς] In Luther's translation: "for he who suffers on the flesh, he ceaseth from sin," the present is incorrectly substituted for the preterite tense: ἘΝ ΣΑΡΚΙ; correctly: "on the flesh." Hofmann's rendering is wrong: "in the flesh," which, compared with the ἐν σαρκί preceding, would imply "that whilst Christ's life in the flesh ended with His suffering, our sufferings took place with continued life in the flesh"(!). The reading ΣΑΡΚΙ, "according to the flesh," conveys the same idea; cf. Winer, 384 (E. T. 513).

ΠΕΠΑΥΤΑΙ ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑς] The mid. ΠΑΥΟΜΑΙ is in the classics frequently joined with the genitive, e.g. *Il.* vii. 290: παυσώμεθα μάχης; *Herod*, i. 47: τῆς μάχης ἐπαύσαντο; *Herodian*. vii. 10, 16: τῆς τε ὀργῆς ὁ δῆμος ἐπαύσατο. In this way ΠΕΠΑΥΤΑΙ here is explained by most interpreters as equivalent to: **"he has ceased from sin, that is, he has given up sinning."** The word may also be taken as the perf. pass. according to the construction ΠΑΥΕΙΝ ΤΙΝΑ ΤΙΝΟΣ, equivalent to: "to cause one to give up, to desist from a thing." ΠΕΠΑΥΤΑΙ ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑς would then mean: "he has been brought to cease from sin, to sin no more" (Schott: "brought away from sinful conduct"). Hofmann erroneously asserts that "ΠΑΥΕΙΝ ΤΙΝΑ ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑς would in a quite general way mean: action such as brings it about that the individual is ended with sin;" that is to say, in the sense, that his *relation* to sin is at an end.[232] For the genitive with παύειν denotes always a condition or an activity of him who is the object of παύειν.

Expositor's Greek Testament

[1 Peter 4:1](#). *Christ having died to flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought that (or because) he that died hath ceased to sins.*—παθόντος σαρκί Peter goes back to the starting point of [1 Peter 3:18](#) in order to emphasise the import of the first step taken by Christ and His followers, apart now from the consequences.

The new life implies death to the old.—τήν

αὐτήν ἔννοιαν. ἔ. only occurs once elsewhere in N.T., [Hebrews 4:12](#), τῶν ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐννοιῶν καρδίας, but is common in LXX of Proverbs; compare (e.g.) [Proverbs 2:2](#), ἔννοια ὅσια (תבונה, *discernment*) shall keep thee. Here it is the noun-equivalent of φρονεῖτε δ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ([Php 2:1](#)). Christ's *thought* (or *purpose*) which He had in dying is shared by the Christian: and it is defined by ὅτι, κ.τ.λ.—ὀπίσασθε, *sc.* for the fight with sin and sinners whom you have deserted.—ὅτι ... ἁμαρτίαις. This axiom is better taken as explaining *the same thought* than as motive for ὀπλ. St. Paul states it in other words, ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας; compare the death-bed confession of the Jew, "O may my death be an atonement for all the sin ... of which I have been guilty against thee".

*One dead—literally or
spiritually—hath rest in respect
of sins assumed or committed;*

so [Hebrews 9:28](#) insists that after His death Christ is χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας. πέπαιται echoes παυσάτω of [1 Peter 3:10](#). In the Greek Bible the perfect passive occurs only once ([Exodus 9:34](#)) outside Isa 1:-31., where it is used three times to render שבת (*cf.* σαββατισμός, [Hebrews 4:9](#)). The dative ἁμ. is analogous to that following ζῆν ἀποθανεῖν (παθεῖν); the *v.l.* ἁμαρτίας is due to the common construction of παυ.

◀ 3973. pauó ▶

Strong's Concordance

pauó: to make to cease, hinder

Original Word: *παύω*

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: pauó

Phonetic Spelling: (pow'-o)

Definition: to make to cease, hinder

Usage: (a) act: I cause to cease, restrain, hinder, (b) mid: I cease, stop, leave off.

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

a prim. word

Definition

to make to cease, hinder

NASB Translation

cease (4), ceased (4), finished (2), incessantly* (1), keep (1), kept right* (1), stopped (2).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 3973: *παύω*

παύω: 1 aorist imperative 3 person singular *παυσάτω* ([1 Peter 3:10](#)); middle, present *παύομαι*; imperfect *ἐπαυομην*; future *παύσομαι* (see *ἀναπαύω* and *ἐπαναπαύω* (and on the forms *παηναι* etc. cf. futher Hilgenfeld, Hermae Pastor, edition alt. proleg., p. xviii, note, also his edition of the 'Teaching' 4, 2 [ET] note (p. 97))); perfect *πεπαυμαι*; 1 aorist *ἐπαυσάμην*; from Homer down; **to make to cease or**

desist: *τί* or *τινα ἀπό τίνος*, **to restrain** (A. V. **refrain**) **a thing or a person from something**, [1 Peter 3:10](#), from [Psalm 33:14](#) (); cf. Winer's Grammar, § 30, 6; ((cf. 326 (305)): R. § 132, 5). Middle, the Sept. for *תִּבַּח*, *כָּלָה*, *לִדְלֵל*, etc. **to cease, leave off**, (cf. Winer's Grammar, 253 (238)): [Luke 8:24](#); [Acts 20:1](#); [1 Corinthians 13:8](#); the action or state desisted from is indicated by the addition of a present participle (cf. Matthiae, § 551 d.; Passow, under the word, II. 3; (Liddell and Scott, I. 4); Winer's Grammar, § 45, 4; (Buttmann, § 144,15)): *ἐπαύσατο λαλῶν*, [Luke 5:4](#) ([Genesis 18:33](#); [Numbers 16:31](#); [Deuteronomy 20:9](#)); add, [Acts 5:42](#); [Acts 6:13](#); [Acts 13:10](#); [Acts 20:31](#); [Acts 21:32](#); [Ephesians 1:16](#); [Colossians 1:9](#); [Hebrews 10:2](#); the participle is lacking, as being evident from the context, [Luke 11:1](#). Passive (cf. Winer's Grammar, § 39, 3 and N. 3) *πέπαιται ἁμαρτίας*, **hath got release** (A. V. **hath ceased**) **from sin**, i. e. is no longer stirred by its incitements and seductions, [1 Peter 4:1](#); cf. Kypke, Observations, at the passage, and Winer's Grammar, as above; (Buttmann, § 132, 5; but WH text *ἁμαρτίαις*, dative, **unto sins**. Compare: *ἀναπαύω*, *ἐπαναπαύω*, *συναναπαύω* (*συναναπαύομαι*), *καταπαύω*).

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

cease, leave, refrain.

A primary verb ("pause"); to stop (transitively or intransitively), i.e. Restrain, quit, desist, come to an end -- cease, leave, refrain.

The Berean:

2 Peter 3:1-4

(1) ***Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.*** (2) I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. (3) First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. (4) They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

New International Version

At the very core of [the gospel](#) message is the assurance that [Jesus Christ](#) will return and establish His [Kingdom on earth](#). Our hope is in His [second coming](#) because we recognize that we need His [merciful](#) intervention before humanity wipes itself out. As things continue to deteriorate, we keep returning to this confident expectation that there *is* a solution to the problems that mankind faces, but that solution is still just over the horizon. However, it seems like His return has been "just over the horizon" our entire lives, and we may wonder at times why the end has not yet come.

In this regard, II Peter 3 is invaluable for keeping the right perspective on Christ's return, and especially its timing. The apostle Peter helps us to focus on the right things in anticipation of that day.

Peter begins the chapter with a reminder of all the things the prophets and apostles had been inspired to preach. The timing of Christ's return was the source of quite a bit of confusion in the first century, and so Peter reminds his audience that a tremendous amount of God's Word has to do with that very topic. The Bible contains a solid foundation for at least a general understanding of the end times, even though the exact timing is not spelled out.

In these verses, Peter addresses the prevailing notion that “life goes on” and the public's scoffing at the idea that the Creator would return and intervene in human affairs. In the previous chapter, he paid considerable attention to false prophets, [false teachers](#), and false doctrines that were troubling the church from the inside. In chapter 3, Peter draws attention to all that the true prophets and apostles had written because their writings needed to be the basis of evaluating what the contemporary teachers were saying. Along the same lines, Paul says in [I Timothy 4:1](#) that “the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the [faith](#), giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. . . .”

A picture emerges of people who had “the faith”—a specific faith—at one time, but whose natural desires have overshadowed it. They had regressed to the place where they scoff at the idea that there is anything more to life than what they can discern with their senses. As their faith deteriorates, they conclude that nothing has really changed in the millennia of (accepted) human history, so it is doubtful that [this world](#) will ever end. So Peter writes to those who have *not* departed from the faith, pointing out that God's Word is filled with examples of His intervention, so that they—and we—might be bolstered in the face of the scoffing.

— David C. Grabbe

Table-Talk Magazine:

Defining the Will of God

by [John W. Tweeddale](#)

Throughout the annals of time, many people have struggled to define the will of God. **When we talk about God's will today, we tend to speak about things in reference to ourselves**—usually good things such as our spouses, our children, our jobs, our finances, and our hobbies. Historically, however, when theologians have discussed the will of God, they have done so to say things primarily about God—usually about deep things such as God's nature, God's decree, God's freedom, God's sovereignty, and God's wisdom.

This wasn't to ignore life's big decisions but to locate them in the vast expanse of the eternal purposes of God.

Defining the will of God is important for us as Christians because it unveils who He is as the eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing God.

Geerhardus Vos describes God's will as “that perfection of God by which in a most simple act and in a rational manner He goes out toward Himself as the highest good and toward creatures outside Him for His own sake.” Stated negatively, **God's will cannot be separated from God Himself. Since God is one in essence, His will is undivided.**

As Richard Muller concisely states, “God is what he wills.”

Viewed from our vantage point,
the will of God reflects His character, reveals His design for His creation, and manifests His wisdom and power in ordering all that comes to pass for our good and His glory.

A key biblical text for defining the will of God is Deuteronomy 29:29. It states, *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”* This verse encapsulates *“the words of the covenant”* that God gave Israel at the end of Moses’ life and ministry (Deut. 29:1). It also provides a biblical-theological framework for understanding the divine will.

The context of Deuteronomy is instructive. As the Lord prepares Joshua to lead Israel into the land of Canaan after the death of Moses, He reminds His people of the necessity of His Word to know His will.

This would prove to be a message Israel needed to hear. The anticipation of the promised land would press the limits of Israel's faith as it navigated the obstacles that often lie in the gap between promise and fulfillment.

In the face of the uncertainties that attend life in a fallen world, Israel needed to be reminded that obeying God's Word was at the center of knowing God's will for their lives.

At the heart of this passage in Deuteronomy 29 is a distinction between “the secret things” that belong to God and “the things that are revealed” that belong to us and to our children. Building on this distinction, theologians often refer to God's secret will and to His revealed will.

While this point may seem obvious, it is crucial for defining the will of God. There are countless things that we don't know as humans, since we are finite. But the same cannot be said of God, since He is infinite and all-knowing.

God's knowledge is exactly like Him:
absolutely perfect.

Unlike us, God does not need to work out problems through deduction. He has no need of counselors to determine what to do in a crisis or to help Him cope with moral conundrums. Since God is infinite and incomprehensible, He has perfect knowledge of Himself and of all things. But this “secret” knowledge belongs to God alone. We might call this the inscrutability of God. **There are things known only to God that are past our finding out** (see [Rom. 11:33–36](#)).

We can rest confident in knowing the divine will of God to the extent that He has revealed Himself in His Word.

In contrast, our knowledge is like us: finite and incomplete. Since we are created, we depend on God to know His will. More precisely, as God reveals Himself in His Word, we can know His will truly if not comprehensively. **The point is that God is the best interpreter of His will. This is why “the things revealed” are so important. Scripture represents the self-revelation of God’s will in written form.**

While we may not be able to decrypt the “secret things” of God, we can rest confident in knowing the divine will of God to the extent that He has revealed Himself in His Word. For Israel and for us, defining the will of God involves knowing and applying the written Word of God.

When we read God’s revealed will in Scripture, we discover that the Bible makes several other distinctions between God’s decretive will, God’s preceptive will, and God’s will of good pleasure.

~ The decretive will of God refers to His perfect and wise counsel in freely ordaining or decreeing whatsoever comes to pass. As the Apostle Paul states in [Ephesians 1:11](#), “In [Christ] we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.” **God’s decretive will underscores His total sovereignty over all things, including creation and redemption, history and providence.** As such, it can never be thwarted, not even by our sin and disobedience. This is not to suggest that God delights in sin or is the author of sin but to say that He permits it in order to accomplish His sovereign will.

~ **God’s preceptive will represents the moral standard that God requires all people to meet. It tells us what God demands of us as His image bearers; it broadcasts what we should do, regardless of whether we obey it. The preceptive will of God, concisely summarized for us in the Ten Commandments, is also known as the moral law.** As the Westminster Larger Catechism states,

The moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul, and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he owes to God and man; promising life upon the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach of it. (WLC 93)

In short, **the logic of the preceptive will of God is summarized in the maxim**
“You shall be holy, for I am holy” ([1 Peter 1:16](#)).

A lesser-known but related distinction is God's will of good pleasure.

This dispositional will has two parts.

~ On the one hand, it refers to **1). the pleasure of God in ordaining His sovereign decree.**

For example, Ephesians 1:5 speaks of God's lovingly predestining His people in Christ "according to the good pleasure of his will" (KJV). And Ephesians 1:9 unpacks how God made known the mystery of His will in Christ "according to his good pleasure." On the other hand, it refers to the delight of God when we do what He wills (see Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:10; Col. 3:20).

In this sense, God is pleased when we obey and displeased when we disobey.

While these distinctions help us nuance the biblical teaching on the will of God, we should not conclude that there are competing or contradictory wills in God. The divine will reflects the single, unified plan of the one true God. A classic illustration of this principle is found in the Apostle Peter's sermon at Pentecost. In Acts 2:22–23, he states,

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

From one perspective, the execution of Jesus violated God's preceptive will, since the killing of an innocent man is murder. Yet, from the standpoint of God's decretive will, we are told that the crucifixion was according to God's sovereign plan. Moreover, the prophet Isaiah highlights God's will of good pleasure when he states of Christ that "it pleased the LORD to bruise him . . . and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (Isa. 53:10, KJV).

The cross of Christ helps us understand how nothing can frustrate the will of God in securing the salvation of His people for the glory of His name.

As we confront decisions big and small, we should not conclude that our response is simply to "let go and let God." Trusting in God's will involves actively resting in His divine wisdom and submitting to His Word. While the secret things of God remain a mystery, we know with certainty that the will of God involves cultivating holiness and thanksgiving at every juncture (1 Thess. 4:3; 5:18). We may be tempted to fret about tomorrow, but a study of the will of God summons us to a life of obedience today.

Dr. John W. Tweeddale is academic dean and professor of theology at Reformation Bible College in Sanford, Fla., and a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America. He is author of *John Owen and Hebrews*.

God has a will but no opinions.

– JDP

CHRISTIAN LIVING

God's Will for Your Life Is More Obvious Than You Think

NOVEMBER 25, 2019 **COURTNEY DOCTOR**

Have you ever wondered what God's will is for your life? I'd venture to guess we've all asked that question at some point. For most of us, the question rises to the surface at critical junctures: choosing a spouse or a job, choosing what school to attend or which house to buy. These are the times we tend to cry out, *Lord, show me your will!*

As we seek to know God's will, we often feel tension. In a sincere desire to please him, we can sometimes walk in fear that we will make the wrong choice about the details of our lives. We spin in circles, wondering where God wants us to get coffee, how much he wants us to spend on groceries, or whether he'd be happy if we went to Disney for vacation. Every choice becomes a paralyzing decision: either discover what God wants, or make a choice that could ruin everything. For some, obsessing over life's details leads them to make decisions in clearly unbiblical ways—hinging their choices on apparent signs and coincidences.

Others swing to the opposite end, thinking God doesn't really care about the details of our lives and doesn't have a "will" for anything we do.

We can also assume God's will applies only to certain aspects of life—whom we marry or what job we take, perhaps—but outside of those big things, we can basically believe *we* control the moments of our days.

James says this kind of attitude is arrogant and evil ([James 4:16](#)). In all things, we should acknowledge our utter dependence on God's sovereign plan, saying, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that" ([James 4:15](#)).

But how can we know if the Lord has willed something or not?

One Will, Two Angles

Theologians discuss God's one will in two main ways—his secret will and his revealed will. His *secret* will (sometimes referred to as his hidden or decretive will) refers to the fact that God is sovereign and rules meticulously over all. Nothing happens outside of his perfect will. It's called "hidden" or "secret" because we don't know his will until it's come to pass:

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 counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose." ([Isa. 46:9–10](#))

This is the sovereign, but hidden, will of God. And nothing will thwart it.

By contrast, God's *revealed* will is what he's made known to us in Scripture. For instance, we know it's God's will for us to love our neighbors, bridle our tongues, act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly. We know it's God's will that we not murder, steal, cheat, lie, slander, gossip, or boast. How do we know? Because he has told us in his Word.

Focus on God's Revealed Will

Ironically, we're prone to overlook God's revealed will and hyper-focus on his secret will. We often want to know God's hidden will for the future, while walking contrary to his revealed will in the present.

We often want to know God's hidden will for the future, while walking contrary to his revealed will in the present.

Instead, we ought to diligently study and seek to understand God’s revealed will. As we sit under good preaching and teaching, reading and studying and memorizing our Bibles in a covenant community, we will grow in our ability to know God’s revealed will. And as we renew our minds, the Spirit of God will help us not only discern God’s will ([Rom. 12:2](#)), but also apply it to the circumstances and moments of our days.

Trust God’s Secret Will

While we obey God’s revealed will, we can trust in God’s good providence—that as his secret will unfolds he is working all things together for the good of those who love him ([Rom. 8:28](#)). Whatever our days may hold, we can trust that the specifics are designed by a loving God for the good of our souls.

Whether the decision of the moment involves choosing a spouse or choosing new flooring, we can trust our sovereign God to order our lives for his glory and our good. Today and every day, the truth is clear: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification” ([1 Thess. 4:3](#)).

This means we can trust God’s will even during trials. Sometimes we think that suffering can’t possibly be the Lord’s will. But we forget that our salvation was won when Jesus submitted himself completely to God’s will in the moment of his greatest suffering.

After living in perfect obedience to God’s revealed will, Jesus, on the night before his crucifixion, asked his Father three times if there was any other way for him to accomplish God’s plan to save a people for himself. Everything hinged on how Jesus would respond to God’s perfect will. And, praise and glory to Jesus, he submitted himself, saying, “Your will be done” ([Matt. 26:42](#)).

So, seek to know God’s revealed will. Be diligent in obeying it. Walk in holiness, pursue sanctification, love your neighbors, be generous with your resources, bridle your tongue, and worship God. Trust that God, in his providence, is working all things together for your good, and remember that what is currently hidden will one day be revealed in glory.

And as you wait with steadfast hope for that day, thank the Lord that his will is always good.

Editors’ note:

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The different wills of God

by Kinglove | [THE HABIT OF PRAYER](#), [The Sovereignty of God](#)

The Bible speaks of the “will of God” in several different ways. The first is distinguishing between God’s sovereign will and his command will.

1. The Sovereign (predestined or decreed) will of God

The sovereign will of God is God’s eternal, predestined, foreordained plan and purpose. It refers to that aspect of God’s will that consists of things he has decided to bring about by his own sovereign rule. No creature (man or angel) can change it. It cannot be changed or thwarted. God’s sovereign will covers matters such as

- Salvation (Ephesians 1:3-6, etc.)
- His choice and calling of Israel (Romans 11:1-2, 29)
- God’s covenant promises in the Bible

Sometimes, God reveals some elements of his sovereign will to us. However, frequently, it remains a secret. God reveals to us only what he wants us to know.

2. The command or preceptive will of God

The command will of God includes the commandments or precepts found in the Bible. E.g. the ten commandments are God’s will, but we can break them (with consequences). God says you shall not murder, yet people can murder others. There are many other commandments or passages in the Bible in which God commands us to live a certain way, to do a certain thing, or not to do a certain thing. This group is also called the moral will of God.

Beyond the sovereign and moral wills of God, we can note the following descriptions of God’s will. I’m indebted to pastor Bob Deffinbaugh for some of the ideas shared below.

3. The preferential or desiderative will of God; also called God’s will of disposition

This describes God’s attitude or disposition towards something. It tells us what is pleasing to Him—what gives God pleasure and what does not. We know that God loves to show mercy, and yet He will execute judgment (Exodus 34:6-7). It is on this basis that Moses appeals to God to forgive Israel, not only here, but many times (see Numbers 14:17-19). Not only Moses but others prayed that God would show mercy

(Nehemiah 9; Daniel 9). God takes pleasure in the salvation of sinners; He does not take pleasure in pouring out His eternal wrath on sinners (Matthew 18:14; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 18:32; 33:11). When we come to things which are not clearly prescribed as sin, or things which are commanded, our desire should be to do that which pleases God (Romans 12:1; Colossians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Ephesians 5:10).

4. The directive will of God

This refers to the Holy Spirit's persona and direct guidance in our lives. He speaks to our hearts or through a dream, vision, or other means. It does not violate any of the "wills" above. There are times when God wants us at a certain place, doing a certain thing. This will agree with the scriptures. However, you don't get the directive will by following the direct instructions of the scriptures. The "Macedonian call" (Acts 16:6-10), the direct guidance of Philip (Acts 8:26), and of Peter and Ananias (Acts 10:1-23) are examples of the directive will of God. Note that even though it is undeniable that God guides us personally and directly, this is not the most common way that God uses. An example is 1 Timothy 4:14.

5. The discerned will of God

The discerned will of God refers to the guidance we arrive at through the application of biblical principles or precepts to situations that have no clear directives in the written word. John Piper writes, "Most of the decisions we make are not spelled out specifically in the Bible.

Discernment is how we follow God's leading through the process of spiritually sensitive application of biblical truth to the particularities of our situation. Romans 12:2 describes this: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." In this case, God does not declare a specific word about what to do. But his Spirit shapes the mind and heart through the word and prayer so that we have inclinations toward what would be most glorifying to him and helpful to others."

The decision of who to marry, what city to live, what career to pursue, how many children to have, which school to attend, what kind of car to get, what kind of food to eat, what kind of shoes and clothes to wear, and how much money to give to charity, and more are not clearly written in the Bible. We use Biblical principles to discern God's will on it.

Caution: Confusing categorization of the will of God

The permissive will of God. This classification, “permissive will of God,” is not found in the Bible. It is a confusing attempt by some people to contrast the sovereign will of God with another concept of the will of God, namely the so-called “permissive will of God.” While the attempt is noble, I think it should be avoided because the distinction is “fraught with peril and tends to generate untold confusion.” Read “[Exposing the Permissive Will of God](#)” by R. C. Sproul.

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How can I know God’s will for my life?

It is important to know God’s will. Jesus said that His true relations are those who know and do the Father’s will: “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother” ([Mark 3:35](#)). In the [parable of the two sons](#), Jesus rebukes the chief priests and elders for failing to do the will of the Father; specifically, they “did not repent and believe” ([Matthew 21:32](#)). At its most basic, the will of God is to repent of our sin and trust in Christ. If we have not taken that first step, then we have not yet accepted God’s will.

Once we receive Christ by faith, we are made God’s children ([John 1:12](#)), and He desires to lead us in His way ([Psalm 143:10](#)). God is not trying to hide His will from us; He wants to reveal it. In fact, He has already given us many, many directions in His Word. We are to “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you” ([1 Thessalonians 5:18](#)). We are to do good works ([1 Peter 2:15](#)). And “it is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality” ([1 Thessalonians 4:3](#)).

God’s will is knowable and provable. [Romans 12:2](#) says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.” This passage gives us an important sequence: the child of God refuses to be conformed to the world and instead allows himself to be transformed by the Spirit. As his [mind is renewed](#) according to the things of God, *then* he can know God’s perfect will.

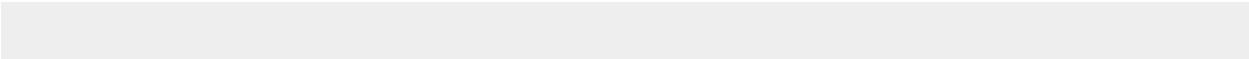
As we seek God's will, we should make sure what we are considering is not something the Bible forbids. For example, the Bible forbids stealing; since God has clearly spoken on the issue, we know it is *not* His will for us to be bank robbers—we don't even need to pray about it. Also, we should make sure what we are considering will glorify God and help us and others grow spiritually.

Knowing God's will is sometimes difficult because it requires patience. It's natural to want to know all of God's will at once, but that's not how He usually works. He reveals to us a step at a time—each move a step of faith—and allows us to continue to trust Him. The important thing is that, as we wait for further direction, we are busy doing the good that we know to do ([James 4:17](#)).

Often, we want God to give us specifics—where to work, where to live, whom to marry, what car to buy, etc. God allows us to make choices, and, if we are yielded to Him, He has ways of preventing wrong choices (see [Acts 16:6–7](#)).

The better we get to know a person, the more acquainted we become with his or her desires. For example, a child may look across a busy street at the ball that bounced away, but he doesn't run after it, because he knows "my dad wouldn't want me to do that." He doesn't have to ask his father for advice on every particular situation; he knows what his father would say because he knows his father. The same is true in our relationship to God. As we walk with the Lord, obeying His Word and relying on His Spirit, we find that we are given the mind of Christ ([1 Corinthians 2:16](#)). We know Him, and that helps us to know His will. We find God's guidance readily available. "The righteousness of the blameless makes their paths straight, / but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness" ([Proverbs 11:5](#)).

If we are walking closely with the Lord and truly desiring His will for our lives, God will place His desires in our hearts. The key is wanting God's will, not our own. "Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart" ([Psalm 37:4](#)).



MacLaren's Expositions

Christian morality brought two new things into the world--a new type of life in sharp contrast with the sensuality rife on every side, and a new set of motives powerfully aiding in its realization.

Both these novelties are presented in this passage, which insists on a life in which the spirit dominates the flesh, and is dominated by the will of God, and which puts forward purely Christian ideas as containing the motives for such a life. The facts of Christ's life and the prospect of Christ's return to judge the world are here urged as the reason for living a life of austere repression of 'the flesh' that we may do God's will.

I. We have, first, in verses 1 and 2, a general precept, based upon the broad view of Christ's earthly history.

'Christ hath suffered in the flesh.'

That is the great fact which should shape the course of all His followers.

But what does suffering in the flesh mean here? It does not refer only to the death of Jesus, but to His whole life. The phrase 'in the flesh' is reiterated in the context, and evidently is equivalent to 'during the earthly life.' Our Lord's life was, in one aspect, one continuous suffering, because He lived the higher life of the spirit. That higher life had to Him, and has to us, rich compensations; but it sets those who are true to it at necessary variance with the lower types of life common among men, and it brings many pains, all of which Jesus knew. The last draught from the cup was the bitterest, but the bitterness was diffused through all the life of the Man of Sorrows.

That life is here contemplated as the pattern for all Christ's servants.

Peter says much in this letter of our Lord's sufferings as the atonement for sin, but here he looks at them rather as the realised ideal of all worthy life.

We are to be 'partakers of Christ's sufferings' {5:13}, and we shall become so in proportion as His own Spirit becomes the spirit which lives in us.

If Jesus were only our pattern, Christianity would be a poor affair, and a gospel of despair; for how should we reach to the pure heights where He stood? But, **since**

He can breathe into us a spirit which will hallow and energise our spirits, we can rise to walk beside Him on the high places of heroic endurance and of holy living. Very beautifully does Peter hint at our sore conflict, our personal

defencelessness, and our all-sufficient armour, in the picturesque metaphor 'arm yourselves.' The 'mind of Christ' is

given to us if we will. We can gird it on, and if we do, **it will be as an impenetrable coat-of-mail, which will turn the sharpest arrows and resist the fiercest sword-cuts.**

The last clause of verse 1 is a parenthesis, and, if it is for the moment omitted, the sentence runs smoothly on, especially if the Revised Version's reading is adopted.

The purpose of arming us with the same mind is that, whilst we live on earth, we should live according to the will of God, and should renounce 'the lusts of men,' which are in us as in all men, and which men who are not clad in the armour which Christ gives to

us yield to.

But what of the parenthetical statement? Clearly, the words which follow it forbid its being taken to mean that dead men do not sin. Rather the Apostle's thought seems to be that such suffering in daily life after Christ's pattern, and by His help, is at once a sign that the sufferer has shaken off the dominion of sin, and is a means of further emancipating him from it.

But the two great thoughts in this paragraph are, that the Christian life is one in which God's will, and not man's desires, is the regulating force, and that the pattern of that life and the power to copy the pattern are found in Christ, the sufferer for righteousness' sake.