

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Looking Deeper Into the Will of God

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 103:19 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Jeremiah 32:17 | Matthew 7:7-8
James 4:13-17 | 1 John 5:14-15

► SUMMARY

One of the most reassuring realities in life is God's sovereignty over the affairs of earth.

Although we may not understand how He brings about His will in the world, we can rest in the fact that He is God, and nothing is impossible for Him. His authority covers not only global affairs but also reaches down into our everyday lives. He has a plan and will for each of us, and our responsibility is to trust and obey Him.

► SERMON POINTS

Believers who trust and obey the Lord attempt to walk in His will and do what pleases Him, rather than seeking to fit into the world by pursuing their own desires. Salvation not only changes a person's eternal destiny, but it transforms how he or she lives now. Instead of living for oneself, believers live for God.

God's Sovereignty

Psalm 103:19 says, "The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all." This means God has the full right and power to do whatever He chooses without any interference from outside forces. In other words, He controls everything. Most people in the world don't believe this. They think God controls some things, but they are in charge of their own lives. From an earthly perspective this may appear to be true, but ultimately God has absolute control of everything—including human beings.

Although we may look at the world and the behavior of people today and conclude that God doesn't seem to be

in charge, He is. Even in our own lives, we may question whether He cares because He doesn't intervene as we desire. However, God's sovereignty cannot be evaluated by circumstances or our understanding of His actions but by the truth of His Word.

The prophet Jeremiah came to this conclusion about God: "Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You" (Jer. 32:17).

If we truly believed that God's arm reaches everywhere and nothing is too difficult for Him, it would change how we live. Our doubts would be silenced, and our confidence in the promises of His Word would increase. Instead of becoming discouraged over the state of the world or our own circumstances, we would rest in the truth of Scripture and put our hope in God.

Three Distinctions in God's Will

When we consider what God is doing in the world and how His will is worked out, we must understand the three aspects of His will.

- **God's Predestined Will.** There are some things the Lord has predetermined to occur, and nothing or no one can change them.
- **God's Moral Will.** This could best be explained as God's righteous standards such as those revealed in the Ten Commandments and various other passages of Scripture. They prescribe what we are to do and not do in order to live as God desires. If we choose to obey the Lord's commands, we will enjoy the benefits of obedience. However, we can also decide to rebel against God's

standards, and as a result, suffer the consequences that inevitably come with sin.

- **God's Desired Will.** These are things the Lord desires for us. For instance, He wants us to walk obediently with Him and seek His guidance. The only way we will know God's desired will is by reading, believing, and heeding the Word of God. That is where we will discover who God is, what He approves, and how He wants us to live.

God's Best

The Lord knows the right path for each of us, and He always does what's best for us. Although life is sometimes confusing, we never have to make decisions without His guidance because He invites us to come to Him in every situation.

- **Matthew 7:7** "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."
- **1 John 5:14-15** "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."

God's Personal Will

The Lord not only rules the world, but He also has plans for our individual lives, and these can be divided into three categories.

- **His Intentional Will.** This is what God intends for us. His plans were in place before we were even born, and they included the time and place of our birth, the families into which we were born, the skills, abilities, and spiritual gifts entrusted to us, our vocations, and many other details. Beginning very early in life, we should ask God to direct our choices. Relying on limited human knowledge, current emotions, or our own desires only leads us the wrong way. Ignoring God's will and determining our own course through life never brings the satisfaction we

crave, but instead, leads us into our heavenly Father's chastisement.

- **His Circumstantial Will.** There will be times in our lives when we fail and make wrong decisions. This is not what God desires for us; however, He doesn't cast us out but continues to work in our lives through these circumstances. Sometimes He may remove the consequences of our sin, but at other times He will leave them. In either case, He works for our good in order to bring us back to Himself and establish us on a path of obedience.
- **His Immediate Will.** Yesterday is gone, and we cannot change the past, but God is still with us directing our path for today. James warns us not to boast about our future plans because we cannot know what tomorrow holds. Our lives are like "a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away" (James 4:14). Instead, we ought to live in complete dependence on Him and say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that" (v. 15).

It's amazing to realize that the God who sovereignly rules heaven and earth is also interested in our individual lives. We are not living in a vacuum but in the presence of the living God. He has revealed His will in His Word and has promised to guide us through each day when we trust and obey Him.

► RESPONSE

- Have you been living and making decisions with God's good and perfect will in mind, or have you been ruling your own life and relying on your own wisdom to guide you?
- Are you willing to yield your life to the sovereign God who holds your future and has your best interest in mind? What changes do you need to make in order to follow God's will more obediently?

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