

# **HOLINESS**

*GOD'S WONDERFUL PLAN FOR OUR LIVES*



## PART 1: KNOWING THE WILL OF GOD AS TAUGHT IN SCRIPTURE ...

### 1. The will of God is that his holy ones are to be holy, 4:3a.

- (1 Thessalonians 4:3a ESV) For this is the will of God, your sanctification.

A. Sanctification is God setting apart his holy ones to himself, his purpose and his will.

Sanctification (ἁγιασμός - hagianismos) is God's work in setting apart and purifying his holy ones. In this process he makes us distinct from the world and morally pure as devoted objects of his will and his love.

In Ephesians 1:1 believers are called saints, God's holy ones (ἅγιος -hagios), and in Ephesians 1:4 Paul states God's foreordained intention to make us holy and to adopt us as sons according to the purpose of his will.

- (Ephesians 1:4a ESV) Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

Our sanctification is the ongoing process of God making his people holy which culminates in our glorification when the trumpet sounds and we are given our new bodies.

- (1 Corinthians 15:51–53 ESV) Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

B. God began his good work in us and will complete it.

- (Philippians 1:6 ESV) And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

C. We do our part as God works his will in us.

- (Philippians 2:12b–13 ESV) ... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

D. We are called and commanded to be holy.

- (Leviticus 11:44–45 ESV) For I am the

LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. ... You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

- (Leviticus 19:2 ESV) Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.
- (Leviticus 20:7b ESV) ... and be holy, for I am the LORD your God.

### 2. We do the will of God when we live according to the instructions we receive from God, 4:1-2.

- (1 Thessalonians 4:1–2 ESV) Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

A. Paul notes that they had received instruction from Paul and the others as to how they should live and please God.

B. The Lord Jesus was the source of this instruction.

C. They had previously received this teaching from Paul and had accepted it as the word of God.

- (1 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV) And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

D. Doing the truth more and more equals doing the will of God equals walking in the light.

More and more speaks of abounding to an even greater extent and more readily. This is relevant to us because when we abound and superabound we walk in the light and so remain faithful until we attain our ultimate goal of holiness at our glorification.

## PART 2: KNOWING THE WILL OF GOD IN RELATION TO THE HOLINESS OF GOD ...

### 1. We must understand and accept the relationship between the holiness of God and the will of God.

We will not understand the will of God unless we study it in the context of the holiness of God. If we study the will of God apart from the holiness and grace of God, we will find ourselves attempting and failing ... as created beings ... to understand and define the mind of the Uncreated One.

Apart from the holiness of God the only standard of measure we have is that of mere humans which is lower than God's thinking as the earth is lower than the heavens. The result will be defining the holiness of God from within the confines of our human categories.

## 2. The holiness of God means that God is the standard of measure—there is no other.

- (Isaiah 46:9 ESV) Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; **I am God, and there is none like me.**
- (Exodus 9:14 ESV) For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, **so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.**
- (Deuteronomy 4:39 ESV) Know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, **that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.**
- (Isaiah 45:22 ESV) Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! **For I am God, and there is no other.**

**Paul Tripp ...** What is holiness? Our translation for holiness comes from the Hebrew word qadowsh which means "to cut." To be holy means to be cut off, or separate, from everything else. **It means to be in a class of your own, distinct from anything that has ever existed or will ever exist.** Qadowsh means a second thing: to be holy means to be entirely morally pure, all the time and in every way possible.

... the Lord of hosts is the sum and definition of what it means to be holy. He occupies a moral space that no one has ever occupied before, and as such, we have no experience or frame of reference to understand what he is like because there's nothing like him.

**John Brown**, a nineteenth-century Scottish theologian: "Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervors, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks and willing as God wills."

## PART 3: ACCEPTING THE IMPOSSIBLE NATURE OF KNOWING THE WILL OF GOD ...

We must understand and accept the impossible nature of knowing the will of God to be able to come to know the will of God.

1. We all begin our lives infinitely separated from God, not understanding our situation, under sin, dead in our sins ... and having no hope and without God.

- (Romans 3:23 ESV) ... for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**
- (Romans 3:10 ESV) ... as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 **no one understands**; no one seeks for God.
- (Ephesians 2:1 ESV) And **you were dead in the trespasses and sins.**
- (Ephesians 2:12 ESV) **Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ ... having no hope and without God in the world.**

## 2. But by the grace of God we were made alive and brought near to God by the blood of Christ.

- (Ephesians 2:5 ESV) ... **even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.**
- (Ephesians 2:13 ESV) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off **have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

## PART 4: THE NEEDED TRANSFORMATION ...

To accomplish the impossible task of knowing the will of God we need to undergo a dramatic transformation so that by the grace of God we will be able to learn the mind of God.

- (Romans 12:1–2 ESV) I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 **Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern **what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**
- (1 Peter 1:14–16 ESV) **As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16** since it is written, "**You shall be holy, for I am holy.**"

## 1. We must acknowledge the impossibility of knowing the will of God by searching the depths of the wisdom and mind of God.

- (Romans 11:33–34 ESV) Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! **How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!** 34 "**For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?**"

## 2. We must present our bodies as living sacrifices to God as an act of worship.

Yes, we are to present our entire selves to God, but it is important to understand that we are to literally present these perishable bodies as living sacrifices.

**3. We must acknowledge our total inability to know the will of God by human ways and thoughts.**

This is necessary to avoid falling prey to categorizing and rationalizing the truth of God according to the lower ways of humans.

Listen in as Isaiah the prophet gives us insight into the holiness of God as he contrasts our ways and thoughts with God's ways and thoughts.

- (Isaiah 55:8–9 ESV) For **my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,** declares the LORD. 9 **For as the heavens are higher than the earth,** so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

**4. We must determine to not conform to the social and behavioral patterns of this evil age.**

In humble submission we determine to not be conformed to the ways and thoughts of this world.

*Conform ...* συσχηματίζω [suschematizo] – to conform one's self, one's mind and character, to another's pattern; to assimilate; to be or become behaviorally or socially similar to; become shaped or molded to a certain pattern.

**5. We must accept and submit to the dramatic transformation of our lives that is the will of God.**

*Transformed ...* μεταμορφόω [metamorphoo] – to change into another form, be transformed in in nature or essence.

*Renewal ...* ἀνακαίνωσις [anakainosis] – a renewal, renovation, complete change for the better; the act of reestablishing something in a like-new and often improved manner.

**6. We test (prove) God's way of living (which is our new way of thinking and living) and are affirmed as we agree with the mind of God and approve what God approves as right living.**

- (Romans 12:2b NLT) **Then you will learn to know God's will for you,** which is good and pleasing and perfect.

*Will ...* θέλημα [thelema] – what one wishes or has

determined shall be done; inclination; an attitude of mind that favors one alternative over others.

*That by testing you may discern ...* to approve; to judge to be right or commendable; think well of.

**7. By the grace of God we have now learned how to discern what is the will of God.**

A. Now we know what is good and of moral excellence in the mind of a holy God.

*What is good ...* ἀγαθός [agathos] – of moral excellence; good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy; excellent, distinguished; upright, honorable.

B. Now we know what is excellent, well pleasing and acceptable in the mind of a holy God.

*What is acceptable ...* εὐάρεστος [euarestos] – well pleasing, acceptable; giving pleasure and satisfaction; perhaps in a greater degree than usual.

C. Now we know what is perfect and lacking nothing in the mind of a holy God.

*What is perfect ...* τέλειος [teleios] – brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; that which is perfect.

**CONCLUSION: DITCH YOUR PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE ... GOD'S PLAN IS WAY BETTER ...**

We humans aim far too low when it comes to our future with God.

*How do we get it so wrong?* How is it that we are we not smitten with awe and wonder at the very thought of the holy plan of God for our lives ... a future which is exceedingly more wonderful and beyond the scope of anything we could ever think or imagine ...

We become nearsighted because our faith fades ...

- (2 Peter 1:9 ESV) For whoever lacks these qualities **is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.**

We drift because we don't pay careful attention ...

- (Hebrews 2:1 ESV) Therefore **we must pay much closer attention** to what we have heard, **lest we drift away from it.**