



PRAY for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. 19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. 20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words. (Hebrews 13:18-22)

A proper summary on the Will of God would require volumes and tomes to fairly treat the matter; but I wish to touch upon a specific category of the Will of the Lord, quite briefly, as opposed to that so-called will of man. There are two conditions of illuminations – Light and Darkness! There are two families on earth – the Children of God, and the children of the wicked one! And there are two wills – the Will of God, and the will of man in bondage to Satan!

How often have I heard that tired old falsehood, “If it is God’s Will” This false principle seems to cover every eventuality in the mind of the reticent to be persevering in furthering God’s Holy will on earth. The rape of little children is not God’s will, nor is the commission of any sin the will of God. God is not the author of sin, yet, sin happens. “For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.” Psalm 5:4 (KJV) God could, by His mere word, cause all sin to stop by wiping the earth clean of every living thing, but His Love and Beneficence rejects that option. He is omnipotent – nothing is beyond His means to accomplish.

The hyper-Calvinists may aver that all things, including sin, happens by the will of God. This gives man an out for the commission of sin beyond his means of restraint. But God has given limited volition to man to learn of Him, follow Him, and embrace His Son, Jesus Christ, as Redeemer and Savior. This is the function of the Holy Spirit in drawing, convicting, saving, and providing eternal security to man., This requires a living consciousness in man which our Lord affords. From before the Foundations of the earth, He has known those whom He will call forth and choose as His Elect. But God does not act to cause any to sin. Sin is solely the result of darkened wills that are in bondage.

The particular area of the diverse distance between the Will of God and of the will of man in this devotion relates to the most sacred of institutions that God blessed at Eden – the Marriage Covenant. What is the significance of the institution God blessed between one man and one woman – Adam and Eve being the progenitors and example of all such marriages to follow but including a far greater covenant between God and man – the Church as His Bride. “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. **For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.**” (Isaiah 54:1-5)

In the Creeds we recite at every regular service of the Church, we repeat our vows to God as the brides of men repeat such vows in the marriage service. A portion of these vows, as presented in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, reads:

(Man’s Name) WILT thou have this Woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?

¶ **The Man shall answer,** I WILL!

As with the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, the vow is initiated by the Bridegroom who gave His life of the Church just as the bridegroom of a woman should be willing to lay down his life for his bride. Then comes the echo’ed response from the woman:

(Woman’s Name) WILT thou have this Man to thy wedded husband, to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love him, comfort him, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?

¶ **The Woman shall answer,** I WILL!

As we become part of the Body of Christ – His Church – we, too, take vows to follow in the Way of Truth and Life as revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us. We surrender our old self-wills (popularly called free-will, but is not free at all) and take upon ourselves the Will of God to do as He has taught us. We follow where He leads, not where we in our old natures choose to go. Almost every step of our formal Anglican worship reinforces this principle.

Following the Prayer for the Whole State of Christ’s Church, and immediately preceding the Prayer of General Confession of the Book of Common Prayer, we read this renewed commitment and vow:

¶ ***Then shall the Priest say to those who come to receive the Holy Communion:***

Y*E who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways; Draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your com- fort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God, devoutly kneeling.*

These vows and commitments have been excluded in many modern churches, but they are yet binding nonetheless. True worship principles are not fungible or replaceable. There are many Christians and churches that profess to possess a high abundance of spirit, but there seems to be little emphasis on truth. On the contrary, there are many modern churches that do, indeed, possess a great reservoir of truth but are devoid of the Spirit of Love and Truth. These two values must be married together else neither is effectual in salvation.

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:22-24)

What is it that makes a marriage lasting between a man and a woman? It is LOVE and commitment. The shambles in which the modern church finds itself is no unlike the state of many marriages in the world today. They are not taken seriously because the vows were not taken sincerely and with a determined commitment. Here is God's counsel on the matter: *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.* (Ephesians 5:21-33)

There is a needless stumbling block presented in this last passage concerning submission and authority for those who read only with tunnel vision. In verse 5:21, we are counseled to submit ourselves in marriage to EACH OTHER! This is not merely a one-way street. Without the love of the husband, the love of the wife cannot be full and durable.
