

Meditation on the 3rd Petition: Battle of Wills

Matthew 6:10: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

For more than 75 years, the boys have been boxed in. Since 1948, Goofus and Gallant, the stars of their eponymous comic strip in Highlights for Children magazine, have taught generations of kids the dos and don'ts of how to be. The premise is as simple as it is effective: two panels, side by side, depicting two approaches to the same situation. On the left, Goofus does the wrong thing. On the right, Gallant does the correct thing. If Goofus is rude, Gallant is polite. If Goofus lies, Gallant tells the truth—a sort of preordained dichotomy of good vs. evil. Gallant wants to do good, Goofus wants to do wrong.

"Will" is a relatively simple concept to understand. It is a wish. It's desire. It is wanting something to take place or to have a particular outcome. But while the idea of 'will' is simple to understand. The implications of it are anything but. Because as you know, it's very uncommon to find two people who want the exact same thing or who agree on the best way to get that same thing. And this inevitably leads to conflict and battles, much like Goofus and Gallant doing wildly different things in the same situation based on what it is that they want.

So what is God's Will? What does God want? God does not have more than one will or wish. God's will is good, pleasing, and perfect, as everything about God is. God's will is that all people would be saved. As Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:3-4: **"This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."** God wants all people of all time to be with him in heaven for all of eternity. It's as simple as that. Infinitely more pure than Gallant, who wants to do good; God wants always, only, for people to be saved.

However, we know that there is someone else who has a single will. If there was no opposition, this petition would be unnecessary. Like Goofus, who only wants to do what is best for himself, there is someone whose single will is to oppose everything that God desires: Satan. Satan desires for you to perish. Satan desires nothing more than for you to go against God's Will so that you will spend the rest of eternity in hell. That is his goal; that is his only goal, and he doesn't do anything to stray from that goal.

And he uses all his power and might and musters every force that he can to keep us from God's Will. Day and night, he uses the world and its allure of wealth and influence to try to keep us from salvation. He uses our own sinful flesh and its will for success, comfort, and even happiness to keep you away from salvation. You can expect that Satan will try to use everything that he has to darken your path, to make you doubt God's Will for you, to try to lead you down a road however fast or slow as he deems effective, to try to lead you from Heaven to hell itself.

He will try to convince you in any way that he can that God's Will is not so good after all. That he really doesn't have your best interests in mind. Like when in the Garden of Eden, he convinced Adam and Eve that God really didn't want what was best for them and led them into sin and, ultimately, death.

You know something, though. If it were just up to us to try to accomplish God's will to get to heaven, left to our imperfect and sinful will, up against the Will of Satan himself, we are already lost, and we are resigned to eternal death. But there is someone who faced the Will of the Devil and came out victorious. There is someone who accomplished the Father's will in your place to earn for you that salvation. God's good, pleasing, and perfect will was also that certain events came to pass: the cross and salvation. Jesus says in John 6:39-40: **"For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."**

There is no greater example of the Will of God being done than in our Savior Jesus. He There was a time when Jesus practiced what he preached in a way that we couldn't possibly imagine. Later on in the book of Matthew, Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, painfully aware of the struggles that lay ahead of him. He knows that he will have to endure physical discomfort to put it in the lightest way possible. He knows he will suffer desertion that night from his closest friends. But those pale in comparison to the torture of the cross. Jesus knows that he is standing on the precipice of suffering that no one has ever or will ever face: the guilt and the punishment for the sins of the whole world. Abandonment by God the Father. He knows this is going to happen, and this is what he does: **"Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Matt 26:39**

Jesus saw the difficulty and the pain, and he would prefer not to do this, but he goes forward to accomplish the Father's Will. The Father's will to be done on your behalf; he takes the punishment you and I deserve so that the Father's desire of the salvation of you and I could be accomplished.

God never says that his Will is always going to be free from hardship. No, no, quite the contrary. God assures you that his will is going to often involve painful battles with the wills of the flesh. There will be a struggle as Satan will try to entice you away to what seems good, all in the hopes of ruining you. There will be times when God's Will might include sending suffering your way.

But never doubt for a second what God's Will is. Even in those times that God sends you pain or allows suffering to come your way, it is all to accomplish his will of the salvation

of your soul. God's Will is always that you are strengthened in your faith, that you are assured of your salvation, and that you are guided in holiness for your whole life until that day that you are brought to his side in heaven.

Goofus and Gallant are still going strong. They are still diametrically opposed to each other in everything they do. Until the end of time, the perfect Will of God will always be opposed by Satan. Whenever you are tempted to doubt what God's will is, go back to where his Will is revealed to you. Go back to the Gospel, where on page after page, you are assured that God's will for you is singular and sure. In God's Word, you will be strengthened to fight the wills of the Devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh. In God's Word, you are convinced of the Will of God accomplished in Christ Jesus for your salvation. In every trial, doubt, temptation, and evil go back to God's Word. There you will be strengthened in your daily fight against the will of the Devil and convinced of your salvation as a part of the will of God. Amen.