

Henry Hamm (2026) – The Triune Work of Salvation: Part 4 [Ephesians 1:5, 9, 11](#).

[Ephesians 1:3–14](#) Part 4

Intro

I've had the privilege of studying and writing about this wonderful portion of Scripture and the privilege of proclaiming it to you. But it is my job to proclaim it accurately and faithfully. It is my job to proclaim the meaning of the original intent of the author, not my own ideas. And if you see that I have misinterpreted this passage or twisted it into my own liking, then it is your job to come and correct me in that matter.

We've had the privilege of looking at God the Father and His role in the work of salvation (predestination, He planned redemption). Jesus Christ, the Son and His role in the work of salvation (He accompanied redemption). And the Holy Spirit and His role in the work of salvation (He applies to us the work of redemption). And we've seen that the triune God has accomplished a wonderful salvation, that if it were not for this plan, then all men would be lost for all eternity. But God. He has graciously sacrificed Himself to save a people who, by nature, are enemies of this great God. This is a wonderful passage of scripture because we see that God has revealed this wonderful plan of salvation to us through His Word, and we do well to study it.

And in this sermon, I will be speaking about the Will of God, the mystery of His will, and what is meant by this mystery (though this will not be dealt with at length, that will be done in chapter 3). It is primarily a subject on the sovereignty of God—a beautiful attribute of His.

PROPOSITION: SALVATION? ONLY IF GOD WILLS. BUT SIMULTANEOUSLY, IF YOU DON'T WILL IT, YOU WON'T BE SAVED.

Review: incorporated through the sermon.

OUTLINE:

1. The Wills of God
2. The Mystery of His Will
3. V. 5, V. 9 and V. 11

What are the Wills of God? (Saved by the Will of God)

A few weeks ago, we said that God works all things according to the counsel of His will. That doesn't just mean that anything that God does is according to His will (it means that), but that anything that ever takes place is according to His will (objectively). Now you may say, does God not want all to be saved? But we know not all are saved. Was He not able to save them? Or was

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it His Will for them to perish? How do we reconcile those two thoughts? 🙌 [Lamentations 3:37](#)
“Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?”

You probably won't remember the introductory sermon to this series, where we briefly looked into what the will of God is and what it is not, and for that we looked at the will that man currently possesses (which, as we saw, is anything but free), and for that we looked at the fall of man in [Genesis 3](#). And there, we saw that man was at one point totally free from sin, but still able to sin. And in that sense, I think his will, even then, was not totally free like God's will. Because man was still susceptible to temptation and influenced by the cultures around him. Even in the garden, man was lured and enticed to sin by his own selfish desires to sin against God, his Creator. After the fall, if you think that man in his natural, sinful condition possessed a “free will,” I think you are mistaken. There is nothing “free” about being born in sin (besides freely choosing sin, and that, only sin). To be born in sin is an enslavement to sin, not free will. That is a will in bondage to sin! Only God has genuine free will. He alone is free from sin, He alone is free from the power of temptation, He alone is free from any influence by which He is persuaded to act contrary to His nature. He alone governs and decrees whatever comes to pass. All things exist by His will, and by His will they were created. He alone is God! And all we creatures are subject to Him by nature and therefore our wills are subject to His order; they're subject to His sovereign rule! If your will were totally free, as it is commonly defined by some Christians, then you are claiming equality with God in that respect. God is above all, and no one is above Him, and therefore He alone has genuine free will. Man has what's called “Relative Freedom of Choice.” (You're a sinner? Then you freely choose sin.

Well, you might say that “God has a free will, and man was made in the image of God, and therefore man must have a free will.” Well, let me ask you this: after the fall, is man not altogether born in sin, as the Scriptures clearly say? Yes, man is born in sin. Okay, so then are you not by nature a slave to sin? Are you not by nature in bondage to sin? So then, by definition, you can only do what you are by nature. You are a sinner, and you will always act accordingly, unless God intervenes and makes you a new creation in Christ Jesus; you can't choose Him.

Verses 12 and 13 emphasize human responsibility; salvation is still, nonetheless, under the sovereign rule of God. Let me just read those verses 🙌 [Ephesians 1:12, 13](#) “so that we who were the first to hope in Christ (that's an act by their own volition) might be to the praise of his glory. 13 (from v13 we see the order of salvation) In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation (they heard the Gospel by divine Providence—that's God's doing), and believed in him (that's an act by their own volition—human responsibility), were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (that's an act by the sovereign God).” Notice, it starts and ends with God! But hold up! From v.13 “and believed in Him,” this is the part that humans are to make a choice—and they do have to—but at the same time, even the fact they/we/anyone believes or makes that choice, is a work of God! You and I can never, never, in any way take credit for how God worked in us. 🙌 [John 6:28–29](#) “Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” (Give me a list of things to do and I'll earn salvation) Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” (It's God's doing, not yours. You have the Law, and cannot even keep that.

There are a number of different Greek words that are used in the NT with respect to the will of God. But these different words are always in two categories; God always operates on two levels simultaneously. In Scripture, we have what's called a will of decree and a will of command. Or sometimes called the objective and subjective will of God, and yet at other times, the hidden and revealed will of God. We need to make a distinction between the wills of God in Scripture, because if we don't, we will get very confused in passages like 🙌 [Matthew 26:39](#) This is Jesus in Gethsemane "And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." God always operates on two wills simultaneously.

Definition:

What's the difference between these two categories of the will of God that He simultaneously exercises? God's objective will is what He has objectively decreed and will certainly be accomplished. His subjective will is that which relates to what God desires or commands us to do (his moral law and revealed directives).

God's ultimate purposes (His objective/decretive/hidden will) will be fulfilled regardless of human choice. On the other hand, God's revealed commands (His subjective/preceptive will) call us to obedience and moral responsibility. That means when He commands people everywhere to repent and believe the Gospel, you should obey His command! The tension between these isn't a contradiction but a reflection of God's sovereignty working through human responsibility and moral agency. In Scripture, God operates on these two levels simultaneously, at all times.

So, God's objective/decretive/hidden will represents what He has determined will definitely occur and is known only to Him, while His subjective/preceptive/revealed will is what he commands us to do, or what He desires of us.

Let's examine some passages to demonstrate this point.

Examples:

The distinction becomes clear through specific biblical passages. 🙌 [Psalm 143:10](#) says, "Teach me to do your will." This exemplifies the revealed and preceptive will. That is, God's instruction that may or may not be obeyed. 🙌 [1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4](#) is the same way, "For this is the (revealed) will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honour,"). By contrast, look at 🙌 [John 6:38-39](#) it says, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me (God's decretive will). And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day." This represents an ultimate will that is described as His decretive/hidden/objective will.

Paul frequently presents both dimensions: 🙌 [Romans 9:19](#) "You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?'" Indicates an irresistible ultimate will (objective/decretive), while 🙌 [Romans 12:2](#) emphasizes His subjective/preceptive will. It says,

“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.” God does not want you to go on sinning!

Listen to 👍 [Romans 9:15–16](#) (the NASB renders this a bit clearer) “For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.” So then it does not depend on the man who wills [that is, the man who really “wants” to be saved, no one wants to be saved apart from God’s Spirit working in us] or the man who runs [that is, the man who is running away from God, the man who is being convicted but does not want to leave his sin,] but on God who has mercy.” That means, no matter what you may think of God, if He wills (objectively) for you to be saved, you will genuinely be converted in due time—like the Apostle Paul. Let’s read it again and see how we think of it now, “So then it (salvation) does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.” Here is how the two wills of God connect in this passage: God has willed (or desired) to save a people from eternity past, and He has now willed (or decreed) the redemption of man by actively carrying out His predetermined plan through the decisions of sinful men. So, Paul is not emphasizing that God is now deciding; rather, He’s describing the result of God’s eternal decision. His will is a fixed, gracious plan in Christ.

A striking example of the tension between these wills appears in the crucifixion. Pastor often mentions this concept, where, simultaneously, the greatest good ever came from the greatest evil that ever took place. But there are many, many other occurrences in scripture where God uses evil for His own purpose, and even for the good of others, including the one that is harmed by the evil. In all of these situations, you can say that, subjectively, God did not want this evil; He did not want these people to reject the truth and spurn God’s Holy name, but objectively, He willed it, and He purposed to use their evil for His own glory and the good of others.

God’s will and desire, in one sense, is no doubt that we obey His revealed will! But at the same time, He has predestined to use our disobedience (our evil) for His own purpose and glory! God did this with Adam and The Fall in [Gen 3](#), he did this Joseph in [Gen 50](#), He did this with Pharaoh in [Ex 9](#) & [Ro 9](#), He did this with the children of Israel in the wilderness, He did this with the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity of Israel [Isa 10](#) & [Hab 1](#), He did this with King Ahab [1 Ki 22](#), He did this with Amaziah in [2 Chron 25](#), He did this with Jesus and His crucifixion [Acts 2](#), [4](#), He did this with Ananias Sapphira in [Acts 5](#), and He will do the same with the Antichrist and his follower in [Rev 17](#). 👍 [Proverbs 16:4](#) “The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.” In all these circumstances, He has and will continue to use evil for His own purpose and glory! I think it is abundantly clear that if God did not operate on these two levels simultaneously, there would’ve been no plan of redemption after the fall, there would be no Messiah, there would be no salvation and forgiveness for our sins, there would be no mercy—only judgment! There would be no hope of saving an utterly depraved world! Do you not praise God, His sovereign rule over all things!?! Praise God, Praise God! Like some of Paul’s objectors, I’m sure some of you are thinking, “Does that mean I can go on sinning because God will just use it for good?” Absolutely not! That’s a blasphemous thought! You’re forgetting that just because God uses evil for His glory, it does not mean the sinner will go unpunished. The sinner will always be punished for his wrongdoing.

Why are we so shortsighted? We always look to the beginning of creation and see the fall and ask, “Why did God create us if He knew we were going to fall?” But that’s not the question we should be asking. Rather than looking to the beginning of creation, we need to look to the end and see what glorious redemption that God has planned and accomplished for His own elect in Christ. God created us knowing that we would fall and be separated from Him, to bring Himself glory and salvation to a peculiar people. God planned the fall of man because He had something greater in store at the end—Redemption! Our hope is not in looking to the beginning, but it is in looking to the end because there we see His great salvation come to completion.

Just because there is evil in the world does not mean that God is not in control! In fact, I think that evil exists is proof that there is a good God. You say, “Well, if He’s omnipotent (all-powerful), could He not just get rid of all the evil that exists?” Yes, He could. But you don’t want that because then that would mean He’d have to get rid of you. Nothing would stand! The fact that God has not destroyed us means He has a plan, and it’s a good one! He is currently using evil (even done by our own hands) for our good, but more importantly, for His glory!

One more thing. There is a sense in which you can resist the will of God. At first glance 🍌 [Romans 9:19](#), which asks the rhetorical question, “...For who can resist his will?” seems to be at odds with passages like 🍌 [1 Thessalonians 4:3](#), which says, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality.” This implies that you can resist the will of God. [But [Ro 9](#) says you can’t] Think of it this way, say you’re walking down the aisles of a convenience store, and as you gaze upon a Hershey bar, a thought comes into your mind that says, “slide the Hershey bar in your pocket,” and you right away think to yourself, “No! That’s wrong.” But the thought comes in again, only with a stronger force. Then, knowing it’s wrong, knowing God commanded you specifically not to steal, but you do it anyway. You have a clear command that says, “You shall not steal,” but you steal anyway. You can be sure that you did contrary to His will! But [Ro 9:19](#) says, “...For who can resist his will?” How does that work? The answer to that is, as we have seen, God has two wills. The objective and subjective will, or the hidden and revealed will, or the decretive and preceptive will. So [Romans 9](#), which talks about “God’s Sovereign Choice” in salvation, is about His hidden or decretive will. While is about our sanctification, which is His revealed or preceptive side of His will! But to resist a will God has decreed or predetermined to take place, simply cannot be done. So, the same way Paul was saved, if God has decreed to save all who were found “written in the Book of Life from before the foundation of the world ([Rev 13:8](#)),” then that will surely come to pass! Or, to reverse that, a spiritually dead sinner cannot chose God in his own moral capability. You may ask, “How then can any sinner come to Christ?” Good question! 🍌 [Philippians 2:13](#) says, “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” He cannot come apart from the empowering grace of God. But at the same time, this does not at all relieve the sinner’s responsibility. 🍌 [Ephesians 5:17](#) “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” And understanding it, he is to do it with his whole heart [Ephesians 6:6](#).

So, praise God that He uses ALL THINGS according to the purpose of His glory!

What is the Mystery of His Will?

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So, with the will of God in the backdrop, what is the mystery that Paul speaks of so often?

Verse 9 of our text says ([Eph 1:9](#))👍“making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ”

There are several passages in the book of Ephesians where “mystery” is mentioned. So, what is this mystery? Warren W. Wiersbe said: “In the New Testament, a mystery is not something eerie or inscrutable, but rather ‘a truth that was hidden by God in times past and is now revealed to those who are in His family.’ A mystery is a ‘sacred secret’ that is unknown to unbelievers, but understood and treasured by the people of God.” One Bible Dictionary says it is a truth revealed by God which is above the power of our natural reasoning. Or, that which we could not have discovered without divine revelation. The mystery that was hidden for centuries past, God has now been revealed through His Word. I’ll just mention that “mystery” actually refers to several different things. There is the mystery of God, the mystery of Christ, the mystery of the Church, the mystery of godliness, the mystery of lawlessness, but in our text, the mystery is with respect to the salvation of the Gentiles and the hardening of the Jews.

We see that God is the one who has made known to us this mystery. Which implies that it was always His gracious plan, but what has He made known to us? Let’s read 👍[Romans 11:25](#) “Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” 👍
[Ephesians 3:6](#) “This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”

It simply is: the salvation of the Gentiles, but what may not be so simple about this is that Israel was hardened in order for this to happen. God brought salvation to us (we Gentiles), but in order to do so, He used the evil of His own people (the Jews) to do so! That is indeed a wonderful mystery. As we mentioned earlier, if God did not use the evil in this world for His glory, then not one person would be saved.

From [Romans 11:25](#), we see that this mystery is first, that a partial hardening has come upon Israel, which means that only some of them will be saved during this hardening. 👍 Look at [Romans 11:7](#) “What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened.” So, the purpose of the hardening of Israel leads to the second aspect of this mystery—the full salvation of the Gentiles. The promise originally given to Israel was withheld from them because of their disobedience (they rejected God’s revealed will). So the promise is given to the Gentiles (for our good). Do you see the will of God at work in this mystery? Are you not thankful God has chosen to work this way? 👍[Romans 11:11](#) “So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass, salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.” You could say that, in one sense, the purpose of saving the Gentiles is to save Israel. 👍[Romans 11:30–32](#) “For just as you [Gentiles] were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of your disobedience [Israel], so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you [Gentiles] they also [Israel] may now receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.” That’s all the nations.

So, because of Israel's unbelief, they disobeyed God's revealed will, which was—now get this—decreed to happen. So whoever believes in Jesus Christ will be saved! And all who are saved have been decreed for that outcome!

It's no wonder Paul breaks into doxology after explaining such doctrine! 🙌 [Romans 11:33–36](#) “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

V. 5, V.9, and V.11

So, now that we have a bit better understanding, I hope, of the will of God and what the mystery is that has been made known to us, let's briefly go over our text. We'll revisit verses 1, 5, 9, and 11.

🙌 [Ephesians 1:1](#) “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...” In at least 4 other letters, Paul mentions these same words, “by the will of God.” And they are all used in the decretive sense specifically regarding his apostleship and salvation. His call to salvation and apostleship was by divine appointment, even from before his birth. 🙌 [Galatians 1:15–16](#) says, “But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles...” Before he had physically done anything good or bad, Paul was objectively chosen for salvation. A sinner is not converted by simply making a decision to follow Jesus subjectively. And yes, it is God's subjective will for all to be saved! But God objectively reveals Himself to us in order to save us. Because in his natural state, man wants nothing to do with God ([Rom 8:7](#)). It is God who, first, gives life to the dead. Then, with that life, the—no longer dead—sinner chooses God. The dead do not have the moral capability to make that decision. The same way Paul didn't have the capability to decide before he was born. It was God who made the decision. The same way Lazarus didn't have the power within himself to rise up when he was dead. It was God who made the decision.

Some Christians say that this is only the case for some individuals (e.g., Jesus and Paul). But then that means it is only some individuals who are sinners by nature. All who are saved are chosen for salvation. Period! As we've been looking at our text, we've seen that over and over again. Read 🙌 [John 15:16](#) with me, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.” 🙌 [John 13:18](#) In contrast with the rest of His disciples, Jesus is speaking of Judas Iscariot here. He says, “I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’” 🙌 [Titus 3:5](#) “he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” God chooses who will be saved! That's in accordance with the will of decree.

Next, verses 5, 9, and 11. Verse 5, as it has been discussed in the past, was dealt with respect to predestination; now it is why predestination. Because it is according to His will. Verse 9 is God making known to us part of His hidden will. And verse 11 is similar to verse 5, God is saying why He has prepared for us an inheritance, because it too is according to His will!

I want you to notice the parallels and similarities between these verses. All these verses have synonymous words like “purpose, according to and his will.” They all have a reference to Jesus Christ, they all have a reference to God, they all have a reference to God’s decreed will.

👍 Verse 5. “In love, he (God) predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his (God) will,”

👍 Verse 9. “making known to us the mystery of his (God’s) will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ.”

👍 Verse 11. “In him (Christ) we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him (God) who works all things according to the counsel of his will,”

So, in all of these instances, God has decreed what will come to pass. In verse 5, He has decreed salvation to certain individuals, and to that, adoption as sons through Jesus Christ. He has decreed to make a family. In verse 9, God has objectively made known His mystery to His people. He has made known to us His hidden plan of salvation. Verse 11. Through the decreed work of Jesus Christ, His children will obtain the inheritance that God has prepared for them. Because He works all things according to the counsel of His.

The same way that we are predestined to receive our inheritance, the same way we are predestined for salvation. If you don’t believe in predestination, then you can’t rightly say that you believe you will go to heaven when you die, because according to the text, God has predestined our inheritance. God works all things according to the counsel of His will, not just some things. ALL THINGS!

Conclusion

So, in conclusion, what do we take away from this? God is the author and primary cause of our salvation. God uses the evil deeds of saved and unsaved men for His own purpose and glory. God is never responsible for any sinner who rejects Christ. God is not responsible for Judas ending up in hell for his betrayal of Jesus Christ, even though that was predestined to take place. God is not responsible for the evil done by the wicked men who crucified Jesus and put Him to death, even though He predestined it to take place. God is not responsible for all the souls crying out in hell. If it were not for God’s eternal plan of salvation, no one would be saved.

This is why we have the great commission—to preach the gospel—that all might repent and be saved. No one can be saved without physically hearing the gospel. And when the gospel is preached to an unbeliever, then that unbeliever, who has just heard the Gospel proclaimed to him, has a decision to make that will last into all eternity, and if this sinner accepts Christ, he will be saved, but if he rejects Christ, he’s lost for all eternity. And yet, the outcome of where this

soul will end up in eternity was predestined by God. Even the fact that he heard the gospel was foreordained by God.

Praise God for the triune work of salvation! Praise God that He has accomplished salvation from beginning to end! Praise God that He has revealed to us this marvellous mystery! If you are listening to this, and you are unconverted, and if you die in that condition, you will surely end up in hell! Know this, you are not promised a tomorrow; you only have right now. So, come, “taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” Repent of your sins and run to Christ for your salvation.

Let's pray.