



Bible Student's NotebookTM

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting **every man** perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XV
Issue 370

God's Will, Counsel and Intention

by – William B. Screws
(former Primitive Baptist pastor, 1932)

The Farmer's **will** is to have a barn full of corn next fall. His **counsel** tells him that in order to have his will fulfilled, he must prepare the ground, plant the seed and cultivate the plants through months of heat. This is not his will, but makes it his **intention** in order to realize the fulfillment of his will.

By this illustration we may understand the difference between God's will, His counsel and His intention. He is operating the universe in accord with the counsel of His will (see Ephesians 1:11). He does not operate it in accord with His will; He operates it in accord with the counsel of His will. In the Greek, *boule* means "counsel," while *boulema* means "intention." *Ma* means "effect." So **intention** is *counsel-effect*, or the effect of counsel. **Counsel**, of course, means "advice."

In Romans 9 God's **will** was to set Israel free from Egyptian bondage, to show His power, and to glorify His name. He was advised by His Own mind that there must be opposition on the part of Pharaoh, or His power would not be manifested, neither would His name be glorified. The liberation of Israel without opposition would be a flat, uninteresting affair that would not be worth recording. The **advice** of God's mind was His **counsel**. On this advice He formed an **intention** to harden Pharaoh's heart. This He did, and then led Israel out in spite of the opposition. Thus His power was shown and His name glorified (:17).

As we read the account in Exodus, we are apt to wish the King's heart had been soft. That was the trouble – it *was* soft. It was *too soft* to suit God's purpose. So God hardened it (Exodus 7:13; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10, 14:8).

God has had a goal in view from the beginning. If He should reach it without opposition there would be no glory for Him. On the other hand, He must have complete control, not only to provide the opposition, but to succeed in spite of it, otherwise there would still be no glory for Him.

A weak parallel is seen in a game of football. There must be stiff resistance, or there is no glory for the winning team. No team worthy of the name wants to reach the goal without opposition.

God is Love (I John 4:8), and He was love in creation. He placed the creation in the Son of His love. This was His WILL, but He was advised that His creatures would never love Him unless they were first lost in sin and then saved. This was His *counsel*. Based on this counsel was His *intention* that His creatures should be lost first in order that they might taste the awfulness of sin, and thus be prepared to fully respond to His love when they should be saved from sin.

I cannot read the account of the fall of man without being fully assured that it all happened according to God's intention. Please do not get His will mixed with His intention. Sin is against His *will*; He hates it, but it is according to His *intention*. He set the stage and let sin come in. If sin is not part of His plan, He could have prevented it.

The immediate effect of sin was not wholly bad, for

(see *INTENTION*, page 3323)

God's Will, Counsel and Intention	3321
God's Will and Intention	3324

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume XV, No. 370 – November 13, 2012

This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

SUBSCRIPTION

e-Mail us to receive a free electronic subscription:

bsn@studyshef.com

By *special order* you may also subscribe to a printed, mailed edition for only \$1.00 per issue. Example: ½ Year (26 issues) = \$26; 1 Year (52 issues) = \$52

PATRIARCHS

Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

Bible Student's Notebook™

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010

Local: (814) 701-0063

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor
(clyde@studyshef.com)

André Sneider – Managing Editor

Rick Lemons – Associate Editor

Department Managers and Assistant Editors

Windber, PA: Clyde L. Pilkington, III, Nathan H. Pilkington, Janet L. Maher, Aaron Locker
Amherst, VA: Nadine Sneider
Australia: Ken Joyce (1938-2012)
Canada: Don Bast
Netherlands: Wim Janse

Copyright © 1989-2012 Pilkington & Sons

SHARING THE BSN WITH OTHERS

Do you know of someone who is hungry for truth? Who loves to study the Bible? Who is disillusioned by traditional Christianity? Who thinks outside the box? If so, why not tell them about the BSN? It could change their life!

BOUND BSN ISSUES

We have bound past issues of the BSN, only \$19.95 each. The more recent issues of the BSN contain our most recent understanding of biblical issues. Therefore, when ordering volumes of the BSN, we would encourage you to order the latest volumes and work your way backwards. Printed and electronic versions both can be found at:

www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/volumes.html

www.studyshef.com

Find many rare books and Bibles at our 24/7 online bookstore. Gift certificates are also available.

YOUR EDITOR'S BOOKS

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. has 20 books rich in Bible study material:

- **The Believer's Warfare:** *Wearing the Armor of Light in the Darkness of this World* (#7000) \$9.95
- **The Church in Ruins:** *Brief Thoughts on II Timothy* (#3325) \$9.95
- **Due Benevolence:** *A Survey of Biblical Sexuality – It Might Not Be What You Think!* (#3775) \$24.95
- **The Outsiders:** *God's Called-Out Ones – A Biblical Look at God's Ecclesia* (#4125) \$9.95
- **Heaven's Embassy:** *The Divine Plan & Purpose of the Home* (#5675) \$19.95
- **I Choose!** *Living Life to Its Fullest* (#4120) \$16.95
- **Nothing Will Be Lost!** *The Truth About God's Good News* (#3750) \$9.95
- **The Plowboy's Bible:** *God's Word for Common Man – The Story of God's Amazing Book* (#4425) \$19.95
- **The Salvation Of ALL:** *Creation's Final Destination – A Biblical Look at Universal Reconciliation* (#7001) \$19.95
- **Suffering:** *God's Forgotten Gift* (#5150) \$9.95
- **Daily Goodies:** *365 Thoughts on Scriptural Truths* (#1747) 490pp PB \$19.95
- **The Great Omission:** *Christendom's Abandonment of the Biblical Family* (#2010) \$14.95
- **I Am ... Who and What God Says I Am!:** *The Divine Reckoning of the Renewed Mind* (#1737) \$9.95
- **The King James Version:** *400 Years of Bondage* (#4682) \$9.95
- **De Kerk in Puin:** *Church In Ruins – Dutch Version* (#1775) \$9.95
- **Studen in het Schriftwoord** – Dutch Book (#1125) \$9.95
- **World Affairs and National Politics:** *And the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus* (#4250) \$14.95
- **Being OK with Not Being OK** – *Embracing God's Design for You ... and Everyone You Know (and Don't Know)* (#1985) \$9.95
- **God's Holy Nation:** *Israel and Her Earthly Purpose (Contrasted with the Body of Christ and Its Heavenly Purpose)* (#2275) \$19.95
- **Daily Gleanings:** *365 Selections on Scriptural Truths* (#1836) \$19.95

DAILY e-MAIL GOODIES™

Sign up for our free daily emails that contain short thoughts on Biblical themes: www.DailyEmailGoodies.com

FACEBOOK & SKYPE

We post our *Daily Email Goodies*, as well as new book notices on *Facebook*. Search for "Study Shelf" for our literature ministry and "Clyde Pilkington Jr" for the editor's personal profile. Your editor is also available on *Skype* – user name is "Salvation of All."

OUR BLOGS

We have 14 blogs on various subjects. To view these blogs visit: <http://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/ourblogs.htm>

BIBLE STUDENT'S RADIO

Audio teaching is available at: www.BibleStudentsRadio.com

JOINTS AND BANDS

Are you looking for other believers with whom you can enjoy fellowship and study? We have set up a blog for just this purpose.

- (1) Go to www.JointsandBands.com
- (2) Choose your state on the right-hand side.
- (3) Add a post with your name and contact information.



INTENTION (continued from front page)

man received a knowledge of good as well as evil. Prior to the fall he was as ignorant concerning good as he was concerning evil.

Before the times of the ages God had placed grace in Christ to save His creation from sin (II Timothy 1:9). All of this shows that it was God's intention that sin should come. Without sin, there would never have been anything for Christ to do.

On the other hand, Adam brought himself and all of his posterity under condemnation. This was true for two reasons. In the first place, he sinned without being consciously coerced to so. In the second place, sin *must* bring condemnation, or it would never serve His purpose as a background for the grace of God which saves sinners. If sin brought no condemnation, we would never appreciate the blessings of salvation.

The Scriptures abound in specimens of the difference between God's will, His counsel and His intention.

We may read the account of the giving of the law to Israel, and be profoundly impressed that it was God's intention that they should keep it. Not so, as we find in Romans 5:20. "*Yet law crept in that the offense should be increasing.*" The *King James Version* has it, "*Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound.*" It was God's will that grace might have an opportunity to super-exceed. His counsel advised Him that grace would not have this opportunity unless sin increased. On this counsel He formed an intention that sin should increase. So, really, He did not give the law to be kept; He gave it to be broken. Breaking the law was not in accord with His will, but it was in accord with His intention, in order that His will might be realized in the super exceeding of grace. Yet this did not leave Israel guiltless. They were guilty, and here grace finds its opportunity.

The crucifixion of Christ was in accord with God's will. His counsel told Him that this could not be accomplished without opposition on the part of the priesthood and betrayal by a friend. So His intention included all of the opposition by the priests and the betrayal by Judas.

It was God's will to bring in the present secret ad-

ministration of grace (Ephesians 3:2). His counsel advised Him that before it could be done, Israel must reject the gospel and be set aside. So it was His intention that Israel should not believe. This throws light on John 12:39. Therefore they "*could not believe.*" It was His intention – not His will – that they should not believe. Now see what a glorious administration it is in which we live, based not on Israel's belief but on their unbelief!

This applies in untold thousands of other instances. God is operating the universe in accord *with* the counsel of His will. We, like the Israelites, would have peoples' hearts soft. If we could understand that God's intention is to be reckoned with, perhaps we would be more patient. He has plans that require hard hearts. If the hearts of all people were soft, His purpose would be defeated. No doubt Israel cried to Him to soften Pharaoh's heart. His answer was to harden his heart. All of the prayer-meetings that might be held now would not induce God to soften the hearts of all people.

"*Has anyone withstood His intention?*" the Apostle asks in Romans 9:19. Many object to His will, but none withstand His intention. This affords me much comfort. I can laugh at persecutors, for they are carrying out God's intention concerning me without knowing it. It is His will that His truth shall travel the pathway of opposition and persecution, because this will magnify His grace as a smooth pathway could not do. Therefore He will see to it that there are plenty of persecutors. This is His intention.

God will justify Himself in letting sin come into the universe, when He puts it away and shows Himself and His creation to be infinitely richer because of its temporary presence. We will be richer in that we will be all that God wants us to be. God will be richer in that He will rest in the full love and adoration of His creatures.

When we look back on it from eternity, we shall be entirely without regrets. We need regrets now, for they make us long for His presence; but we shall have none then, for we will see that sin furnished the occasion for the display of His grace, and the background for our full response to His love.

(see *INTENTION*, last page)



God's Will and Intention

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

In translating Romans 9:19, I felt almost as if the text before me was faulty. It should surely read “*who hath resisted His will?*” Yet the word is not *will*, but *intention*. There seemed so little difference at the time that I did not appreciate the concordant rendering myself.

Since then I have been most thankful for it. It helps to solve one of the deepest difficulties and contradictions connected with the place and problem of evil.

To the question, “*Who hath resisted His will?*” we may answer, “*Many, if not all.*” Yet to the query, “*Has anyone withstood His intention?*” the reply is the opposite, for *no one* can thwart Him. *Even when withstanding His will we are fulfilling His intention.*

There are not many passages in God's word like Romans 9:19. Seldom are we taken behind the scenes into the realm of the absolute. Much in this chapter *seems* to contradict other portions of the Scriptures, because they deal with processes, as seen by man, while this is concerned with causes, known only to God.

God has a goal. In order to reach it He must have had absolute control from the beginning. All of the intervening process, no matter what it may appear to be to men, must be the working out of His original intention. He is the great Potter (:21). His creatures are clay. This is true only in regard to God's intention. Viewed in relation to His will they are not at all the passive material suggested by the clay. “*Ye will not*” describes man's antagonistic attitude toward God's revealed will.

The case of Pharaoh is the classic example of the chasm between God's will and His intention. His revealed will was very plain. “*Let My people go!*” (Exodus 5:1). It seemed to be fulfilled in the liberation of Israel. However, no one who reads the account and believes it can escape the conviction that God's intention included more than His revealed will, and that it involved opposition to that will. This much might be easily inferred if Pharaoh had been hard-hearted enough to play his part. It is put beyond doubt by the action of God in hardening his heart.

God's revealed will was limited to the release of Israel. His



intention was to display His Own power and glorify His name in all the earth (Romans 9:17). This is given to us as a specimen of His complete purpose and of the process by which He will attain it.

Mankind does not comply with God's will, His saints do not comprehend His intention. Yet He uses both the opposition and the ignorance to effect His object. No doubt many in Israel were fervently praying that Pharaoh's heart would soon soften and he would let them go. God's answer to their prayer was to harden his heart. They sighed for salvation. He wrought with a view to His own glory.

It takes little imagination to picture this scene. Its continuous repetition during the first three eons makes it most important to our spiritual welfare. The same conflicting forces are at work today. It is quite conceivable how the saints would have managed the affair. They would have implored Jehovah to compel Pharaoh to let them go. Perhaps they would call a grand Prayer meeting for this purpose. Perhaps they would set aside a week of intercession. “*We know not what to pray for*” was as true of them as of us. Perhaps they would be “*definite*” in their petitions, and insist that He melt the heart of the king, and so remove his opposition.

How much there is of this today! The saints unite in great “*world movements*,” seeking to soften the heart of mankind, trying to do away with sin, seeking to abolish the many evils that harass us, uniting against war and vice and corruption, for all of these are against the revealed will of God. These efforts, we are told, are *practical*. They are not mere theory, words without works. Of what use is such an article as this, for example, to stem the tide of iniquity? Using the same figure, I would advise all that the tide will be the highest in all history, and that no human effort will be able to stop it, for it is necessary to fulfill God's intention.

The Israelites hoped Jehovah would soften Pharaoh's heart. What they wished was to slip quietly out of Goshen into the promised land. They wanted none of the terrible signs. They did not ask for the passover. Surely they would not have entered the trap which threatened to destroy them. They did not ask for the miraculous passage through the Red Sea. The forty years in the wilderness



was not of their choosing. The most illustrious epoch in their history was forced on them. It was a continuous exhibition of disobedience to God's will, yet who doubts for a moment that it was in line with His purpose?

Now that all is past and we can get a true perspective of these events, who would prefer to have Israel's prayer answered? *It was not necessary to soften Pharaoh's heart. It was too soft already.* If it had not been hardened the exodus would have been a flat, uninteresting story, with no outward manifestations of Jehovah's power or love. Its glory would be gone. Its God would be unknown. The wisdom and power of Egypt must be exposed by conflict with the wisdom and power of God. His attributes must be revealed by contrast with the mightiest and wisest of humankind.

The antitype of this marvelous period of Israel's history lies just before us, only the miraculous manifestations will be far more wonderful than of old. God is today hardening the world's heart in preparation for that epoch. Men are approaching the wisdom of ancient Egypt in their knowledge of nature, and are far surpassing it in power. Shall Jehovah weaken them before using them as a foil to display His might? Rather it is His wisdom to harden their hearts, so that, in opposing His will, they may fulfill His ultimate intention.

It is obvious that God could not reveal His intention. He could not tell Pharaoh that, while He asked him to let the people go, He really did not want him to comply, but desired to use him as a foil for the revelation of His power. This would actually make a mere machine of him. It was the ignorance of God's ultimate object which made the whole procedure real to the actors in it. They did not by any means feel or act as mere puppets, notwithstanding that each and every one was doing precisely what was needed to accomplish God's aim.

Too often we are told that, if man has no free will, he is a mere automaton. This is a mistake. The so-called "freedom" consists merely in the lack of *conscious* coercion. Being ignorant of the constraining or restraining influences which determine his conduct, and altogether unaware of ulterior forces, he subconsciously *yields* at the very time that he imagines he is most independent. His freedom of will simply is ignorant unconsciousness or submission to environment or heredity.

In relation to the will of God, men are consciously independent. They can accept it or reject it, and imagine that no other force but the "divinity" enthroned within them has anything to do with their decision. Yet when

we find the niche assigned them in God's intention they are (thank God!) the most utterly dependent slaves of circumstance it is possible to imagine. It will be found that, throughout their lives, they were no more masters of their fate than they were of the date and details of their birth.

The doctrine of man's free will peoples the earth with a race of puny gods. We object to the dual gods of Persia or the many deities of the Greek and Roman pantheon, yet these ancient pagans never rose to the absurdity of making every man a god. The possession of a free, untrammelled, unconquerable will is the exclusive attribute of Deity. Only One God can possess it. Our blessed Lord Himself did not claim it. He came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him Who had sent Him.

The failure to recognize both of these aspects of divine revelation has led to incalculable confusion and misunderstanding. Those who reject God's intention rob Him of His godhood and deify man. Those who confuse His intention with His revealed will make of Him a love-lacking tyrant, a hard-hearted monster. Others, who wish to believe all that the Scriptures have to say, are not clear how to harmonize His character with the presence of sin, especially when it becomes evident that sin has a place in the attainment of His ultimate purpose.

It seems most reasonable, at first thought, that God's will must be fulfilled in order to reach God's goal. We imagine that any infringement of it forever forfeits any share in His ultimate purpose. However, further reflection will show that God's intention must be attained, not only through submission to His will, but also through opposition to its express commands. *The highest expression of God's wisdom lies in His ability to transform every effort against Him into that which is not only favorable to His plans, but essential to His purpose.*

All evil and every sin reverses its character completely when we take it from the limited light of God's revealed will to the universal illumination of His intention. This is the reason that we do not hesitate to believe the Scriptures that all is of God (II Corinthians 5:18).

No sin remains such when completely illumined by His intention. It is a failure, a sin, and subject to dire penalties when man commits it, but it is no longer a mistake when it finds its place in God's purpose. The same act which brings shame and dishonor on the creature, when subjected to the divine alchemy, is transmuted into a source of glory and peace to God.

Such general observations are apt to be dismissed as ►

bordering on blasphemy, but let anyone take the great sins in the Scriptures and ponder all of their aspects. Each one is essential to God's plan.

It is better to be specific. Pharaoh is the great sinner in this scene. He is the one who opposes God's expressed desire. Make him willing or compliant with God's command, and what is left? In that case God would have failed in His object. To avoid this He finds it necessary to stiffen the opposition. *Jehovah hardens Pharaoh's heart in order that he may sin against Him!*

Some insist that God cannot have such a close connection with sin. They would prefer to fix the blame on Pharaoh, or on Satan. Yet, while Jehovah directly causes Pharaoh to sin, *by doing so He Himself avoids failure or sin.*

Any lack of discrimination when speaking on these themes is likely to cause confusion. The same statement may be both true and false. Two directly contradictory assertions may both be true or both be false, according as they are related to God's will or to His intention.

A beloved brother, who had been meditating on these things, made the statement that Adam's "fall" was really a fall upward. I would strenuously object to such a suggestion, apart from an explanation. Adam's sin and transgression and offense were very bad and degrading when viewed as disobedience to God's will. When associated with the work of Christ and God's ultimate purpose it was the very best he could have done. Even its immediate effects were not all evil, for he obtained a knowledge of good, impossible in his previous condition.

So with sin as a whole. We almost dread to speak of it in relation to God's ultimate [purpose], for few, even of His beloved saints, have seen behind the scenes, and almost any assertion would be false if related to His revealed will.

Is sin good? *No!* It is the worst thing in the world. No words can express our horror and detestation of it.

Is sin good? *Yes!* Not, indeed, in itself, but its effect will be beneficent beyond anything else this world can give, when combined with the mediatorial work of Christ and the reconciliation of which it is the occasion.

Perhaps this is why some beloved brethren insist that I teach that God sins, or is the Author of sin. I have never said this or even thought it, so far as I am aware. If I have unwittingly done so, I humbly retract and recant.

I have been informed that various passages in my writ-

ings on this subject imply it, though they do not express it in so many words. When I review these passages, I do not see the implication. I did not intend such a thought. I did not express it. To my own consciousness, I did not even imply it.

Some inferred from the apostle Paul's teaching that they should do evil that good may come. If *he* could be misunderstood, I count it an honor to be in the same condemnation.

What is an implication? Is it not the result of combining what we think with another's statement? It is reasoning from two premises: one our own, and one supplied by another. In its crudest form the argument may be stated thus: I believe that all is of God. My inquisitors insist that sin is part of the "all." Therefore, I believe that God sins. It seems very logical *to them*. I may object and say that I do not concur in their conclusions. I may even say that my premise is not mine, but God's, but no; [to them] my scheme is simply an attempt to exonerate Satan and prepare people for the homage which he will demand at the time of the end! Away with such a fellow from the earth!

This places me in a strange position. I cannot but consider their deduction a mistake in logic, a transgression of morals, and even an offense. In short, it is a full-orbed sin. I am eager to acknowledge, however, that it is of God.

Even my small mind, weakened by overwork, and dulled by distress, has not the slightest difficulty in discriminating between the human and the divine aspect of these acts. *God is making no mistakes. His servants are. He will justify their injustice, not because they are in line with His will, but because they are carrying out His intention.*

I have no hesitation in thanking God for this distressing antagonism, for I know that in His hands it is no error. Truth such as this needs opposition for its development and dissemination. *It takes friction to rub off the rust of centuries.*

I take it to be my duty never to insist on a deduction from another's words to which he does not assent. It may be impossible for me to see how he can escape it, but my infirmity is no valid ground for another's condemnation. I find the same mistake is often made in the study of the Scriptures. A deduction is made from some passage and held in opposition to the plain teaching of another portion. What am I, that I should escape this mishandling?

I would take it very kindly of my inquisitors, however, if they would publicly acknowledge that I do not believe



that God sins, or is the *author* of sin, and that I see nothing in my writings to that effect, but I have always maintained, with my inquisitor, that this is unscriptural.

I would exhort my inquisitors concerning the form of their indictment. I have striven to avoid non-scriptural forms of expression when dealing with this theme. This is difficult to do when writing at length on a single subject, but it is easy to do when drawing up definite charges. The form of an indictment may condemn those who prefer it. It may be purposely ambiguous, so as to cloud the issue. Such is the phrase “Author of sin.” The word author is unscriptural. It is an appeal to prejudice. It seems to smirch God with sin. It may or may not imply that God sins. Some do not think that it does. Others do. The lack of love that thinks evil injects it into the issue as a character witness, to fasten the odium of heresy and blasphemy on those who stand for the truth!

The difficulty seems to be that we cannot easily view an act apart from its moral character. We do not readily see that *no act is sinful in itself*, but in its relations. The act of plucking and eating fruit is not necessarily a sin. Yet it was humanity’s primal error. The mistake lay in its relation to the God Who had forbidden it. If He had commanded it, it would have been commendable. Now that we know that it was essential to His intention, that He had provided for it before it occurred, that He arranged everything so that it should occur, we see that, *though it was a sin in relation to His will, it was no mistake in view of His benevolent intention.*

Who fortified Pharaoh’s heart? Was it good or evil? Was it a sin or not? Straightforward answers to these simple questions should settle the matter. Until my judges suggest a more satisfactory solution I shall still believe and teach that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, that it was necessary to spread abroad His name and fame, and therefore good and just, and also that Pharaoh withstood God’s Word, which was an evil and a sin. One act, two aspects: bad *and* good.

Perhaps the greatest example of the distinction between God’s will and His intention is found in the law promulgated from Sinai. Jehovah made known His will in a complete code of laws besides the condensed commandments which were carved in stone. The Jew, who was resting on law, is said to “*know the will*” (Romans 2:18). However, if it was God’s intention that the nation should keep the law, it certainly was a dismal failure on His part. They broke its greatest precept before it reached them. They dishonored God by its flagrant infringement.

Though the failure of the law seems to be contrary to the will of God, it actually was a fulfillment of His intention. It was really given that,

Every mouth may be barred, and the entire world may be becoming subject to the just verdict of God, because by works of law, no flesh shall be justified before Him, for through law is the recognition of sin (Romans 3:19-20).

The law which, [seemingly], was to deter from sinning, actually was given for the detection of sin. It was given to prove that no one could keep it. Beneath the revelation of God’s will, in it was His intention that it should not be kept, but should accomplish its object through its infraction.

Law crept in that the offense should be increasing (Romans 5:20).

How differently did Israel, at Sinai, feel about it! They were quite sure that they would greatly lessen the distance between themselves and Jehovah by their obedience to His precepts. Why had He told them what He wanted them to do and to avoid unless it was His will to carry out His instructions? The *will* of Jehovah was clear, but His *intention* was quite concealed. He could not make known His intention at that time without frustrating it.

This should help us in considering the larger question of sin. Sin is always against the revealed will of God. No one can possibly find any excuse for sinning so far as His expressed precepts are concerned. Both conscience and nature add their voice to restrain us from wrong.

However, we do sin, and how can we be *justified* unless the sin is, in some sense, justifiable? We know that it is God’s intention to draw His creatures into loving intimacy with Himself through sin and a Savior. We know that the *temporary* term of sin will leave the world infinitely richer in the knowledge and appreciation of God. It will bring God immeasurable treasures of love and adoration. As a whole, its results vindicate its presence for a time. What is true of all sin must be true of every sin.

This truth is the foundation of the doctrine of justification. Because it has been lost, justification has also disappeared, or has been degraded to a pardon or an “imputed” fiction. Few believe that God actually justifies believers. They imagine that He only alters the court records, so that no one can legally prove their guilt. It is of the utmost comfort and satisfaction to know that all that we have done is vindicated by the part it plays in ►



carrying out His intention. *Do not let anyone sell you an imitation justification!* God's is the actual, the genuine, the precious reality.

This is why we insist that all of the world has *not* become "guilty" before God, as the *Authorized Version* mistranslates (Romans 3:19). The entire world is *subject to the just verdict of God* (CV). He withholds this verdict until the judgment, in the case of the unbeliever. The believer, however, is pronounced *not* guilty. He is acquitted, vindicated, justified, by faith. His sins, though contrary to God's will, were in line with His intention, in order that He might reveal Himself through them.

All that the usual theology has to offer us at the consummation, even in the saved, is a partial, patched, repaired and repainted universe. The song of the saints will be in a minor key, "I was a *guilty* sinner." Their joy will be clouded by eternal regret and shame for their part in the tragedy of the eons. The eonian times will be the eyesore of eternity. Oh! if only they had not been! So will God's wisdom and power be questioned and His glory dimmed, for He Himself must be the chief culprit in the collapse of His creation.

Away with such unworthy thoughts! The consummation will not reveal a patched, but a perfected universe. We will not be worrying about our past sins, but overwhelmed with God's wisdom and love in their vindication. Much as they distress us now, much as we fear them and avoid them and dread the very possibility of further sin, God will see to it that they will leave no stain, no blot to mar the bliss eternal, but will blend into His benign designs, and discover to a delighted universe the delicious depths of love which could not be displayed by any other device,

or appreciated by any other plan.

This teaching is also the substructure for a mature experience in the things of God. It gives stability, a calm confidence in the face of the chaotic conditions which surround and engulf us. *We are not worried, as once we were, by the awful opposition to God's will, nor do we fear for the fulfillment of His purpose.*

The flood tide of evil and sin, however contrary it may be to His will, is essential and indispensable to His ultimate intention. He is the great Alchemist Who will transmute everything into glorious gold by contact with the accursed tree.

It may not be easy to grasp the distinction between God's will and intention without, at the same time, revising our views on many related truths. We must have our eyes opened to the difference between evil and sin. Evil need not be wrong, while sin always is a mistake. We must determine the source of sin. We must see how God uses evil as a background to make good appear good. We must realize that sin is transmitted not by a "sinful nature," but by inherited mortality. Then we will be able to understand how *God justifies and repudiates sin*. Above all, then will we revel in the discovery of a *real God* (a concept almost unknown today) – not a magnified man, defeated and desperate amidst the ruins of His creation, but a *Deity infinite in power, sublime in wisdom, limitless in His affections, Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will* (Ephesians 1:11), in order to reveal Himself to our hearts as Light and Life and Love.

The Problem of Evil
chapter 18

INTENTION (continued from page 3323)

This doctrine is needed. It serves to give us stability and confidence in the face of conditions that surround and engulf us. What a comfort it is to believe that He is operating the universe in accord with the counsel of His will. This is much better than believing that the universe has gotten away from God, and that He is frantically striving to manage it.

This doctrine also gives confidence and stability in the face of our own failures. God is at the helm, and manages when we fail. Our failures are in accord with His intention. Certainly sin is left in the bodies of saints for a definite purpose. Without it, we might forget God. Knowing it to be present, we remember Him.

This doctrine furnishes the background for justification. There could never be justification for sinners if sin was not, in some sense, justifiable. It is justifiable in that it gives Christ something to do, furnishes an occasion for the display of grace, and will bring infinite riches to God in the love and adoration of His creatures; Hence:

As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of One, the free gifts came upon all men unto justification of life (Romans 5:18).

The Pilgrim's Messenger
Volume XI, Number 9
Glennville, GA