

## Critique of the Traditional View

### **I. Addressing the “Proofs” of the traditional view**

- a. Reason: since God is a god of order, it makes sense that He would have a specific will for each decision of life. Answer: there is nothing illogical about Him *not* having an individual will. Logic cannot help us determine the existence of an individual will of God.
- b. Historical and biblical examples: a number of respected men in church history and in the biblical record demonstrate the success that results when finding and following God’s individual will for their lives. Answer: the fact that God revealed specific aspects of His will to specific biblical individuals does not make this process normative for us.
- c. Biblical teaching:
  - i. Col. 1:9—pray for knowledge of His will. See the next two verses. Clearly this is talking about understanding the *moral* will of God.
  - ii. Rom. 12:1-2—an exhortation to prove what God’s will is. Read the rest of Romans 12. This entire chapter is about the *moral* will of God.
  - iii. Prov. 3:5-6—God will direct the paths of those who trust him. The traditional view’s understanding is based on a mistranslation of the text in the KJV. This verse is not talking about guidance, but about how those who fear the Lord will generally enjoy success in life.
  - iv. Isa. 30:21—direction in the right way. Rather than understanding the one speaking the “word behind you” as the Holy Spirit leading with His still small voice, the better understanding is a reference to the prophets who will come out of hiding and resume their teaching and correcting ministry to the people.
  - v. Psa. 32:8—counsel in the way which you should go. It is controversial whether the speaker is David or God. In either case, the best understanding is that the counsel being described here is related to God’s *moral* will.
  - vi. Eph. 2:10—direction into specific good works. The best understanding is that God sovereignly chose people for salvation whom He desires to walk in His *moral* will.
  - vii. Gen. 24—example of guidance in finding the right spouse. Rare biblical examples of individual guidance do not suggest that this is normative for believers today.

## II. Practical problems with the concept of the individual will

- a. The problem of ordinary decisions—no one can live by the idea that God has a perfect will for you in the mundane, ordinary decisions in life because guidance from God on those decisions will never come.
- b. The problem of equal alternatives—Many choices we must make are between essentially equal alternatives. These kinds of decisions can be enormously frustrating to adherents of the traditional view because if one does not receive clear guidance from God in these decisions, one is afraid to choose for fear of making the wrong choice, and hesitation will further restrict your options.
- c. The problem of promoting immaturity
  - i. Avoidance of wise counsel
  - ii. Indecisiveness
  - iii. Forcing circumstances to decide
  - iv. Overthinking a decision
  - v. Acting contrary to your preferences
- d. The problem of subjectivity in decision making
  - i. Impressions do not produce certainty
  - ii. Multiplicity of subjective signs actually increases uncertainty
  - iii. Multiplicity of decision makers increases uncertainty

## III. Is peace a valid indicator that you are making the right decision?

- a. The traditional view suggests that peace is an umpire of sorts that “calls” decisions. If you are making the right decision, you have peace about it, but if you are headed in the wrong direction, you will feel anxious and troubled.
- b. Two verses are said to support this idea: Col. 3:15 and Phil. 4:7
- c. Read Col. 3:12-17. These verses are not talking about inner peace but about peace among believers who are unified. It is invalid to extract this verse from its context to suggest it is referring to peace as an inner umpire.
- d. Read Phil. 4:6-9. While this passage is referring to inner peace, it has nothing to do with guidance, but is the result from obeying the *moral* will of God.