

God's Permissive Will

"Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." Matthew 19:8

Before entering the Promised Land, Moses reviewed with this new generation the promises and expectations of God. God said: "Howbeit there shall be no needy among you – for the LORD will surely bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it – if only thou diligently hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all this commandment which I command thee this day."¹ A few verses later He said, "For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying: 'Thou shalt surely open thy hand unto thy poor and needy brother, in thy land.'"²

You frequently note throughout the Old Testament the contrast between what God wants and what He anticipates. For example, God said Israel would repudiate the Theocracy and ask for a king.³ Later, when the prophet Samuel expresses anger over Israel's desire for a king, God said, "... they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."⁴ In the Matthew passage cited above, Jesus told the people that God did not want divorce, but under certain circumstances allows it.

There exists a distinction between the perfect and the permissive will of God, between what He wants and what He will allow. By this I do not mean what God "allows" in the general sense of man exercising his will, such as sin and rebellion. Rather His permissive will deals with what He will allow short of sin, but outside of what He deems best for you. You may enter God's permissive will if you wish, but understand that when you do you have told Him that you know better than He does what your best looks like. This may, in turn, result in your crossing the line from submission to God to willfulness.

¹ Deuteronomy 15:14-15 ² Verse 11 ³ Deuteronomy 17:4-5 ⁴ I Samuel 8:5-9