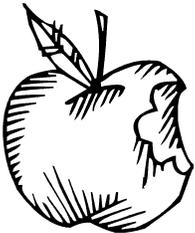


God's Will Be Done

People have been struggling with questions about God's will ever since Adam and Eve first thought about taking a bite of forbidden fruit. "If God is good," people say, "and if He is all-knowing and all-powerful, why does He allow bad things to happen?" And a thousand variations on that question, all boiling down to one basic question that we all have to answer every day, over and over: **Should I trust God and obey Him, or would I be better off to do what I want to do?**



Part of the problem is that we believe we are qualified to judge God's actions. We see horrendously evil things, like the molestation of children by trusted adults; like the repeated senseless violence of mass murderers gunning down defenseless people; like the awful famines and epidemics taking place in Africa and elsewhere; like the disastrous flooding and severe drought and wildfires happening every year in our country; and so much more. We're overwhelmed, and we cannot help but think, "God, how could you allow all of these horrible things to happen? Don't you see? Don't you care?"

But all of these horrors are nothing new. Ever since that mess-up in the Garden of Eden, God has removed His protection from time to time and allowed disasters to happen to unrighteous people. And that includes every one of us, of course, because "There is no one who is righteous, not even one." (Romans 3:10 NRSV) Sometimes we think we understand—the victims actually deserve whatever the painful consequences may be. Other times we don't understand; we think the innocent are being punished.

I have two lovely granddaughters. When the older one was 18 months old, two adults held her down in a doctor's office while a third adult jabbed needles into both of her arms. She was scared and hurt, and she cried a lot and kicked and squirmed, but the adults did not flinch. Now if you could get all of the one-year-olds in the world together and take a vote, it would be meaningless because children of that age are not qualified to judge whether the actions of those parents and that doctor were good or evil.



Babies are not equipped to judge adults. In the same way, only much more so, human beings are not equipped to judge God. We haven't the knowledge or the experience or the wisdom to judge His actions, and we cannot see things from His perspective. Babies have to trust in grownups' goodness and wisdom. Sometimes the grownups betray that trust, and that is a sad and ugly thing. But when the grownups do what they should do, for the good of the child, then it is a beautiful thing, even if it causes the child some temporary pain.



In the same way we, ultimately, have to trust that God knows what He is doing. Oh, yes, there are many times when we don't want to trust Him. We are always ready to tell God how He should handle His affairs. "Stop the killing in Syria and Afghanistan, Lord. Protect our soldiers and send them home quickly." That's my frequent prayer nowadays, along with many others I send heavenward, asking God to make things turn out the way I think

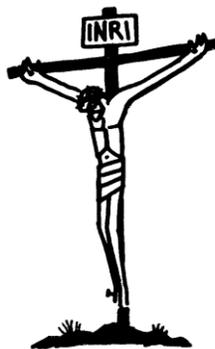
they should. Sometimes my prayers are righteous, sometimes they are pretty selfish. Sometimes they're casual; sometimes they are truly heartfelt.

Does God do what I ask Him to do? Sometimes, amazingly, He does. And when He does, I have a choice. I can strut a little, thinking that I have some sort of an "in" with God that maybe other people don't have. (Yes, there are those who are foolish enough to think that, about themselves or others. I have heard people say, "That person's prayers are powerful." Well, if they are, it isn't any human power that powers them.) Or, when He gives what I ask for, I can simply be grateful that, on this occasion, the Holy Spirit guided and empowered me to ask for the blessing that God wanted to give.

Does God always do what I ask Him to do? No, He doesn't. And when He doesn't, I have a choice, the same one that confronted Job in the Bible. I can "curse God"—that is, judge Him according to my own standards and level of comfort, and find Him guilty of neglect or downright abuse—or I can trust Him, knowing that His vision is bigger than mine and His purpose is better than mine. Even if I am in severe pain, as Job was, I can decide—I must decide—that I will trust Him. Because, if I don't trust Him, then I cut myself off from Him.

The problem that we have, of course, is that we want to be in control. And not just of the things God gives us dominion over; we want to be in control of everything. In other words, we want to shift God off of His throne and take over. That is the human condition, and that is original sin.

Now we're getting down to the basics of relationship with God. We don't have to worry about our past sins. Jesus paid the penalty, so after we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness, we have it. But then, the vitally important thing that we must do is, very simply, just let God be God.



Acknowledge and accept the fact that He alone is God, and I am not, and you are not. What He says, goes. What we say, if it doesn't agree with what He says, is meaningless noise. What He does is right and good, because that is His nature. What we do according to our own will may actually turn out to be right and good, but if so it will be because God wanted it or chose to use it.

God is God, and He insists on retaining that position, all alone. He is not about to move over for anyone. He is not about to submit to being judged by human beings. We had better learn to live now and forever with His sovereignty. Millions of people will condemn themselves to eternal death because they simply refuse to accept God's forgiveness, on His terms, and submit to His sovereignty.

How can we trust God when we're suffering? I don't say it's easy. There is never anything easy about enduring suffering. But it is pretty simple. We have to focus our attention on God's goodness. We see it revealed in the Bible, especially in the person of Jesus.

As Paul wrote, "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory." (Colossians 3:1b-4)

God is God, and nothing we can do will ever change that. We can just be very thankful that He is good, and can always be trusted.

*Father,
Thy will be
done...
not mine!
And And, keep talking me!*

The Peace of the LORD be with us all.

Brother Roland

The Penny

Several years ago, a friend of mine and her husband were invited to spend the weekend at the husband's employer's home. My friend, Arlene, was nervous about the weekend. The boss was very wealthy, with a fine home on the waterway, and cars costing more than her house.

The first day and evening went well, and Arlene was delighted to have this rare glimpse into how the very wealthy live. The husband's employer was quite generous as a host, and took them to the finest restaurants. Arlene knew she would never have the opportunity to indulge in this kind of extravagance again, so was enjoying herself immensely.

As the three of them were about to enter an exclusive restaurant that evening, the boss was walking slightly ahead of Arlene and her husband. He stopped suddenly, looking down on the pavement for a long, silent moment.

Arlene wondered if she was supposed to pass him. There was nothing on the ground except a single darkened penny that someone had dropped, and a few cigarette butts. Still silent, the man reached down and picked up the penny.

He held it up and smiled, then put it in his pocket as if he had found a great treasure. How absurd! What need did this man have for a single penny? Why would he even take the time to stop and pick it up?

Throughout dinner, the entire scene nagged at her. Finally, she could stand it no longer. She casually mentioned that her daughter once had a coin collection, and asked if the penny he had found had been of some value.

A smile crept across the man's face as he reached into his pocket for the penny and held it out for her to see. She had seen many pennies before! What was the point of this?

"Look at it." He said. "Read what it says."

She read the words, "United States of America."

"No, not that; read further."

"One cent?"

"No, keep reading."

"In God we Trust?"

"Yes!"

"And?"

"And if I trust in God, the name of God is holy, even on a coin. Whenever I find a coin I see that inscription. It is written on every single United States coin, but we never seem to notice it! God drops a message right in front of me telling me to trust Him? Who am I to pass it by? When I see a coin, I pray, I stop to see if my trust IS in God at that moment. I pick the coin up as a response to God; that I do trust in Him. For a short time, at least, I cherish it as if it were gold. I think it is God's way of starting a conversation with me. Lucky for me, God is patient and pennies are plentiful!"

When I was out shopping today, I found a penny on the sidewalk. I stopped and picked it up, and realized that I had been worrying and fretting in my mind about things I cannot change. I read the words, "In God We Trust," and had to laugh. Yes, God, I get the message.

It seems that I have been finding an inordinate number of pennies in the last few months, but then, pennies are plentiful!

And, God is patient...



— Author unknown

**Bible questions? Ask and I'll try to answer.
Brother Roland, PO Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222**

Be Thankful

Part of living within God's will is learning how to be thankful for all the "learning experiences," as well as the blessings, that He sends our way. Another important part is learning to use the "full armor" that God provides. Enjoy the puzzle.

Puzzle:

K D H R R K O Y S P R A Y I N T H E S P I R I T Z E L N O S P L H
C T Z I G Y R S E A C P K A W Y V Z M V B C G J R S C Z O U B Q A
Y D C G S B F C C F O J S X L A R R R N X D W A Y B Q O T E Z S V
R T T H F N N M N E X M Y G R E E E U Q S R A F Z I P I D U K O W
R Y G T N F L H A W F W N B G X U W W O U O P P X T T I C G M K N
H A O E X K O A T J G I E N B A P O N A L L O C C A S I O N S O Q
N G Q O U D S C S I G B A R K A Y P N P T E Y S L C O D I V I E V
O K C U J J A S M D A D D C G D V Y N U E H T L I B F B T T S A R
D F Q S F B D C U Q M F Z N H T F T T C B T O P M O Y H A T D M F
U S O N R H M R C O V Q F S C E K H G C X N L N R Y A V B V E Q U
D E N E T H G I R F E B T O N O D G R V H I Z I J R L Z U U G P L
S O O S Q N V F I M K Z I A D A L I X G N G T A L A L T D S A L L
M T E S U Q G B C B I L U Q L L N M U E K N A K S C K H B V R U A
S H N T C N N U L W A X O Y E F E S D M L O R F Z I I U O N U H R
F A U I I B E G L X G X Y G E F L I K E A R O A R I N G L I O N M
H C T N A U Q D A E E F H E U T S H H Y A T A B B E D W T A C L O
T V N A U S P V N R Z O T B H O B N V S E S Z F S D S U A I S A R
U U T E N N E E I Z L G I E D B Y I F M A E N R S I O J K Z I J O
R E Z R Y P R H P F O B W I Y D R R L W Z B S M Q V F S E O D C F
T Q H M E O R J T S U O S M F R Q E E W B S M N U M R R Y M E H G
F L D T U L N O P R R N I Z J D H A A V T J K L N S E E O Z B P O
O G X S N R A E W D O K D I L L A O T S E V I G E H Q D U M T F D
T V L R R O L P O L Q F O E E T X X N C T R R F M O U D R T N C K
L Y T B G R T F E O S B G N I Y A R P N O P E E K W E W S Z O L F
E Z V A E C G U O E D A A S Y F Y F R Z F D L H G T S D T G D G Z
B F N A E O T P P M K T R S K L V V F J K W T A W G T F A O A A J
E W D V D D P K S W O R D O F T H E S P I R I T T Q S H N H U Q G
H Y P X M O D S I W K C A L U O Y F I N E G K F L E E N D B Y B E
T J F W J L L P D K E Y J A A N S B Q O H W K P J Q O U V C T T B
L I K E A T I M I D D E E R G Y D G P D H N K N B U J F A A Z K Y

Words:

IF YOU LACK WISDOM
ASK GOD FOR IT
HE GIVES TO ALL
GENEROUSLY
UNGRUDGINGLY
IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES
BE DISCIPLINED
KEEP ALERT
SATAN PROWLs AROUND
LIKE A ROARING LION
BE STRONG IN THE LORD
IN HIS MIGHTY POWER

BE BRAVE
DON'T BE DISCOURAGED
DO NOT BE FRIGHTENED
LIKE A TIMID DEER
RUNNING FROM DANGER
GOD IS WITH YOU
WHEREVER YOU GO
PUT ON THE
FULL ARMOR OF GOD
THE BELT OF TRUTH
BREASTPLATE OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS

FEET GOSPEL-READY
SHIELD OF FAITH
HELMET OF SALVATION
SWORD OF THE SPIRIT
THE WORD OF GOD
PUT IT ALL ON
TAKE YOUR STAND
PRAY IN THE SPIRIT
ON ALL OCCASIONS
ALL KINDS OF REQUESTS
KEEP ON PRAYING
FOR THE SAINTS