

## CHAPTER 4

# Circumcision of the Heart

*The Will: The reason we sin.*

“For I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:18–20, KJV).

Several years ago, I spoke to about 200 teenagers and their parents on the topic of “The Will.” This chapter covers the same material, but in more detail. The reaction from some of those folks still leaves me breathless. It was like watching a group of people having an allergic reaction. They reacted with great consternation about the thought of having to give up their will. Since that experience, I have witnessed similar reactions among people affiliated with many different denominations—as well as non-believers. Because of my personal experiences, coupled with 26 years of observing the world through the eyes of the news media, my conclusion is that a person’s will is the epitome of selfishness and therefore is the root of all of his or her problems. The person who came up with the adage “you are your own worst enemy” became cognizant that problems in life came from something inside of us. All of humanity’s problems began after Adam and Eve activated their wills in the Garden of Eden.

Before the creation of the universe and humanity, there was only God and His created angelic beings. These angels, as we learn from the book of Genesis, also possessed free will. At some moment in the past, God made the decision to create a new world. God, being just and respectful to His angelic citizens, explained His plans for the soon-to-be-created man and

woman. You can read about God's intentions for humanity from the following verses: "Or know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:2–3, ASV). In addition, you discover more of God's plans for His only begotten Son and the heirs of salvation in the following verses:

"Having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, who maketh his angels winds, and his ministers a flame a fire: but of the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands: They shall perish; but thou continuest: And they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a mantle shalt thou roll them up, as a garment, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. But of which of the angels hath he said at any time, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:4–14, ASV).

With this understanding of God's plans for the human race, I theorized that this was why Lucifer reacted the way he did. It is important to note that Lucifer was the most powerful of the

angels and the one God put in charge of this angelic race of spiritual beings. From the following passage, you will see what Lucifer decided to do about God's decision for a new race of people:

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning!  
How art thou cut down to the ground that didst lay low the  
nations! And thou said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I  
will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the  
mount of congregation, in the uttermost parts of the north; I will  
ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the  
Most High” (Isaiah 14:12–14, ASV).

This passage is describing Lucifer's jealous and intensely selfish reaction to God's future relationship with humans. In today's terminology, Lucifer was to become “second banana.”

The shortest definition of sin is “I will.” This was the first time a decision was made to follow a will other than God's will. This caused the fall of Lucifer—as well as one-third of the heavenly residents who chose to follow him. They were cast out of heaven.

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought  
against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and  
prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.  
And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the  
Devil, and Satan, which deceived the whole world: he was cast out  
into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation  
12:7–9, KJV).

A similar situation took place on earth in a garden called Eden. Like Lucifer, God created Adam and Eve with free will. Earth's first couple was given complete charge over God's creation, with one exception: “But of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17, KJV). Most

of us know what happens next. Exercising their free will, Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. In doing so, they experienced a similar fate as Lucifer—they were cast out of their home.

It is a reasonable conclusion that Adam and Eve did not fully understand the gravity of their actions when they ate the forbidden fruit. On the surface, the punishment (banished and cursed) does not seem to fit the crime – they ate some fruit. If God’s punishment seems excessive, maybe the crime was far worse than just eating the fruit.

Let me give you another example of how God teaches.

“And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks upon the Sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it had not been declared what should be done to him. And Jehovah said unto Moses, The man shall surely be put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him to death with stones; as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Numbers 15:32-36, ASV).

What do you think about God’s punishment – death by stoning – for someone who was caught picking up sticks to build a fire on the Sabbath? What was the crime? Was it picking up sticks, building a fire, breaking the law, or was there a deeper spiritual issue about our fate if we rely on our works for righteousness?

The consolation prize for eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was given to Adam and Eve's descendants. And the prize was a list of good works to perform, and a list of evil deeds to avoid. For the list of good and evil would be needed in order for them to establish their own righteousness. Israel was given the knowledge of doing good, which was communicated in the 613 ordinances you can read about in the first five books of the Old Testament. Then, for avoiding evil, God gave His people the Ten Commandments. You see, the choice to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil resulted in the establishment of the legalistic system (Mosaic Covenant). Humanity's objective with this system was to achieve righteousness through works. Compliance to the Law of Righteousness was accomplished using a power not from God, but of people—their willpower: “Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship” (Colossians 2:21–23, ASV).

God's intentions for allowing this legalistic system were to prove that:

1. Humanity cannot obey laws perfectly: “With men this is impossible” (Matthew 19:26, KJV). Only God can, “but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26, KJV).
2. Humanity is sinful. “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20, KJV). Therefore, people need a Savior.
3. Humanity's will strives against the things of God and therefore is not needed. Does a person need a will? Yes, of course—but it has to be God's will that we exchange ours for.

So far, God's children have gotten two of three correct, but the master teacher's work is not finished.

The following verse is humanity's proclamation to God about the establishment of their own righteousness: "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us" (Deuteronomy 6:25, KJV). This edict came from a heart and mind nourished by the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Deuteronomy 6:25 became the mission statement that fueled a legalistic system that has blinded and separated a nation from God for the past 2000 years.

Now why didn't God just eliminate this tree from Eden and spare everybody the grief? God knew that Adam and Eve would exercise their will and disobey—so why did He put the tree there? The answer will come when you recognize that your heavenly Father is a master teacher. God wants His students to learn their lesson, and the best way to achieve that is by experience. Nothing teaches better than experiencing the consequences of our actions. The Father wants all of His created beings to understand that His will is the only one that can sustain life for all eternity. Speaking as the Son of Man (the last Adam) to all of humanity, Jesus was teaching this understanding about humanity's will when He said, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me" (John 6:38, NKJV). Tempted by Satan himself, the first Adam failed. Although, the last Adam (Jesus) won the battle over the will. It is intriguing how Jesus won the battle; He won because He never used His will. This is a major piece of the puzzle.

Approximately six thousand years have passed since the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Go to your local bookstore and walk to the history section. There you will find the

consequences of a world run by the will of humanity. Wars, insurrections, slavery, greed, power-hungry dictatorships, and a host of atrocities inflicted upon the innocent have scarred world history. God wants people to look back over time, as well as to assess the conditions of the present world to learn the lesson about free will. God has many lessons for humanity and the lesson before we are saved is that Christ is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6, ASV). And a lesson after we are saved is about the will.

The atrocities around the world and the wars and rumors of wars you hear about daily in the news are a direct result of a global society ruled by humanity’s will: “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war” (James 4:1–2, NKJV). So much of world history is marred with violence that the books that have recorded it could fill every shelf in a library. Satan’s portal into the lives of humanity is our will. When we exercise that will, suffering, sorrow, and death are the tragic consequences.

Tragedy and suffering happens to every person, but the world is at a loss as to why. However, Christians should know why the world lacks this understanding. It is because the natural mind cannot understand the spiritual. Knowledge of the physical world is only half of the story. Wisdom of the spiritual side is needed to complete the puzzle. Those of the world are working a jigsaw puzzle with half of the pieces missing.

Therefore, the next time you see people suffering at the hands of men or natural disasters in the newspapers or on television, tell the world that God was not lying when He told Adam and Eve that they would suffer and die if they ate of the forbidden tree. And not only would they suffer and die, but so would all of humanity. However, there is good news. God has paid the

penalty for humanity's mistake, but He wants the world to see that humanity's will is intrinsically evil. The solution to the world's problems is simple: do the will of the Father. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40, KJV). Yes, we may still suffer, but "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18, NKJV). The One who will wipe away all our tears is coming soon in the clouds to call His people home. God will restore the world back to the way He intended, and that is a garden paradise free from pain and suffering.

Every Christian, from time to time, has trouble knowing what God's will is for their life. How many times have you heard a brother or sister say, "I'm seeking God's will for my life"? Doesn't it seem like a contradiction to talk about seeking God's will, and then in the next sentence, defend the necessity of keeping our will? I have heard some Christians say that we will retain possession of our will in eternity, because we would be puppets on a string without it. This belief comes from a mind nourished by the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. After the first bite from that forbidden fruit, humanity became a puppet, hanging from the strings of a puppet-master called free will. We cut those stings every time we submit our will to do the Father's will.

There seems to be a mindset that our will gives us our individuality. Can people still keep their individual identities without their will? *Absolutely!* Was Jesus a puppet without an identity when He said, "because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 5:30, ASV)? Jesus was His own person, and so shall you be when you possess the only will that can sustain the human race throughout eternity—the Father's will.



Here may be where the confusion comes in about our will versus God's will. Our will is self-centered and programmed to serve the individual. The will makes a person feel entitled to getting his or her way, and the human race assumes that God's will acts the same as theirs. Understand and hold on to this next statement with your life. The heavenly Father's will is all about you in that His will wants to protect, provide, teach, guide, and love you unconditionally. God's will is to do what is in the best interest for you—period. How more obvious does God have to make it? Besides the fact that the heavenly Father sacrificed His Son for us, look at the world around you. God designed all of creation specifically for the care and comfort of humanity. In the vastness of the universe, there are planets and stars that number into the trillions to the trillionth power, but only one can support life—Mother Earth. The heavenly Father cares deeply for His children, and it is important that we understand that only His will can sustain the human race throughout eternity.

Other believers have used the following to defend keeping their will: “When we are in our new, glorified bodies, free will can be controlled.” Let us look back into Biblical history and see how true that statement is. Lucifer was a powerful spiritual being who did not have the flesh to deal with. He was holy, pure, and was favored of God. How could a being that knew no evil and walked in the very presence of God Almighty fall away? He had free will.

Adam and Eve were created holy and pure and in the image of God. They had glorified bodies of flesh and knew no evil. They walked with God in fellowship daily. How could they have fallen? They had free will. Is it conceivable to think that when God makes a new heaven and a new earth, He will allow humanity to enter His new kingdom possessing the most destructive force in the universe—free will? The same will that caused heaven to experience its

first war, resulting in the expulsion of one-third of the angelic hosts. In addition, because of our will, God pronounced a judgment of condemnation and death upon all of humanity, and He placed a curse upon creation. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22, KJV). Many Bible scholars assert that the reasons for natural disasters can be traced to this passage, “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain.”

God’s created beings have shown—even under the best of circumstances—that a will other than the heavenly Father’s can only have cataclysmic consequences—death and destruction. God has one final test for free will. About six thousand years (six days on God’s cosmic calendar) has transpired from the time Adam and Eve left the garden and until today. Remember, a thousand years is but one day to the Lord. After the seven years of tribulation (eleven minutes on God’s timetable), Christ will reign and rule on earth for a thousand years; wrapping up seven thousand years humanity has possessed free will on this planet. At the end of Christ’s reign, many people will exercise their will and join forces with the newly released Satan to try to defeat the Lamb of God. This battle will end quickly and then eternity begins. God needed the entire week (seven thousand years) to show humanity the undisputable evidence that free will can never enter into His new kingdom, for it continually strives against that which is holy and pure.

A person possessing a will other than God’s is a losing proposition. Jesus was the only human to win the battle over the will. The battle was lost in the Garden of Eden by Adam and Eve, and Christ won the battle in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus asked His Father three times, “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, ‘O my Father, if it be

possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39, KJV). When Jesus said the third time, “but as thou wilt,” the battle over the will had been won.

Some may interpret Christ’s submission of His will to His Father as the lesson for humanity. We can keep our will; we need only learn to submit it to the Lord. If my memory serves me correctly, we were cast out of paradise because we couldn’t do it. And since the time of our expulsion, the ability to submit our will has been an ongoing problem to this very day. Let us just admit it—we cannot do it; only Jesus could. Christians are not to submit, but surrender their will. By definition, to surrender something is admission of defeat. Here is a short list of words that mean the same as surrender: *give up, give in, relinquish, hand over, forfeit, and concede.*

Why is it so hard to give up completely that which has shown to be so destructive? Because, the Christian populace has never accepted new revelations very quickly, and many times these truths come to a servant at a time they were not meant for. Take the servant Paul—he knew 2000 years ago why he sinned: “For I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil, which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:18–20, KJV). Do not confuse our desires or urges with our will. Paul desired to do well, but his will superseded that desire. We can have the greatest desire to obey, but because the will is stronger, humanity continually succumbs to its power.

Here is a hypothetical situation to ponder: God decides that His crowning glory of creation (the human race) will not possess free will, and people are still living in the garden

paradise called Eden. Had God already anticipated that the citizens of Eden would have asked Him, “Why don’t we have a will of our own?” What better way to answer that question than to have the human race experience a world ruled by humanity’s will? God is a master teacher. This question may still arise in eternity from those generations that didn’t experience the old earth, but its history will forever be a reminder to the inhabitants of God’s kingdom that God’s will is perfect for all. Those who are reigning and ruling with Christ will share the story of earth throughout the kingdom. I know that there is one book in heaven—The Book of Life. However, if there are going to be other books, I believe the story about earth will be on the shelf and will be required reading. Let us give it a title: “Earth of Old: A Legacy of Man’s Will, Never to Be Repeated.”

Again, I will ask you, “Why did God put the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the garden?” It was for a lesson to teach about the will of man. Our master teacher likes to teach using contrast. Therefore, God put the first couple in a paradise free from pain and suffering. After Adam and Eve exercised their will, pain and suffering became constant companions for the entire human race. Christians are supposed to make the connection, and then relay the message to the world.

The heavenly Father gave the world the study materials: His Word. For six thousand years, civilization has experienced a world ruled by humanity’s will. Based on world history and the condition we are in today, how would you answer God if He asked you the following questions: What have you learned about free will? Do you understand why—even after your spiritual rebirth—I, your heavenly Father, left your will intact and active? Do you understand why My Son, Jesus, told you many times that He came to do My will and not His? Do you want

to keep trying to submit your will? On the other hand, do you want to surrender it completely for its removal?

We have prayed the Lord's Prayer so many times that many of us don't listen to the words anymore, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, *thy will* be done, on earth as it is in heaven." The words "as it is in heaven" are insightful, because they may reveal that the very first problem God had with the will (Lucifer's will and one-third of the angels) has been taken care of. After the ejection of Lucifer and one-third of the angels, the remaining angelic citizens of heaven may have relinquished (by volition) their will because of the cataclysmic consequences to creation. Earth is the last domain of the dreaded will, and God's plan is to "finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth" (Romans 9:28, KJV). Another way to say this is that God is going to "nip sin in the bud." God has quarantined the reason for sin (humanity's will) on earth until the Day of Judgment.

Is it possible that God gave the human race a will so that we can choose to love Him rather than be forced to? God said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16, KJV). Let me back up John 15:16 with more words from Jesus: "No man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of the Father" (John 6:65, ASV). When a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior, they for the first time do the will of the heavenly Father. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40, KJV). For most people, the will must first be broken in order for them to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.

World, Biblical, and church history have proven the futility of humanity's efforts to submit their will to the Lord. For now, it is true that Christians are supposed to submit to the Lord—but once again, let me reiterate that our will is why it is a daily struggle. Like the Law that was put in place to show people that they are sinners, the will was left intact and active in the flesh to show why we are sinners. Answer the following questions: Why would you want a will other than the will of your heavenly Father? What good reason can you think of that would necessitate you having access to your will? Why do you want to keep something that you will never need to use (circumcision—foreskin—circumcision of the heart)? If this does not make sense, keep reading, it will.

So can we remove our will? Only God can remove free will, because it requires spiritual surgery – circumcision of the heart. I believe that to remove our will, God requires from the children of the kingdom a realization of its destructiveness and then a volunteered surrender. This gives proof that the lesson was learned. Remember, our Father is a master teacher who has been patiently teaching the human race a pivotal lesson about humanity's will. The day will come when all believers will eagerly surrender to God their hearts for its circumcision to remove the will.

The timeframe for the removal of the will—or more accurately, the circumcision of the heart—can be ascertained by reviewing when a male child was circumcised under the Old Testament law. It happened on the eighth day: “And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any foreigner that is not of thy seed” (Genesis 17:12 ASV). The circumcision of the heart will happen on the day when eternity begins – on God's cosmic calendar that is the eighth day.

Does the following verse in God's Word make more sense to you? "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:28–29, ASV). Like the Old Testament circumcision that removed what was not needed: the foreskin. Likewise, God's circumcision will remove that, which is not needed: the will.

God expects humanity to come to an understanding about their will without Him spelling it out for them. This is not the only spiritual issue that self-awareness is required before God can proceed. For instance, to be saved, a person must acknowledge their sins and confess they need a Savior. Let us visit the story of the rich young ruler to see how God deals with those who have not come to a full understanding of certain truths. In the case of the rich young ruler, it is the understanding that he was a sinner. This young man wanted eternal life and asked what he had to do. Christ said that he had to obey the commandments, and the man said, "All these have I kept from my youth up" (Luke 18:21, KJV). What Jesus said next was proof that God expects humanity to come to an acknowledgment of certain spiritual matters on his or her own. The lack of awareness of personal sin in this man's mind caused Jesus to change His message of grace to a response about works, "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (Luke 18:22, KJV).

Surrendering our hearts for its circumcision will not leave us without a will; we will have a new heart that beats to the rhythm of God's perfect will. We will still be able to choose and have preferences, but our choices will no longer have selfish agendas behind them. From that which is pure and righteous will we choose, because God has replaced our will with His perfect will. What would it be like in a world in which God's will reigns supreme? It will be paradise—

just as it was back in the Garden of Eden, the place humanity gave up so they could create their own paradise by establishing righteousness by works and maintaining compliance to the Law using their willpower. Great idea.