

Oh Christian, where did you learn that?

For all our exposure to the Bible, we Christians do pick up some incredible, often self-justifying, but ruinous theories about God. Some of the more common theories include:

The Christian who says “I don’t really consult God, I don’t know what discernment means, I simply assume that everything that happens to me is directly or indirectly from God”

We are born-again Christians but just like the unsaved, we always do our own thing. We walk by sight in the spiritual emptiness of our own intellects. Other than knowing in our hearts that God forgave our past sins because of what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross (which knowledge was actually revealed to us by God’s Spirit) we insist everything else must come to us through our natural senses and be capable of being initially understood by our reasoning natural mind.

Consequently, since we only believe what we can see, we are largely circumstance driven and ruled people. When things go well we are O.K. but when things go wrong, which is most of the time, we remain on the unhappy treadmill of trying to fix our circumstances. So, we become “If only I had a better or change of _____ (car, house, spouse, job, appearance etc.) I would be happy” type of people. Even when we achieve our “If only I had”, it remains a mystery to us why we quickly again aren’t truly happy.

Even though the Bible says that “**The whole world is under the control of the wicked one**” (1 John 5:19 NIV), we stubbornly hold the view that God is in control and everything that happens to me, good or bad, must be from God. The Bible’s teachings that Christians are to discern, as in hear from God, what things are of the world, or of the flesh, or of the devil, and therefore not of God but to be resisted, are foreign to us. We don’t believe its possible to know God’s will before acting, therefore we plough on hoping that if something is not God’s will He will somehow forcibly stop us from doing it (even though He didn’t stop Adam and Eve). As a result most of our decisions and choices are outside and contrary to the will of God. When we end up suffering because of our own choices, which were without God’s input, we might religiously claim that we are suffering for Christ. Needless to say we’re not very eager to share our type of Christianity with others.

1 Cor 6:9 ...**Do not be deceived...**

The Christian who says “I tried standing on the (written) promises of God, but it didn’t work, for you just never know with God and besides you’re not really supposed to know”.

We are Christians who have been around awhile and we’ve seen a thing or two. We believe that the Bible is the word of God and sometimes even try our best to stand on scripture promises that we think apply to our case. When things don’t work out as we had hoped we either assume that it just must not have been God’s will, or we get very discouraged and either secretly or openly conclude that God’s promises just don’t work.

We are quick to pass on to others whenever we hear of someone who was “a good Christian” who tried standing on one of God’s promises and it didn’t work. We are now like others who say you never can really know with God, sometimes it works sometimes it doesn’t; we just don’t see the relevance of faith. Even though Jesus said “**According to your faith be it unto you**” and “**Whatever you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them**” – Mat. 9:29, Mark 11:24. We believe, based on our experience, that it’s presumptuous to say you’re believing God for something. Also we think that to say such things takes away from God’s sovereignty and puts Him in the position of responding to our will rather than our responding to His will. (We don’t allow of course for the possibility that God in His Sovereignty could personally give us a promise, and the faith to believe Him for its fulfillment). We basically prefer to judge God and His promises based on our own experiences and those of others close to us, rather than to re-examine our circumstances in the light of God’s word as revealed to us by His Spirit.

We have never seriously considered either of the following two realities:

(a) If you give me a list of all the things you might say to me and promise me sometime in my life, but have not actually said to me yet, that it would be very unwise of me to select something from that list and try and stand on it and make it come to pass - until you had in fact said it to me. So it is with the Bible – in one sense this is a list of all the sayings of God, sayings that God may at some point say to me but hasn’t yet. If I then pick a promise from the list and try to stand on it, but God hasn’t yet spoken it to me personally, is it then fair for me to judge God when inevitably the promise doesn’t come to pass? Only the Spirit of God can breathe life into a dead written word of scripture and cause it to become a spoken living word to me personally which I then hear inaudibly in my heart. Christianity is a relationship with a living God.

(b) When an unsaved person attends an evangelical Gospel meeting, but doesn’t get born again – what are we to conclude ?

- That Christianity doesn’t work?
- That you just never know with God?
- That he just wasn’t good enough to deserve it?
- That it must not have been God’s will?

No, since we know “**That God loves and desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth**” but that only “**whosoever believes the truth will receive everlasting life**” (1 Tim. 2:4, John 3:16) we must conclude that either the unsaved person didn’t hear the truth in his heart or didn’t fully believe it (at least yet).

Despite this simple explanation of how initial salvation works, when it comes to most of the other promises of God in the Bible its we Christians who are quick to draw the above four wrong conclusions for why a particular promise didn’t come to pass.

1 Cor 15:33 **Do not be deceived...**

The Christian who says “If it’s meant to be it will be, and so I don’t bother the devil and he doesn’t bother me”

We are often sincere Christians, admittedly without much deeper knowledge of God’s truth, who have found a way around any direct responsibility for what happens in our lives. We simply believe that what will be, will be, if it’s meant to happen it will. In fact this is how we determine God’s will, we see what ends up happening, and then conclude whatever it was had to be God’s will. We don’t pray believing prayers because our prayers always include the doubting “if it be your will”. With this fatalistic approach to life we don’t see much of a role for the devil since God’s will is going to be done anyway.

Well, was God’s will done with Adam and Eve or Cain or Noah’s generation or Esau or Israel’s entry into and conduct in the Promised Land or Saul or Solomon or Israel’s split into two kingdoms and their respective captivities? No, why? **“Because they would not be obedient to the voice of God, therefore they limited the Holy One of Israel”** (Deut. 8:20, Psa. 78:41). If God’s will were automatically to be done on earth, Jesus would not have asked us in the Lord’s prayer to pray (and believe) that God’s will would be done here on earth – an earth that 1st John 5:19 reveals is under the dominion of God’s enemy Satan. Satan of course received that dominion when Adam and Eve believed his deceiving words. It is because man surrendered to the devil the dominion on earth that God had given him, a sovereign God now needs tender hearted Christians to receive both the knowledge of His will and the faith to believe Him for it, in order for His will to be done. That’s why **“God’s eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are fully His”** (2 Chron. 16:9).

Sadly it seems not many Christian hearts are available to God to learn of His will, trust Him for it and when needed pray His will into existence. Therefore most of what happens on earth, wars, crimes, poverty, sickness, family breakups and man’s prideful elevation of himself to be his own god, is in direct opposition to God’s will.

James 1:16 ...**Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**

How then can God’s will actually be accomplished in our lives?

We have seen that among other things the Bible is a list of God’s potential promises to each of us. It has been estimated that there are 7000 such promises in the Bible. When God finds a hearing heart He can then by His Spirit speak one of those promises to that heart. Jesus said, **“My sheep hear my voice”**. In order for that promise to come to pass, for God’s will to be done, everything hinges on the answers to the following questions:

- Did I hear God speak to my heart a Spirit breathed scripture?
- Did I believe in my heart what He said to me?
- Have I acted like, by what I say and do, that I believed what I heard?

What will always without fail happen when the answer to all three of these questions is yes – a Christian’s heart hears a promise from God, truly believes it and acts accordingly retaining those precious words in his heart? The promise always comes to pass. How do we know? Because God who spoke the promise never lies. “..**Has He said it and will He not do it, has He spoken it and will He not make it good?**” – Num. 23:19. Remember this is not me selecting a written promise and hoping God will make it good, this is God Himself, the eternally righteous one, giving me His word, His unbreakable word!

Heaven and earth may pass away but God’s word to one of His children who lives in and trusts and obeys Christ, is eternally true. In fact “**All the promises of God, in Christ, are yes and, in Christ, amen, to the Glory of the Father by us**” – 2 Cor. 1:20.

If however, I don’t hear God’s voice because my heart is hard, or when I hear Him speak a promise I just flat don’t believe it and therefore don’t act like its true, can that promise ever come to pass in my life? No, not unless God can find a tender hearted substitute Christian to hear and believe Him in prayer on my behalf – a true but rare intercessor.

What do you suppose then is Satan’s chief tactic, according to the parable of the sower and the seed, to prevent God’s will being done in my life? His chief tactic is either to stop me hearing the voice of God, perhaps by convincing me there is no such thing, or, if I learn the truth and start to hear God speaking scriptures to me, to immediately come and try to steal those words out of my heart so that I no longer believe them. This, according to Mark chapter 4 and other places, Satan tries to do by stirring up opposition and trouble, against me, inducing me to worry and to not trust God, encouraging me to keep caving in to the wants and desires of my flesh, and deceiving me to put my trust in material things.

I may think that I’m having nothing to do with the devil but if I don’t regularly hear God’s voice and then speak His words to others, then the master of deception has successfully blinded my eyes to the truth. But Jesus came to preach the recovery of sight to the blind.

So then its from Satan that we Christians hear and learn these soul destroying deceptions

Rev 12:9 ...**Called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world...**

Are you serious? How is this possible that Satan deceives so many? He does it through secretly introducing his thoughts into our thought lives. And his thoughts always question, challenge, and lie against the truth of God’s words. For Jesus said he is the father of lies:

2 Cor 2:11 **Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his thoughts** (devices).

You mean Satan, and his angels (demons), can deceive people, non-Christians and Christians alike, about the true teachings of God? Yes, these spirits seduce people with half truths and lies, teaching doctrines that oppose or twist the teachings of God’s word.

1 Tim 4:1-2 **Now the Holy Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,**

God, who is Spirit gives His light to our spirit, which the Bible also refers to as our heart, for it's the spirit of our mind. Satan, who has no spiritual light, attempts to deal with us at the level of our heads, or intellects or our natural minds, which, like him also have no light. If we, as Christians, choose not to live in our hearts, where Christ lives and where we can listen to God's voice or thoughts, then we will be wide open to the great deceiver, Satan, and prone to listening unawares to his thoughts, that is to the voice of the stranger.

Prov 20:27 **The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD...**

1 Sa 16:7 **...The LORD looks at the heart.**

John 10:27 (Jesus)...**My sheep hear My voice...and they follow Me.**

John 10:5 **...For they do not know the voice of strangers.**

And what determines whether we live in our heads, subject to the voice of strangers, or in our hearts, subject to the voice of God? Our own will or soul. We decide which of our two natures we live in, our human nature known as our flesh or our new nature or our spirit:

Rom 8:6 **To be** (to have our will) **controlled by human nature results in death** (to our relationship with God); **to be** (to have our will) **controlled by the Spirit** (God's spirit ruling in our spirits) **results in life and peace.** TEV

Our own will must choose not only to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, but also to receive from God a love for the truth. Otherwise it is a certainty that we will be deceived by lies:

2 Thess 2:10-11 **...Those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them** (or allow them TLB) **strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,**

These potentially life giving and eternal life saving truths may only seem like so much religious silliness to us if we try and wrap our heads around them. Because it's only with our spirit, or heart, that we can see, understand and know the truth of God's words:

1 Cor 2:14 **The unspiritual self, just as it is by nature, can't receive the things of God's Spirit. There's no capacity for them. They seem like so much silliness. Spirit can be known only by spirit — God's Spirit and our spirits in open communion.** MSGE

These are some of the things the Bible has to say. And the Bible says that its words are God's words and they are unbreakably true. The question then is; will you and I allow God to shine the light of His truth into our hearts and free us from Satan's deceptions?

John 8:32 (Jesus) **And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**