

Becoming Human Again: a Theology of Sanctification
Lesson 12: On Discerning the Will of God & the Leading of the Spirit
[Part 3]: Applying the Preceptive Will of God to Big-Decisions

I. **“Big-decision” making:**

II. **On the one hand, big-decisions are not wholly neutral or indifferent (*adiaphoron*):**

A. By rejecting the third-will theory, we run the risk of reasoning as follows:

1. *Premise 1:* Whatever is not required or prohibited is indifferent
2. *Premise 2:* Big decisions are neither required nor prohibited
3. *Conclusion:* Therefore, big-decisions are indifferent

B. Premise 1 is true; but premise 2 is true in only a trivial sense, namely, that our big-decisions are neither *expressly* commanded nor forbidden in scripture

C. Premise 2 is false in a non-trivial sense: though scripture does not expressly command or prohibit our big-decisions per se, it does regulate and constrain them by “good and necessary consequence” (WCF, 1,6]

“The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, *or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture:*

D. Good and necessary consequences occur in at least two ways:

1. First, the application of specific precepts to specific courses of action

2. Second, the application of general precepts to all actions whatever

3. Hence Paul’s challenge to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23-33)

E. The “insufficiency of Scripture”? A reply to T. David Gordon on the WCF [1,6]:

“The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, *or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture*: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be *ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed*” [emphasis mine].

III. **On the other hand, “big-decisions” are not straightforward acts of obedience or disobedience:**

- A. As noted, big-decisions are neither *expressly* commanded nor forbidden:
- B. Generally speaking, big-decisions are not even straightforwardly subject to the “good and necessary consequences” of biblical precept:
 - 1. Many big-decisions involve complicated extenuating circumstances
 - 2. Most big-decisions are really multiple actions rolled into one, which means we must apply multiple precepts at a variety of levels
 - 3. Some biblical precepts do not, by themselves, imply anything concrete about which way to go in our big-decisions
 - 4. Often the same precept can validate two divergent courses of action
 - 5. Often the same precept can be used “for” *and* “against” the same decision
 - 6. Different precepts can validate different courses of action:

IV. **Since many of our big-decisions are neither indifferent nor acts of obedience (or disobedience), we should categorize them as acts of maturity (or immaturity)**

- Hebrews 5:11-6:2
- 1 Cor 3:1-3
- 1 Cor 14:20
- Philip 3:15
- Eph 3:11-15

V. **Criteria for wise decision-making:**

- A. Relevance of the “facts-values” distinction:
- B. *Values*-consideration: Have you examined your heart, to determine whose kingdom you are seeking?
- C. *Facts*-consideration: Have you sought to understand all the variables and circumstances surrounding your options, including long-term-consequences?
- D. Quality controls:
 1. Have you formed a thorough pros and cons list?
 2. Have you sought counsel?
 3. Have you given ample time to think it through, and in different frames of mind?
- E. Are you praying rightly—not for revelation, but for illumination?

VI. **Questions:**

- A. If God commands us to be wise, and we make a wise decision, doesn't that mean we “obeyed”? Or, if decide unwisely, doesn't that mean we “disobeyed”?
- B. What do we do in the face of equally good options?
- C. What does one do later if they made a bad decision?