

Non Sola Scriptura: the Blackaby view of God's will — 2

by Dan Phillips

Now to the most potentially *disastrous* aspect of this teaching, in **pastoral** terms: **living it out.**

Non-moral choices. In their eagerness to



downplay the Scriptures' sufficiency, the Blackabys point out that God told many people to do things that were not **reasonable** nor **morally** necessary, such as where Abram or Isaac chose to live, or whether Peter or Andrew continued in their employment (p. 46). **Remember this:** God might lead us to do things that "make us *uncomfortable*" (p. 44), are *not logical*, and are "*unorthodox*" (p. 46; they do not mean *doctrinally* unorthodox), and may involve "surrender[ing] ... goals *and comforts* in order to become involved in God's activity" (p. 46).

The terrible threat. In what areas does God tell us what to do? Choice of *school, career, church, ministry...* even choice of *mate*. Oh? Does that mean that there is "only one right person"? Yep (p. 79). What if I *miss* that one right person? God may give us (second-best — or third? seventeenth? four hundred thirtieth?) "marriage and a fulfilled life," *but* "**Failing to walk with God always carries a cost...**" (p. 80, emphases added).

Whoa! Pause. Seriously, stop everything and *think* that one over.

Imagine you are a poor soul, **married** to a poor soul afflicted with the Blackaby view.



Your spouse believes that he **missed the "one [that was] best suited"** for him (p. 79). He *missed "the* life partner He has chosen for you" (p. 79), "God's **best**" (ibid.), "**that someone** who would have been God's **special gift** to" him (p. 80). *Every time he looks at you*, he might be thinking, "second-best." *Every time he says he loves you*, he might be thinking, "but **not** like I'd have loved that special someone."

No lie. I am not making this up. I don't have to. I actually knew a girl, decades ago, who lived in fear of just this situation.

Her friend's mother "felt" she was "called" to be a missionary. Ah, but she met and married a man who *wasn't* so "called." And now this woman would spend the rest of her life knowing that she had *missed* God's calling, had *missed* God's will for her life! She had settled for second-best. She had *married* second-best.

Did you get that? That was the woman's attitude, *and she communicated that to her daughter!* About *her father!* (And wouldn't that mean that the *daughter* was second-bes



t, too? *Not* "the child who should have been"?)

So the daughter knew, and now *her friend* knew! Word was really getting around, about this poor sap. Can you count the things *Biblically wrong* in this picture so far? Even beyond that the whole concept is the *precise opposite* of what Scripture says on the subject (1 Corinthians 7:39)?

So now her friend lived in fear that she might meet and love the wrong man — or, more to the point, *any* man other than *the one right man* — and spend the rest of her life knowing she was out of God's *best* will for her life.

See? "**Train-wreck.**"



"Ludicrous"? So how far does this go? What does this "will" include? The Blackabys must get that question a lot, and it clearly stings them. Their reaction is as **rhetorically strong** as it is **logically vacant**.

One of the most ludicrous questions people ask is: "Should I seek God's will about everything? Must I pray and ask Him what brand of toothpaste I should buy and which breakfast cereal I should eat?" ...Clearly some mundane aspects of our lives are not life-and-death matters; nor will they influence eternity. They simply require wisdom in our decisions (p. 47)

But why is it "ludicrous"? *How do we know* they "are not life-and-death matters" that



will not influence eternity? After all, **remember** that the Blackabys *belabored* the point that God had specific directions for "mundane," *non-moral* matters such as where to live, where to eat dinner, where to *sit* to eat dinner, whether to stay in a given business. How do we know what *God* considers "mundane," given that the Blackabys demand that He direct every detail of our lives, *just* as Jesus did with

the apostles?

No eternal consequences? How do we know there are not eternal consequences?

The Blackabys ridicule the (broadly and deeply Biblical) "extreme view that everything we do, right down to the smallest detail of our lives, is prescribed by God" (p. 61). Their phrasing is characteristically sloppy here, but they *seem* to be denying the pan-Biblical truth of providence.

Well then, *if* God does not actually have a handle on "the smallest detail" of my life, and *if* He has all sorts of things He wants me, Dan Phillips, to figure out that He wants me to do — without the Bible, by struggling to hear and discern His voice and apply all the complex Blackaby-invented signs and tests — then how can *I* know where it stops?

Toothpaste and eternity. I'm *absolutely serious*. Think about it. The Blackabys scoff at toothpaste-selection. Well, how do I know?

If I pick this tube of toothpaste right in front of me, I will get to the check out line a few seconds earlier than if I bend down and reach back to pick the one near the floor, where the front packages are missing. Suppose that means that I will pick *checkstand 12*, whereas otherwise I would have picked *checkstand 8*. Suppose God *wanted* — in the Blackaby-God's weak, whispery, ambiguous way — for me to pick checkstand 8, because He was *hoping* I would *then* hear His *next* little mumbly nudge telling me to witness to *that* checker, because He had been preparing her heart to hear the Gospel *from me*.



But alas! I pick the closer toothpaste. I go to checkstand 12. I am now *out* of God's perfect will. Uh-oh. What happens when I am out of God's perfect, individual will? The Blackabys told me: "The **consequences**" can be "**disastrous**" (p. 48)! And so...

- ...the checker *doesn't* hear the Gospel from me, and *goes to Hell* instead of Heaven.



- ...I walk out into the parking lot 12 seconds early, am *killed* by a *white van*! Aigh! Bam! *Dead!*
- I *never* write that commentary on Proverbs that would have changed hermeneutical history, or that book on Calvinistic Dispensationalism that would have brought all Biblical Christians together in the truth, or preach to tens of thousands of others God was preparing to hear the Gospel *just from me!*
- ...and *they* all go to *Hell*, too!

Now maybe you chuckle, or maybe you're angry. But ***there are NO OBJECTIVE OR BIBLICAL CONTROLS in the Blackabys' construct*** to rule any of this out!

That's not a big deal?

Obey/disobey. This is not an exaggeration. The Blackabys constantly speak of divining this whispery, vaporous leading of God in terms of **obedience** and **disobedience** (pp. 45, 61, etc.) And well they should! If it is God's *will*, then I *must* obey, mustn't I? After all, *God* is speaking! Does it *get* more authoritative than that? Can *anyone* think of a



time when God says, "Do A," when it is morally indifferent to obey or disobey? Disobeying God is the very **definition** of **sin** (James 4:17).

Yet I am not sure the Blackabys have even thought this through, even though they're famous for advocating this view. They insist that this will of God, this voice, that they want people to pursue may well *not* involve choices "between right and wrong" (pp. 42, 43). Huh? If God *tells* me to do A, doesn't that *make* it a choice between right and

wrong? If He says, in that whispery, unsure murmur I'm to pant after, "Dan, do A," and I do B — haven't I done *wrong*? Even if God is "saying," "Dan, buy a white car," and I stubbornly insist on buying a car with a real color — am I not doing *wrong*? Am I not *sinning*?

And this brings us to a question I really would like to ask the Blackabys.

Supposing I was (somehow) born untainted by Adam's sin.



Supposing I never sinned in my entire life. And then...

Supposing God was "telling" me (Blackaby-style) to become a *truck-driver*, and I became a *cook*...

...would Jesus have had to **die** to keep me from going to **Hell** for being a **cook** instead of a truck-driver?

Or for picking the wrong seminary? Marrying the wrong person? Buying the wrong toothpaste? Going to the wrong showing of "Fireproof"?

Here is where I would find out how serious they were about their notions. If God *directs me* to do something, and I *do not do* that, then I have *sinned*, and I deserve *Hell* for it.

It's just not funny anymore, is it?

No telling who picks up a book. Perhaps most readers will assume the Blackabys' work will fall into the hands of basically stable, sober-minded people. They won't go nuts with the Blackabys' theories. In other words, they won't really take them seriously.

But why not? Suppose, instead, a less-stable, less well-taught, more *obsessive* person comes on their work. He shifts into overdrive at the thought of discerning this uncomfortable, inconveniencing, fantastic guidance from God. Now *everything and anything* is fraught with numinous overtones! Every "nudge" (their word) or circumstance or random word or even (all possible means of God's guidance, according to the Blackabys; cf. pp. 56-59) *might be the voice of God*, speaking to him! Miss it, and face terrible consequences!

So this poor wretch flees the job he's trained for, yanks his family across the country, moves them into a cardboard box to pick over scraps while he starts harassing strangers in Christ's name, because of a *voice* he thinks he's hearing... and where could it end? Do not dismiss this: remember, God might lead us to do things that "make us *uncomfortable*" (p. 44), are *not logical*, and are "*unorthodox*" (p. 46), and may involve "surrender[ing] ... goals *and comforts*" (p. 46).



If there's a one-for-one carry-on from the Bible, maybe this unstable soul will "feel moved" to have his family live on grasshoppers and honey, like John the Immerser. Or maybe he'll "feel led" to walk around naked, like Isaiah; or cook his food over dung, like Ezekiel. Or maybe he'll tell a ship's captain to throw him overboard, to end a storm, like Jonah.

There are *no real, objective, Biblical controls* against such behavior in this reckless article.

This is one of the most pastorally-irresponsible articles I've read, from orthodox Christian writers.

Conclusion: worse? Yes. In conclusion, I think this view of God's will is *worse* bondage than Pharisaism in this regard.

At least in Pharisaism, you knew where you stood. If you threw up a rock on the Sabbath and caught it with the same hand, you'd violated the Sabbath. It may be a silly rule, but it's discrete, it's distinct, it's *there*.



With this view, *you never know!* You might have sinned *merely* by picking up the rock! Or maybe you picked up the wrong rock! Or maybe you picked it up with the wrong hand! *You never know!* Since the Blackabys stress that this "will" isn't necessarily about right and wrong, it could be about anything... and so ***everything*** becomes a *matter of right and wrong!*

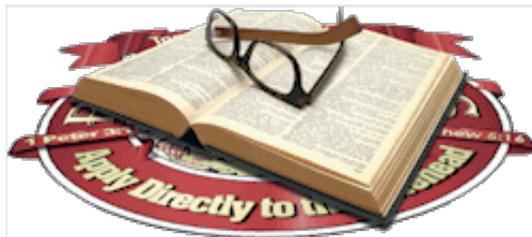
There is no basis for knowing, no objective control, as long as it is not directly against Scripture.

Summary. After *pro forma* niceties about Scripture, the Blackabys assure Christians that what they *really* need for a *dynamic, personal, God-pleasing* relationship is not to be found there. They would send them on a lifelong rabbit chase for which Scripture can offer no guidance, because it envisions no such pursuit.

Among the products are irrational, unstable, irresponsible and/or chaotic lives. Unbelievers (and believers) who are wronged, hurt, or simply appalled at reckless behavior by the "I-just-felt-led" set *will not* glorify God for it. Just "play the God-card," and you're off the hook.

What glorifies God is not a bunch of people acting like fools in His name. I have this notion that **God** *knows best* what will really glorify Him. Hear Him:

See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land



that you are entering to take possession of it. 6 Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' 7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? 8 And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

(Deuteronomy 4:5-8)

A better way. Thank God Scripture points us in no such direction! **Thank God** that

Scripture is wholly sufficient for teaching, correcting and directing us, so that we may be *fully* equipped to serve God (2 Timothy 3:15-17)! God *does* talk to us. He talks to us through His living, truly-sufficient Word (Psalm 119:24; Proverbs 6:20-23; Hebrews 3:7-11; 4:12).

And **thank God** that He does in fact exhaustively control *everything* that comes to pass, so that His children can *never* put themselves out of the sphere of His love and blessing and good will (Psalm 115:3; Proverbs 16:1, 4, 9, 33; Romans 8:28-39; Ephesians 1:11).

PS — I did ask God to guide me in writing this review. If you agree with the Blackaby position... how do you know He didn't?

addendum — after yesterday's post, a reader offered a word of testimony, which I've shared [here](#).

