

'Wilt Thou?' 'I Will!'

The Place of the Will in Christian Experience

By Rev. Warren, McIntyre, U. S. A.

Going about in the work of evangelism and after dealing personally with many individuals, I have become convinced that something needs to be said that will help people to understand the importance of the human will in Christian experience.

That the will is the prime human factor in man's relation to God as his Saviour is so basic to a sound well established Christian experience that those who do not recognize this fact, and act accordingly, make up the major part of those who are unstable and repeatedly backsliders.

Let us take a moment and notice what Rev. 22:17 says, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him that heareth say, Come. And let him take of the water of life freely". Not just whosoever, (that leaves something lacking), but whosoever will. It is the decision of the will that is the determining human factor. Psa. 110:3 says the same thing. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power". That is: God is able to work the wonders of his grace when people are willing. When the Holy Spirit pleads and the human will agrees—then God can wonderfully save.

In creating us, God built into the very structure of our being a set of tools, as it were, with which we weigh, evaluate, guide and construct our lives. These tools are reason, judgment and the will. Reason looks at a given matter from every angle, turns it over, takes it apart, examines it and lays the facts before the judgment. Judgment weighs the facts, listens to the plea of desire, draws upon experience for evidence for or against, hears what conscience has to say, considers the suggestion of Satan and the advice of God, draws its conclusion and submits its recommendation to the will for decision as to action or restraint. The will, which is the executive agent of personality, activates its decision for action or restraint and thus determines the course which a man takes. This action of the will determines moral attitude, action, relationship and responsibility. It is thus that the soul maintains innocence before God or comes under a cloud of guilt.

The whole matter resolves itself into this simple form: every sinner becomes what he is by a decision, or repeated decisions, of his will: Christian becomes what he is by a decision, or repeated decisions, of his will. The following will illustrate.

The work of the Holy Spirit in conviction may be deep and pungent and fully sufficient to lead to salvation, but there will be no finding forgiveness and peace with God until by a decision of the will one turns from sin and, meeting the conditions of surrender, repentance and faith, obtains the Divine pardon.

The work of the Holy Spirit in warning of the dangerous nature of carnality and in convincing the believer of his need of a pure heart may be definite and fully adequate to bring him into a clear experience of sanctifying grace, but he will never obtain a pure heart until by a decision of his will yields to God, makes a complete consecration, enters into a holy covenant with the Lord and seeks the sanctifying indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

There is no keeping saved apart from repeated decisions of the will, as problems arise, to agree with God and side with Jesus. The

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power of God to keep is effective only in conjunction with the decision of the believer's will to co-operate with Christ by obediently walking in light and keeping true. When the believer thus furnishes the will to be kept, God furnishes the keeping power.

There is no growth in grace without a firmly maintained decision of the will to make progress spiritually. The point of greatest weakness in the Christian experience of many people is the lack of a definitely made and aggressively maintained decision of the will to grow spiritually, walking and working in glad co-operation with the Holy Spirit as He seeks to teach, guide and mature.

There is no keeping true to one's appointed calling in life, whatever it may be, apart from a vigorously maintained decision of the will to carefully and constantly be obedient to the whole will of God for heart and life. Paul, in Phil. 3:13, 14, states how he had this issue definitely settled, how he kept his will set: "This one thing I do . . . I press toward the mark".

There is no maintaining of a genuine devotional life in the reading of God's Word and the kind of praying that brings blessings and help apart from a settled fixedness of the will to do this "in spite of" and "at any and all cost".

In every case, God, ready and anxiously willing after warning and pleading, has to await the decision of the human will. The will decides what God can or cannot do about saving sanctifying and keeping. Marvelous, astonishing fateful fact—salvation or damnation turns on a decision of a man's will.

Sinner friends, the provisions of grace are adequate, the promises of God are reliable, the blood of the Lamb is efficacious to cleanse, the constant help of the Holy Spirit is available. You can be a Christian if, when He deals with you, you set your will to co-operate with Him. This you must do very soon or, by your neglect, you will pass beyond all hope of salvation. Hesitancy and postponement ultimately, and often very quickly become fatal.

My Christian friend, if you want to do so, God will help you to maintain a firm decision of your will to walk humbly, to reject evil and do the right, to at once correct mistakes, rectify unintentional wrongs, heal accidental wounds, earnestly push on and keep true to Christ. Thus the Lord Jesus will aid and enable you to keep in constant victory. If you have not already done so, let's definitely settle it right now to keep your will doing its part in the maintaining of a good Christian experience. God is waiting to work out in your heart and life all the provisions of Calvary. This decision and set of your will to always co-operate with Him and not only determine your present happiness, but the future of your Christian experience, your character in this world and your destiny beyond the grave. Dear Lord Jesus, by Thy grace and the help of Thy Holy Spirit, enable me to so maintain this set of my will that I can know with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed".

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bothered at the way preachers and laymen wring their hands in despair, chanting an old dirge, "What can we do here?" to which they furnish their own reply, "We might as well quit. We can't do anything here!" Regarding this, Paul who knew the need of Patience said, "Be not weary in well doing."—Wesleyan Methodist.

Patience

By D. A. Manker

One of life's priceless jewels, Patience, adorns any life. And anyone is made ugly by a lack of it. Like a smile, Patience attracts, and like an "imp," "imp"atience repels. There is a certain awe that accompanies one's performance when the "imp" gets the place of the patience. Some revel in the swath they can cut when once they turn loose. But standing alone, or with the vanquished and the slain all around, he who has "lost his patience" has usually lost all.

A Chinaman listened to an argument between a Christian and a devotee of some pagan religion. His decision between the contestants was in favor of the Christian. When asked his reason, he said the Christian didn't shout, he didn't even lift his voice. He didn't "butt-in," he didn't scold! Said the Chinaman, "He must be right! When one is wrong he knows he cannot depend on what he says. His mere statements won't stand. He substitutes violence, shouting and threat!"

Everyone admires a person who can control his own spirit. He is said to be of nobler quality than "he that taketh a city." Tried often, sometimes irritated by a seeming willful, tantalizing effort to pull a Christian "off from his horse," continuing patience is the only victory. By loss of patience there is loss of prestige. Temper tantrums render a Christian as shorn of power and influence (and we might say self-respect) as is one's tormentor. Instead of two people classified one as victim and one as rogue, there results two rogues!

Patience, in most personalities, is a grace to be acquired by Divine aid alone. There are some naturally patient people but most of us are naturally belligerent, fighting (at least in attitude) "at the drop of the hat." Chagrin and remorse for past failures cannot render a cure. The "hickory-stick" may make it discreet for a child to curb his feelings, but it would take a big stick indeed to eliminate the feelings. Fortunately, one of the great miracles of grace lies in the realm of conquered emotions, of cleansed dispositions.

But there is another realm in which Patience shines. It is in the disappointments, delays and grind of difficult tasks and situations. These do not necessarily tempt to an aroused passion, but are more likely to depress, discourage and cloud every outlook. There is nothing for the farmer to "get mad at" when his crops fail. But he needs a lot of patience to cheerfully carry on. There is no one to scold when a minister finds his work at a stand-still but he may wish to move on to where he THINKS things will be different.

To forever wait for some longed-for-response to our "clear-as-day" reasoning takes patience. Do you have a bright idea? Have patience. Those you need to put it across will probably "come 'round" very slowly. Does someone promise to come to church and then forget it? Have patience. They may yet come. Does someone "let you down" after you have invested in them? Have patience. John Mark made quite a man of himself after one failure. Peter made a good "come-back" after he "let-down" someone more important than you!

From where I sit, my chief concern is not that things move slowly, that the world is hard to reach, that it takes too much time to get people settled in their faith. I'm more

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