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Human Will

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-- *Commentaries from past newsletters* --

It had been my intent to dwell at length on the subject of the human will, but my excitement about the Exodus (Exodus is an umbrella organization for ministries to homosexuals) meeting seemed more important. Even so, it seems that my experiences at Exodus and the human will do relate. All of the people at that meeting had to will to come out of the homosexual lifestyle. No one can ever change his course in life until he or she wills to change.

What is will? It is a function of the human mind made up of the energy of the spirit, and the direction of the soul. It is a force that activates or inhibits us. Will is the force that drives men to climb Mt. Everest, to go to the moon, to win a race or football game, to be a good husband or wife, or to become a Christian. It is the force that aids a person in recovering from homosexuality, or the residuals of abuse in childhood, an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia or from alcohol and drug addiction. Will can be weak and it can be strong.

Will is always future directed. One can not will something in the past. It can only be exercised in the present to affect the future.

Will is affected by salvation. Before we become Christians we are not able to live a righteous life. Paul is emphatic that the unregenerate person cannot keep from sinning. Even if he wills to stop he cannot (Rom. 8:6). Our human nature, or our instinctual drives, give rise to behaviors that are in conflict with God's will for our lives. This changes with salvation. Now we can stop sinning. Why? Because we have another Spirit that energizes us, and a soul that has accepted God's laws and made them our wants. It is not that God has usurped our will, it is that his will is part of us. We have installed him in our mind. Therefore, because we have his mind our will is to do his will. We do it because we know that his will is right and good and perfect.

There are many factors that influence our will. Those of us who do marriage counseling wonder how some women or men can put up with unfaithful husbands and wives. How people allow themselves to be dominated and held in bondage to parents, or friends. How homosexuals can continue a promiscuous lifestyle that will eventually lead to HIV infection and, in time, AIDS. How an anorexic can continue to exercise 4 or 5 hours a day and continue to eat only 600 to 800 calories. They do these things with the knowledge that they are self-destructive and hurtful to those who love them. Our job as counselors is to appeal to their will so it can be redirected toward right behaviors. But it is a hard job.

How does one redirect the self-destructive will of others? To begin we have to recognize the fact that the human will does not tolerate the imposition of another will above its own. This statement is a dogma. The only way one can redirect the will of another is to appeal to it. We have to persuade them. It is important for all of us to know that God never imposes his will on us. He instead appeals to our will by offering us choices and reminding us of the consequences of the choices. There is a hooker in all this though. God has first loved us and demonstrated his love for us by sending his son to die for us. If we have responded to that love, and loved him back we will want to please him. We do so by being obedient to his commandments, by praising and worshipping him, and living a life that glorifies him.

It is because our will has been redirected by the love we have for one another that our life changes so dramatically with salvation. It is even further energized when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Our appeal, then, has to be made in love. Reason alone is not going to appeal to the will of another. It can only appeal effectively if it is offered in love.

Another important point that needs to be made here is that it is only by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that we can respond to the high calling that Jesus has given us. It is not enough that we believe in God and Jesus. It is not enough to go to church on Sunday, take part in other church activities and pay our tithe. It is not enough to talk about Jesus in our church and Sunday school classes. Jesus was very specific that we should be witnesses for him in all the world. This means that at every point in our everyday existence we are to lift him up and witness to his saving power. It is a dangerous thing to do this. His very name is an offense to those who are being lost. We can expect to be treated with contempt and hostility if we talk about him. We can even expect to be physically mistreated if we persist. He told us so!

To do God's will is dangerous business. Do you know how to determine his will for your life? Most Christians say they do not. The rules are well defined. They are quite simple.

1. Absolutely surrender your will to God.
2. Know what the Bible says about any decision you plan to make.
3. Ask yourself how you feel about it.
4. If it is an important decision, seek mature and competent Christian counsel.
5. Use sanctified common sense.
6. Ask yourself if the doors are open for you to do what you want to do. Are there too many obstacles, or is the pathway straight and clear?

If a person follows these rules they will almost never make the wrong decision.

The Exodus meeting demonstrated to me that grace abounds when sin abounds. As the militancy of the gay liberation movement has increased, God has increased the power of his salvation through organizations that are affiliated with Exodus. There are many Christian ministries to homosexuals. If a homosexual wills to exit the lifestyle, help is available. He, however, has to will to do so. He or she must be repentant, and willing to accept a totally new existence. Activities that seemed to be repugnant, and relationships that were not desirable have to be desirable. Since homosexual behavior is not pleasing to God. It has to be seen as sin and stopped. I emphasize this point. The person is not changing to please me, or any other significant person in their life. They must want to please God! Only then can they or will they change.