

SECTION NINE
THE ANALYSIS OF THE SOUL
(3)

THE WILL
CHAPTER ONE

THE BELIEVER'S WILL

Man's will is the organ with which man makes decisions. Our willingness or unwillingness, our wanting or not wanting, and our deciding or not deciding are all the functions of our will. The will of man is his "rudder." As a ship turns according to the rudder, a man moves according to his will.

Man's will can be said to be his true self, the man himself, because the will represents the man. All the actions of the will are actually the actions of this "man." When we say, "I am willing," we actually mean that our will is willing. When we say, "I want this" or "I decided to do this," it means our will wants it, or that our will decided it. The function of the will is to express the intention of our whole being. The emotion is only what we feel, the mind is only what we think, but the will is what we want. Hence, the will is the most important part of our whole being. Man's will is deeper than his emotion and mind. Therefore, when a believer pursues after the spiritual life, he has to pay attention to the will.

Many are misled to think that "religion" (using this word for the time being) is only a matter of the emotion, and that its only purpose is to make man's emotion comfortable and happy. There are others who think that "religion" should fit in with reason (mind), and that it should not be too slanted toward the emotion. Only a rational religion is believable to them. Little do they know that the real "religion" is neither for the emotion or the mind, but for man to obtain life in the spirit and to bring man's will into subjection to the will of God. If all our experiences do not bring us to the point where we willingly receive all the will of God, they are but very shallow. If the spiritual life of the believers does not find much expression in the will, what good does it do? In such a case, the will, which represents the self, remains the same.

The true way of salvation is to save a man's will. Whatever is not deep enough to save a man's will is vanity. All the wonderful feelings and clear thoughts are only external. A man can obtain happiness, comfort, and peace by believing in God. He can also understand the mysteries of God and have high, wonderful knowledge. Yet he still does not have the deepest union with God. Apart from the union of the will with God, there is no other union in this world. Therefore, after a believer has obtained life, in addition to his intuition, he should pay attention to his will.

FREE WILL

In speaking about man and man's will, we should always keep in mind that, as human beings, we have a free will. This means that man is self-governed; man has an independent will. Whatever is not approved by him cannot be forced upon him, and whatever he opposes cannot be pressed upon him. Having a free will means that man has his own opinion. Man is not a machine to be maneuvered by others. All the actions of a man are controlled by himself. Within man there is a will. This will controls the

things within and without. Man is not like a machine to be controlled by any power from outside. Within man there are governing principles that decide man's conduct for him.

This was the condition at the time of God's creation of man. God created a man, not a machine. God told him, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). In these verses we can only see God's command with persuasion and prohibition, but without compulsion. If Adam would have been willing to obey and not eat, it would have been Adam who so willed. When Adam became disobedient and ate, there was no way for God to stop him. This is free will. God put the responsibility of eating or not eating on man and allowed man to choose according to his free will. God did not create an Adam who could not sin, who could not disobey, or who could not steal. This would have made man a machine. God could advise, prohibit, and command, but the responsibility to obey was upon man. Because of His love, God cannot help but command in advance. But because of His righteousness, God will not force man to do anything that he is not willing to do. If man wants to obey God, it must be man himself who is willing; God will not force him. God may use many ways to make man willing, but unless man consents, God will not do anything to force him.

This is a very important principle. As we will see later, God's work never goes against this principle, even though the work of evil spirits' does. Therefore, we can differentiate what is of God and what is not.

THE FALL AND SALVATION

Man fell. This fall did great damage to man's free will. In the universe, on that day, it can be said that there were two great opposing wills. On the one hand, there was the holy, good will of God; on the other hand, there was the filthy, rebellious will of Satan. Between these two wills, there was the autonomous, independent, free will of man. When man listened to the word of the devil and disobeyed God, it seemed that he was answering God's will with an eternal "no" and answering the devil's will with an eternal "yes." Man's will became the slave of the devil after the fall because he exercised his own will to choose the devil's will. All of his activities became subject to the will of the devil. As long as man does not overthrow this initial surrender, his will is bound by the devil.

In man's fall, his position and condition became totally of the flesh. This flesh is corrupt to the uttermost. Hence, man's will, like his other faculties, is controlled by the flesh. In this dark situation, nothing that issues from man's will can please God. Even if man wants to seek after God, his activities remain in the realm of the flesh; they have no spiritual value. When he is in this condition, he can serve God in many ways according to his own ideas, but all these are merely "self-imposed" means of worshipping (Col. 2:23), and they are unacceptable to God.

Unless man receives God's new life and serves God in this new life, his activities are of the flesh no matter how he serves. Even if he has the intention to work for God and suffer for God, it is altogether vain. If man is not saved, his will may aspire for the high things; it may be toward good and toward God, but it is still useless because in God's eyes it is not a matter of how the fallen will wants to work for Him, but a matter of how He wants man to work for Him. Man may initiate and prepare many good works; he may think that this is serving God, but if the works are not initiated and carried out by God, man is just worshipping his own will!

The same is true in the matter of salvation. While man is in his flesh, even if he wants to be saved and have eternal life, this will cannot please God. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God..who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13). Even if man wants to be saved, he cannot make himself saved. The idea of wanting to be saved must come from God. Believers think that there is nothing better than a man who is trying to be saved, seek the way of life, and be a good disciple of Christ. But God tells us that in the matter of regeneration and in everything relating to God, man's will is useless.

There are many of God's children who do not understand why in John 1, God says that man's will is useless, while in Revelation He says, "Let him who wills take the water of life freely" (22:17). It seems in the latter case that man's own will is wholly responsible for his salvation. Furthermore, in John 5 the Lord Jesus spoke of the reason why the Jews were not saved. It was because "you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (v. 40). Here again man's will is responsible for man's perdition. Is the Bible contradictory on this matter? What is the purpose of such different speakings? If we understand the meaning of these verses, we will understand what God requires of us in our Christian life.

God's will is "not intending [willing] that any perish but that all advance to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9) because He "desires [wills] all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, this matter does not involve God making a decision as to who will be saved and who will perish; that question is settled. Now the question is what kind of attitude do sinners hold toward God's will. If a man is naturally religious or not worldly, or if he tries to be a Christian through his tradition, environment, or family, he will see that he is as far from God's life as all the other sinners. If he resolves, determines, and chooses to be a Christian on the basis of some sudden excitement or thrilling inspiration, his efforts are still useless. The main question is how does man treat God's will. God loves man, but is man willing to be loved? Christ wants man to come to Him, but is man willing to come? The Holy Spirit wants to give man life, but does man want to have life and live? Man's will is useful in the will of God. But the question remains, how will man's will treat God's will?

Have we seen the difference here? If a man initiates the pursuit of salvation, he will still perish. Many religionists of this world belong to this category. If, upon hearing the gospel, man is willing to receive what God wants to give him, he will be saved. One way is for man to consider himself as the source of initiation; the other is to place himself in a receiving position. One is for man to initiate; the other is for God to initiate and for man to accept His will. Therefore, these two do not contradict each other. Rather, they teach us a very important lesson. John 1 speaks of man being willing. John 5 and Revelation 22 speak of man accepting God's will. Hence, we see such expressions as "not willing" (John 5:40) and "wills" (Rev. 22:17). It is not a question of purpose, but a question of where the purpose comes from.

God instructs us that, even in such a great and wonderful thing as salvation, if it issues from the self, it will still not please God and will be rejected. If we want to advance in our spiritual life, we must understand all the principles God used to deal with us at the time we were saved because these original principles point out to us the principles we should live by in our spiritual life in the future. One of the greatest principles is that the intention of our flesh does not have any value before God. Whatever comes out of ourselves, that is, out of our old creation, is not acceptable to God. Even if we are

pursuing after something as wonderful and important as salvation, it will still be rejected by God. We should remember at all times that God does not care for the differences between good things, bad things, big things, and small things; God only asks where these things come from and whether or not they are initiated and carried out by Himself. We were not saved because we wanted to be saved, but because God wanted it to be so. Hence, in our entire life we should see that all activities, even the most wonderful ones, are completely useless unless the work is done by God through us. If we do not learn the principles for our living from the very first step of salvation, we will have endless failures afterwards.

As far as man's condition goes, while he was a sinner, his will was rebellious toward God. Therefore, in addition to giving man a new life (which we have covered before), God has to bring man back to Himself. Just as man's will is the essence of man himself, God's will is God Himself, the true life of God. Therefore, saying that God wants to bring man back to Himself is the same as saying that God wants to bring man's will back to His own will. This is what the believer should endeavor to do his entire life. Even at the first step of salvation, God is working in this direction. Therefore, when God, through the Holy Spirit, causes a man to be convicted of sin, He causes him to realize that he has nothing to say. Even if God condemns him and sends him to hell, there is nothing he can say. When God reveals to man, through the gospel, His will on the cross of the Lord Jesus, He makes man say willingly and wholeheartedly, "I am willing to accept God's salvation." The initial step of man's salvation is the salvation of his will. A sinner's believing and receiving are nothing other than being one who "wills [to] take the water of life," resulting in salvation. A sinner's objection and resistance are nothing other than being one who is "not willing to come to [Him] that [he] may have life," resulting in perdition. The battle between man's salvation and perdition is fought in man's will. Man's fall in the beginning was due to the rebellion of his will against God's will. Consequently, man's salvation is just the submission of his will to God's will again.

Although a man's will is not totally in union with God after he is saved, his fallen will was somewhat uplifted when he rejected Satan, self, and the world at the time he received the Lord Jesus. Furthermore, his will is renewed through believing in the Lord's word and through receiving God's Spirit. After man is regenerated, he receives a new spirit, a new heart, and a new life. Therefore, the will now has a new master and is controlled and directed by this master. If the will submits, it becomes a part of this new life; if it opposes, it becomes a strong enemy to this new life.

The renewed will is more important than any other part of man (the soul). Thoughts can be wrong, feelings can be wrong, but the will should never be wrong. Whatever else is wrong is not as severe as the will being wrong, because the will is man's self as well as the faculty that motivates the whole man. Once it becomes wrong, God's purpose will be frustrated immediately.

SUBDUING THE WILL

What then is salvation? Salvation is nothing other than God saving man out of himself and into God. Salvation has the aspects of termination and union. It terminates the self and unites God and man. Any way of salvation that does not have the goal of saving man from himself and into union with God is not genuine. If a method of salvation cannot save man from himself and into union with God, it is only empty words. Real spiritual life is the severing from that which is of the animal and entering into that which is divine. Everything that belongs to the creature must go; the creatures should only enjoy all that

the Creator is in the Creator Himself. The creature must become nothing before real salvation can be manifested. Genuine greatness does not depend on how much we have; it depends on how much we lose. Genuine life can only be seen in the losing of one's self. If the natural disposition, life, and activities of the creature are not totally done away with, there will be no place for God's life to be manifested. Our "self" is often the enemy of God's life. If we do not lose the intentions and experiences that are for ourselves, our spiritual life will suffer great loss.

What is the self? This is one of the most difficult questions to answer. Although we cannot answer the question one hundred percent accurately, it may be more or less accurate to say that the "self" is the "self-will." The essence of man's self is just his will because the will reveals how the man actually is, what he actually wants, and what he is willing to do. Except for the work done in man by the grace of God, all that man has, whether he is a sinner or a saint, is completely opposed to God. The disposition of created man is always natural, and it is never of the same kind as God's life.

Salvation is nothing other than saving man out of his fleshly, natural, created, animal, and selfish will. We should pay attention to this point. In addition to God giving us a new life, the return of our will to God is the greatest work of salvation. God gives us new life for the purpose of turning our will back to Him. The gospel is to lead us to a union with God in our will. Otherwise, the gospel has not achieved its mission. God does not intend to save just our emotion or our mind; He intends to save our will because once the will is saved, the rest will be included. To a certain extent, man may unite with God in the mind. He may also share the same emotion with God in many things. But the most important and the most complete union with God rests in the union of man's will with God's will. This union of the will includes all the other union of man and God. If the mind or the emotion is united with God, but the will is not, this union is still short. Since our whole being moves according to our will, our will is clearly the most powerful part of our being. Noble as the spirit may be, it too submits to the governing of the will. (We will see this in a moment.) The spirit is not sufficient to represent the whole being, because the spirit is the part where man has fellowship with God. The body is not sufficient to represent the whole being either, as it is the part where man contacts the world. But the will stands for the attitude, opinion, and condition of man's true self; therefore, it has the power and sufficiency to represent the whole being. If the will is not joined completely to God, other unions are shallow and empty. If the will that governs our entire being is in complete union with God, our entire being will be totally submissive under God's hand.

There are two unions between God and man; one is the union in life, the other is the union in the will. The union with God in life is through receiving of the very life of God at the time of our regeneration. Just as God lives by the Holy Spirit, we also should live by the Holy Spirit from now on. This is the union in life. This means that God and we have only one life. This is inward. However, the will expresses this one life. This is why there is still the need for the union of the will outwardly. The union of our will with God means that God and we have only one will. These two unions are mutually related and dependent. At this moment we are only speaking about the union of the will because the other is beyond our present scope. The union of the new life is spontaneous because the new life is the life of God. However, the union of the will is more difficult because the will belongs to us.

As we mentioned before, God wants us to do away with the soul-life, not the function of the soul. Hence, after we are united to God in life, God wants to renew our soul (mind,

emotion, and will) to bring our soul into oneness with our new life, as well as into oneness with His will. Since our will is the most important part, after regeneration, God daily is seeking the union of our will with His will. If our will is not fully one with God, it means that salvation is not fully accomplished, because man himself is still not in harmony with God. God not only wants us to have His life, but also for ourselves to be in union with Him. The will absolutely belongs to us. If there is no union in the will, we ourselves are not yet united with God.

If we study the Bible carefully, we will see that among all our sins, there is one common principle --rebellion. Adam brought us to perdition through this sin, while Christ brought us to salvation through obedience. We were originally sons of rebellion; now God wants us to be the children of obedience. Rebellion is just following after our will, while submission is following after God's will. The whole purpose of God's salvation is to have us forsake our will and be in union with His will. Today believers often make a big mistake in this matter. They think that spiritual life is happiness in the feeling and knowledge in the mind. They endeavor to pursue after all kinds of feelings and biblical knowledge, thinking that these are the best. In the meantime, they do many wonderful, great, and important works according to their feelings and thoughts, thinking that these must be well- pleasing to God. Little do they know that God's demands are not related to how man feels or what he thinks; He wants man's will to be united with Him. He desires to see a believer wholeheartedly seeking after what He wants and willingly obeying all that He says. Unless he unconditionally submits to God and willingly accepts the complete will of God, his so-called spiritual life is superficial, no matter how holy and happy it makes him feel or what he receives. All visions, strange dreams, voices, prophecies, zeal, works, activities, and labors are outward. If a believer does not resolve in his will to go all the way to finish God's course, whatever he does is useless.

If our will is in union with God, we immediately stop the activities that issue from the self. This means that there is no longer any independent action. We are dead toward ourselves, but alive toward God. This does not mean that we can act for God according to our own impulses or methods. It means that we move according to the moving of God and are severed from all the activities of the self. In other words, this kind of union is a change of who is the center, a change of who is the initiating one. In the past all of our works were centered upon the self, and all of our activities were initiated by the self. Now everything is unto God. God does not question the nature of the matters that we have initiated; He only asks who initiated it. Anything that is not delivered from the self, regardless of how good it is, is ignored by God.

THE HAND OF GOD

Although God's children are saved, they have not fully obeyed God's will. As a result, God has to use many ways to lead the believers into full submission. God moves the believers with His Spirit and stirs them up with His love so that they will submit to His will and not love, pursue, or do anything outside of Himself. It is a pity when God's moving and stirring do not produce the desired results in the believers. Then God has to stretch forth His hand to bring the believers to the place where He wants them to be. His hand is primarily manifested in circumstances. God applies His hand heavily upon the believers to crush, break, and bind them so that their will can no longer be hardened before Him.

As long as the believer is not deeply united with the Lord, God is not satisfied. The purpose of God's salvation is to have the saved ones in complete union with His will. In

order for God to bring us to this point, He has to use the environment; He causes us to encounter many frustrations. He causes us to be heartbroken, distressed, and afflicted. He causes many practical crosses to come upon us. Through these things, He causes us to bow our head in submission. Our will is very strong, and unless it is hit by God in many ways, it will not submit to Him. If we are willing to come under the mighty hand of God and accept His discipline, the will which occupies our life will experience a cutting work again and again and will be delivered to death again and again. If we resist God, heavier afflictions will come upon us and subdue us.

God wants to strip us of everything. After believers are truly regenerated, they all have one thought --to do God's will. Some openly make this kind of promise, and some hold this intent in secret. God will prove whether such a promise (or intent) is true or not. He causes the believers to pass through a stripping that they do not like. He causes them to lose material things, health, fame, position, and usefulness. He eventually causes them to lose the happiness and zeal in their feeling, as well as His presence and sympathy. He will bring the believers to the point where everything other than God's will is expendable to them. He wants them to realize that as long as something is according to His will, they should receive it, even though they may suffer physically or in their feelings. If God delights in afflicting them, stripping them of everything, taking away their "spiritual usefulness," or causing them to become dry, dark, and lonely, they should accept it willingly. God wants the believers to realize that He saved them, not for the purpose that they would enjoy anything, but for His will. Therefore, whether there is gain or loss, happiness or dryness, the feeling of God's presence or forsaking, believers should always be mindful of God's will. If it is God's will to forsake us, can we take pleasure in being forsaken? When a sinner first believes in the Lord, his goal is heaven. This is all right. After being taught in God, he will come to realize that it is for the will of God that he believed in God. Even if the result of believing in God is to go to hell, he would still believe. After the believer has been thoroughly taught, he will no longer be mindful of his own gain or loss. If he can glorify God by going to hell, he is willing to do so. This is, of course, only an example. But believers must see that their believing in the Lord, while living on earth, is not for themselves, but for the will of God. Their greatest happiness, greatest privilege, and greatest glory are to forsake their own corrupted, natural, and fleshly will and unite with the will of God to fulfill God's heart's desire. The creature's gain and loss, glory and shame, bitterness and happiness, are not worthy to be considered. If the Most High One can be satisfied, whatever the lowly one may become is of no concern. This is the unique way for a believer to lose himself in God!

A TWO-STEP ENDEAVOR

There is a two-step endeavor in the union of the will with God. One step is for God to subdue the activities of our will; the other step is for God to subdue the life of our will. Often our will is subdued by God only in certain particular matters. In these matters we think that we have completely submitted to God. However, there is still a secret tendency for our will to become active once given the chance. God not only wants our will to be restricted by Him in the aspect of its activities, He also wants the tendency of our will to be completely broken, smashed, and destroyed as if its very nature is changed. Strictly speaking, a submissive will and a harmonious will are different. Submission is only in the aspect of activities, but harmony is in the aspect of life, nature, and tendency. A servant, who fulfills all the orders of his master, merely has a submissive will. The will of a son who is intimately sympathetic towards his parents' heart is harmonious with his father's will because he not only does what he should do, but he also delights in doing it. A submissive will merely stops its own activities, but a harmonious will is one with God and is of the same heart as God. A will that is in complete harmony with God is one in

which one's whole heart is placed in the will of God. Only those who are in harmony with God can truly comprehend God's heart. If a believer has not reached the point where his will and God's will are in complete harmony, he has not yet experienced the highest point of the spiritual life. Submission to God is good, but when grace has completely overcome the natural disposition, the believer will be in complete harmony with God. Indeed, the union of the will is the highest point of the believer's experience of life.

Many people think that they already have totally lost their will. Little do they know that they are actually far from it. In all the temptations and trials, they only see the submissive will, not the harmonious will. The submissive will is the will without resistance, not the will without the self. Who does not want to gain something for himself, to reserve something for himself? Who does not want to have gold, silver, honor, freedom, happiness, convenience, high position and a little of whatever? A person may think that his heart does not care for these things. But while he still has them, he does not realize how tightly he is bound by them. Only when he is about to lose them will he realize how much he is unwilling to part with them. Sometimes a submissive will is quite compatible with the will of God. But at other times, a person feels that in the life of his own will he is struggling severely against God's will. If not for the work of God's grace, it would be hard to overcome.

Hence, a submissive will is still not perfect. Although the will has been broken and no longer has the strength to resist God, it has not reached the point of being one with God. We admit that reaching the point of not being able to resist is already a great mercy of God. Generally speaking, a submissive will is already dead. Strictly speaking, however, it still has a thread of unbroken life within it. There is still a kind of hidden inclination within, affectionately desiring the former way. Hence, it seems that we are quick, happy, and diligent to fulfill God's will in some matters more than in others. In both cases we are fulfilling God's will, but there is a difference in the degree of personal preference. If the self-life is indeed put to death completely, the believer will see that he holds the same attitude in all matters concerning the fulfillment of God's will. The difference in slowness, fastness, bitterness, happiness, as well as the difference in the effort we apply, indicates that our will is not yet in harmony with God.

The two conditions of the will may be illustrated by the examples of Lot's wife, the Israelites' coming out of Egypt, and the prophet Balaam. In the experience of Lot's wife coming out of Sodom, the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, and Balaam's blessing of the Israelites, they were all carrying out God's will. They were all subdued by God and not acting according to their own will. Yet the inclination within them was not one with God. Therefore, the results were all failures. Even when the direction of our steps is right, our heart is often privately not in harmony with God. As a result, we become fallen.

THE WAY TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL

God will never be submissive to us. He is not happy with anything but His will and our submission to Him. Things that are fairer, better, greater, and more important cannot replace God's will. What God will fulfill is His own will. If He does not fulfill His own will, it is hard to expect us to fulfill it. In God's eyes, all the best things are corrupted as long as they contain the element of man's self. Many things are wonderful and profitable if they are done according to the leading of the Holy Spirit of God. But if they are done by man himself, their value before God is completely different. Hence, it is not a matter

of man's tendency or a matter of the nature of things; it is a matter of what God's will is. This is the first point to remember.

Now we need to ask how man's will can be in harmony with God's will. How can man be delivered from having the self-will as his center to having God's will as his center? The key to the whole matter is the soul-life. The degree to which we are severed from the control of the soul-life is the degree of the union between God and us because nothing hinders our union with God besides the soul-life. We seek after God's will to the extent that we lose our soul-life and to the extent that our will takes God as its center. This is because the new life is naturally inclined toward God and is suppressed only by the soul-life. The way to achieve the goal is to deliver the soul-life to death.

Without God, man perishes. Without God, everything is vain. Everything that is outside of God is of the flesh (the self). Therefore, outside of God, whatever is done by one's own effort and according to one's own thought is condemned. A believer must deny all of his own strength and desires. He must not care for himself in anything and not do anything with his self. He must completely trust God in everything and go forward step by step according to God's ways, waiting upon God's time, and according to God's requirement. He must be willing to accept the strength, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and work that is from God as his own. He must confess that God is the source of everything he has. Only in this way is harmony possible.

This is truly a "narrow way," but it is not a difficult way. It is narrow because each step is regulated by God's will. This way has only one principle, which is to not reserve any ground for the self. As such, it is a narrow way. A little deviation from God's will takes us away from this way. However, this is not a difficult way. When the soul-life is consumed, habits, hobbies, desires, and cravings are broken one by one, and nothing opposes God anymore. Consequently, one does not feel that it is a difficult way. Unfortunately, many believers have not even entered the door or walked on this way. There are also some who do not have patience and who leave this way before reaching the point of sweetness. But whether the period of hardship is long or short, one thing is certain: only this way is the way of life. This is the way of God. Therefore, it is true and sure. Whoever wants to have abundant life has no choice but to walk in this way.