



A V o i c e F r o m T h e W i l d e r n e s s

Divine Energy Or Human Power

"Have Thine own way Lord, have Thine own way. Thou art the Potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me after thy will, while I am waiting yielded and still." We believe these words, but are we really willing for Him to have His own way? Are we "yielded" or persistently rationalizing and justifying our outbursts and indulgences of "self?" Or maybe we've been trying to do the will of God in the power of our own will? This means I'm trying to make myself do what is right because I have to, but I'm not choosing to have "self" surrendered to God to receive His power to accomplish it. Yes, we may do the right thing, it may even look good on the surface, but it's still humanity alone doing it. Friends, will power is not the power over temptation. Will power is our God given power of choice. It is the power to choose to remain, or gain connection with God, who will give us the power to overcome the temptation. This is why James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God." This has been a missing link in our warfare with "self" in temptation. Submission to God is the right action of the will. Our first work is **not** to fight against temptation or to choose to resist the devil by human will power alone. But it is to surrender the thought, word or action to God, depending in Him for

the power to do that which is right, then cooperate with Him continuously. We have all sadly misunderstood this first step we need to make when temptation comes. Let me illustrate.

A family was visiting us in our home, their two children and our three were busily doing their home schooling. Their mother had been doing some corrections and brought them to their attention. The battle of "self" began as both children protested, debated and tried to negotiate with their mother. The older child did make the right decision and yielded a full surrender to their Father in heaven, which was immediately evidenced by a sweet disposition and acceptance of the mother's will. There was an obvious contrast between the surrender of the older child and the stubborn refusal and obstinacy of the younger. Finally, in what appeared to be futile desperation, the mother threatened the younger child with what would happen if there was no change before father returned. The change came almost instantly, or I should say the compliance; as the child stopped arguing and began doing the corrections. But there was a scowl on the face, coldness in the eyes, which was carried with the child a good share of the day. Had this child made a decision

using the will? Yes! Did it enable an outward conformity to mother's will? Yes! Was there real submission to God's will? No! And was there really a surrender to the mother's will? No! Was this decision empowered by grace? No! You see friends, will power alone is not the power over temptation and sin. Will power is not divine power, but must be used to connect us with divine power, which is the power for true victory over self and sin. This is where we've been missing it.

In the book *Desire of Ages* 466 we are told that, "When we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the **divine energy** of the Holy Spirit, and they (the powers of the soul) obey the dictates of the will (our choice) in fulfilling the will of God." How does this reference apply to the children in our illustration? Both children were placed in temptation, both experienced the initial giving way to the flesh in argument and justification of self and both of them used their will to make a decision to do what their mother had requested. Here's the difference. The first child had a desire to seek "a power out of and above" himself. Their will was used to seek that power, place their will in submission to that power, and to receive "the divine energy" to bear righteous fruit that only comes from that power. The second child did use the will, the power of choice, but not to surrender self and take hold of divine power, but instead, as will power to "grit the teeth" and force "self" to do what mother had said, rather than face the consequences of father's disapproval. The child was miserable, "self" was unsubdued and its negative affects were experienced by others.

It is vital to our daily Christian walk that we recognize how we are really coping with temptation. For years I thought I understood the will. Until God helped me reflect upon what was really taking place. For most of us our first reaction to temptation is to justify why I should be irritated, why I should speak these words to my spouse and why my temptation and circumstances are different than yours. Or secondly, because we

want to do right, we try to "grit our teeth", stand our ground, and live our religion in our own strength and very often in the wrong spirit. This is where we're missing it. We're either justifying or rationalizing "self" or trying hard to resist the flesh without divine power.

We are so busy in one of these two scenarios that we are totally missing the call that comes from our Lord in every temptation. "My son give me thine heart." Proverbs 23:26. When temptation comes, our first decision needs to be, do I want to stay in vital connection with God and do His will or if I'm

not connected do I want to make that connection to receive "a power out of and above" myself right now?

In light of this decision, it makes more sense to me why we are admonished twice on page 47 of *Steps to Christ* to understand the "**true force** of the will" and to recognize that "everything depends on the **right action** of the will." The "**true force**" comes when the, "right action of the will" is accomplished. When we add this missing ingredient, then instead of using my power of choice - my will, to ex-

cuse and defend "self" or use my will as a teeth gritting power to conquer temptation; I use my will to keep me in a truly submissive and surrendered position to God's will. I'll put it into a simple illustration.

Because we travel quite often, Alane has become efficient at preparing and serving meals on the road. Often these meals include some tasty, healthy dessert which I enjoy. We had finished a series of meetings and were on our way home, eating as we drove. It was just about time for that special dessert to come out when I felt this unmistakable irritation in my throat. To me it meant the first symptom of a sore throat. It also meant the first sign of a temptation ahead and the faithful call of God, "My son give me thine heart."

Let me tell you what was going through my thoughts so quickly. I knew, that little irritation in my throat was a warning to me of a weakened body. My schedule was off with meals and late to bed. With all the meetings I had been talking a lot more and the body needed some rest! The dessert, even though

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sweetened with honey or dates, was still sweet and would work against my immune system. In an instant I recalled, from the past, a special meal of homemade waffles, banana smoothie, toast and whipped honey. The Lord had prompted me to be temperate with that delicious honey. But I liked the honey! So I reasoned away the call to my heart and overused the honey. I justified the clamorings of "self" and soon reaped the consequences. In about three hours I had a sore throat, followed by a cold. Now here I was again, this time driving down the road and God is calling to my heart. What will I do this time?

The first decision was, will I do what I want to do, or will I honestly yield my will and inclinations to choose what God wants me to do. I wanted to begin a debate with the Lord about how healthy the dessert was and it would be okay to eat it. Quietly the Lord impressed this thought upon my mind. "I'm not telling you that you can't eat the dessert, I just want to know if you want to do my will, right now?" God was trying to spare me from sickness, not deprive me of dessert. As I remembered that God had never asked me to give up anything, but for my good. I yielded a willing submission. Then I received the promised "divine energy" to make the decision to pass by the dessert. In times past I might have used my will to choose not to eat the dessert because, I felt obligated to, or guilty if I ate it with the symptoms of a sore throat. There is far too much of this kind of "arms crossed," "scowly faced," "I have to" kind of religion among professing Christians today. It's trying to live the religion of Christ without the power of Christ. *Christ Object Lessons 96-97* says it this way. "Man cannot transform himself by the exercise of His will. He possesses no power by which this change can be effected ... The **renewing energy** must come from God ... There are those who try to reform by correcting this or that bad habit, ... But they are beginning in the wrong place. **Our first work is with the heart.**" There it is "our first work is with the heart." Or we could say, our first work is with the will. Am I willing to be molded to God's will or will I stubbornly hold

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to "self's way". We must choose "not what I will, but what thou wilt" or we choose to justify ourselves and resist the call. If my will is not surrendered, doing the will of God is arduous and really is not obedience but the works of the flesh.

In the little situation with the dessert the pivotal point between the drudgery of I have to and the joy of obedience was in the first decision. God says, "My son give me thine heart." My son, before you go any further in this temptation, decide whether you want to stay connected to my Divine power. Decide whether

you want to manage yourself, your way, or if you want Me to manage you and have My will be done. By yielding a willing surrender the "**renewing energy**" was provided to not only choose against the dessert but also to do it so willingly that it was not even noticed as a struggle by my family.

How does this "renewing energy" operate? Is it tangible? Yes, it's as tangible to the Christian walk as it was to the man by the pool of Bethesda. It is real energy to live the daily experience. As soon as I am willing to have my will quieted to do God's will, the "renewing energy" flows in. It is the energy to do what is right and to do it in the right spirit. It works like this.

One evening Alane and I received a phone call, a very agitating call. Afterward while discussing the call, we found that we disagreed about one very important part of the conversation. I knew that my perspective was correct and felt that she needed to see it my way. I tried twice to get her to see the point, while the Holy Spirit gently entreated me that my spirit was not right. So I decided to be silent and go have some prayer time. That sounds good doesn't it? But I wasn't silent on the inside and I wanted God to see my perspective too. In spite of my unrest, agitation and justification of self, God was calling to my heart. He was asking me if I would stop rehearsing my will, stop nursing my views and just decide if I would like to do His will? That's hard to argue with! I said, "Okay Lord, you have my permission to show me Your will and work out Your

will in me. At that moment I knew I was willing to let go of my way and allow God to have His way. Then the "renewing energy" was there. It's really there all the time, like the air we breath, but we don't always want to utilize it, do we?

Steps to Christ 68 says, "God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of **grace**, as real as the air which circulates around the globe." Right there on my knees I was allowing that "grace," the "renewing energy," to transform my thoughts, motives and actions. My disposition was desirous of listening more carefully to her perspective. There was rest in my soul, instead of chafing and agitation. There were no more peevish feelings of being misunderstood. And I was truly willing to admit my wrong spirit, without the excuses and justifications, we are all so prone to use. It was this "renewing energy" that David was seeking when In Psalms 51:10 he said, "Renew a right spirit within me." And in verse 12, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation."

Where do we honestly find ourselves? Is the Christian life secretly a drudgery? Are we trying to "reform by correcting this or that bad habit" without making the first decision to allow the "**renewing energy**" to vitalize and give power to our decisions? In *Christ Object Lessons* 97 we are told, "The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely - because he is required to do so - will never enter the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within." Does this mean that there are no hard experiences or that there is no personal agonizing effort on our part? No! Our battle is the continual "surrender of self" as our flesh cries out for dominion. The "burden" described in this passage refers to trying to live the Christian experience and battle temptation using our will power alone as the power over sin, rather than using the power of the will to make a conscious surrender of "self" to God and His will and then receive His Divine power to accomplish it.

We can have the "joy of obedience". Do you believe it? Psalms 40:8 says, "I delight to do thy will, O my

God." David said, "Teach me to do thy will." Psalms 143:10. Are we willing to learn how? With each temptation we can be learning how to maintain our hold upon God, so that His "renewing energy" brings the joy into our obedience.

When our Saviour faced the three fierce temptations in the wilderness he "gained the victory through **submission and faith** in God." *Desire of Ages* 130. Then through James he says to us, "**Submit** yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you." James 4:7-8.

Friends, Jesus gained the victory by first submitting to God, then resisting the devil. May God open our eyes to see how we've been losing the battle in temptation and where our real strength lies. Let us draw nigh to Him in submission and faith, that depends fully upon Him. Then He will draw nigh to us with His "Divine energy," that enables us to accomplish His will.

A Voice From The Wilderness

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