

KEPT FOR THE MASTER'S USE

by

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CHAPTER NINE

OUR WILLS KEPT FOR JESUS

“Keep my will, O keep it Thine;
For it is no longer mine.”

PERHAPS there is no point in which expectation has been so limited by experience as this. We believe God is able to do for us just so much as He has already done, and no more. We take it for granted a line must be drawn somewhere; and so we choose to draw it where experience ends, and faith would have to begin. Even if we have trusted and proved Him as to keeping our members and our minds, faith fails when we would go deeper and say, “Keep my will!” And yet the only reason we have to give is that though we have asked Him to take our will, we do not exactly find that it is altogether His, but that self-will crops up again and again. And whatever flaw there might be in this argument we think the matter is quite settled by the fact that some whom we rightly esteem, and who are far better than ourselves, have the same experience, and do not even seem to think it right to hope for anything better. That is conclusive! And the result of this, as of every other faithless conclusion, is either discouragement and depression, or, still worse, acquiescence in an unyielded will, as something that can't be helped.

Now let us turn from our thoughts to God's thoughts. Verily, they are not as ours! He says He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Apply this here.

We ask Him to take our wills and make them His. Does He or does He not mean what He says? and if He does, should we not trust Him to do this thing that we have asked and longed for, and not less, but more? Is *anything* too hard for the Lord? Hath He said, and shall He not do it? and if He gives us faith to believe that we have the petition that we desired of Him, and with it the unspeakable rest of leaning our will wholly upon His love, what ground have we for imagining that this is *necessarily* to be a mere fleeting shadow, which is hardly to last an hour, but is *necessarily* to be exhausted ere the next breath of trial or temptation comes?

Does He mock our longing by acting as I have seen an older person act to a child, by accepting some trifling gift of no intrinsic value, just to please the little one, and then throwing it away as soon as the child's attention is diverted?

Is not the taking rather the pledge of the keeping, if we will but entrust Him fearlessly with it? We give Him no opportunity (so to speak) of proving His faithfulness to this great promise, because we *will* not fulfil the condition of reception, believing it. But we readily enough believe instead all that we hear of the unsatisfactory experience of others!

It may be that we have not sufficiently realized the sin of the only alternative. Our wills belong either to self or to God. It may seem a small and rather excusable sin in man's sight to be self-willed, but in what a category of iniquity God puts it! (II Peter 2:10).

And certainly we are without excuse when we have such a promise to go upon as, "**It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His pleasure.**" How splendidly this meets our very deepest helplessness—"worketh in you to will"! Oh, let us pray for ourselves and for each other that we may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe. It does not say, "to usward who fear and doubt"; for if we will not believe, neither shall we be established. If we will not believe what God says He can do, we shall see it with our eyes but we shall not eat thereof. "**They could not enter in because of unbelief.**"

It is most comforting to remember that the grand promise, "**Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power,**" is made by the Father to Christ Himself. The Lord Jesus holds this promise, and God will fulfil it to Him. He will make us willing because He has promised Jesus that He will do so. And what is being made willing, but having our will taken and kept.

All true surrender of the will is based upon love and knowledge of, and confidence in, the one to whom it is surrendered. We have the human analogy so often before our eyes, that it is the more strange we should be so slow to own even the possibility of it as to God. Is it thought anything so very extraordinary and high-flown when a bride deliberately *prefers* wearing a color which was not her own taste or choice, because her husband likes to see her in it?

Is it very unnatural that it is no distress to her to do what he asks her to do, or to go with him where he asks her to come, even without question or explanation, instead of doing what or going where she would undoubtedly have preferred if she did not know and love him?

Is it very surprising if this lasts beyond the wedding day, and if year after year she still finds it her greatest pleasure to please him, quite irrespective of what used to be her own ways and likings? Yet in this case she is not helped by any promise or power on his part to make her wish what he wishes. But He who so wonderfully condescends to call Himself the Bridegroom of His church, and who claims our fullest love and trust, has promised and has power to work in us to will. Shall we not claim His promise and rely on His mighty power, and say, not self-confidently, but looking only unto Jesus—

“Keep my will, for it is Thine;
It shall be no longer mine!”

Only in proportion as our own will is surrendered are we able to discern the splendor of God's will.

Conversely, in proportion as we see this splendor of His will, we shall more readily or more fully surrender our own. Not until we have presented our bodies a living sacrifice can we prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God. But in thus proving it, this continual presentation will be more and more seen to be our reasonable service, and becomes more and more a joyful sacrifice of praise.

The connection in Romans 12:1, 2, between our sacrifice which He so graciously calls acceptable to Himself, and our finding out that His will is acceptable to ourselves, is very striking.

One reason for this connection may be that only love can really understand love, and love on both sides is at the bottom of the whole transaction and its results. First, He loves us. Then the discovery of this leads us to love Him. Then, because He loves us, He claims us, and desires to have us wholly yielded to His will, so that the operations of love in and for us may find no hindrance.

Then, because we love Him we recognize His claim and yield ourselves. Then, being thus yielded, He draws us nearer to Him,* and admits us (so to speak) into closer intimacy, so that we gain nearer and truer views of His perfections.

* **Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near** (II Chronicles 29:31).

Then, the unity of these perfections becomes clearer to us. Now we not only see His justice and mercy flowing in undivided stream from the cross of Christ, but we see that they never were divided, though the strange distortions of the dark, false glass of sin made them appear so, but that both are but emanations of God's holy love. Then having known and believed this holy love, we see further that His will is not a separate thing, but only love (and therefore all His attributes) in action; love being the primary essence of His being, and all the other attributes, manifestations, and combinations of that ineffable essence, for God is Love.

Then this will of God which has seemed in old far-off days a stern and fateful power, is seen to be only love energized; love saying, "**I will.**" And when once we really grasp this (hardly so much by faith as by love itself), the will of God cannot be otherwise than acceptable, for it is no longer a question of trusting that somehow or other there is a hidden element of love in it, but of understanding that it is love; no more to be dissociated from it than the power of the sun's rays can be dissociated from their light and warmth. And love recognized must surely be love accepted and reciprocated. So, as the fancied sternness of God's will is lost in His love, the stubbornness of our will becomes melted if that love, and lost in our acceptance of it.

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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