

SPIRITUAL VICTORY (4)

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said, “there is no erroneous supposition and misleading than that a Christian can, in his own strength, command and control the old nature” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, p. 354).

Contrary to much religious opinion, **our will is not free and our choices aren't good**. Our will does not have to be dragged off against its own inclination into sin, it willingly and voluntarily craves sin and cannot do anything different but pursue it. In fact, I believe that **every believer's spiritual victory begins by acknowledging this truth and by rejecting free will**. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the famed theologian said, “A human being is so designed by God that he cannot guide himself” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 6, p. 225). **Our will is not free, it is born to sin**. As Luther said, “everything is sin you do alone out of your free will” (*Complete Sermons*, Vol. 1.1, p. 26). This is critical doctrine for us to embrace because: 1) It shows we believe exactly what the Bible teaches; 2) It is a key for our personal victory over sin; 3) It is key to us giving glory to God. **If you don't reject free will, you will spend your Christian life believing something that is actually contrary to the Word of God and living in a way that does not really give the glory to God and that is never a formula for great spiritual victory.**

In the trenches of the fleshly battle, this is a big key to victory and it is one very few ever come to terms with. Our will is incapable of any victory when it comes to God or true spirituality. As Dr. Martin Luther said, our will is not free in any “God-ward” direction (*Bondage of the Will*, pp. 309-310). Dr. Chafer said, “The consciousness of sinfulness, or a tendency to sin, has been the experience of the most spiritual saints of all generations and especially as they have come into closer fellowship with God” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, p. 356).

In fact, when Jesus was teaching His disciples about prayer, He specifically asked them to pray “God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven” and “do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:10, 13). Why did Jesus teach His disciples to pray like this? Because victory in temptation would never be found in their will, it had to come from God using His will to accomplish on earth holiness like it is in heaven. When it comes from God's will, He gets the glory for it (**Matt. 6:13**).

This concept of our will is not just my opinion, or Martin Luther's opinion or G. Campbell Morgan's or Lewis Sperry Chafer's opinion, this is the clear testimony of all Scripture. In fact, let us look at some passages from both the O.T. and N.T. that communicate this.

Category #1 - Some Old Testament Passages:

- 1) **Genesis 3:6** - Prior to this moment, God classified everything He had created, including the man and woman, as “very good” (**Genesis 1:31**). After this moment, His classification was never the same. Now what should Adam and Eve have done differently, when their intellect emotions and will were surging against the will of God? Obviously they did not have the will to choose right. So what should they have done? What they should have done was gone to God and told Him that they recognized that there is something in them that wanted to do the opposite of what He told them. They should have admitted the struggle to God and asked Him to give them victory. But that is not what they did. They did not seek God, they tried it on their own and they failed. Most Christians fail today because they still have not learned this lesson. They think victory is determined by their will, and they too will fail.

SPIRITUAL VICTORY (5)

- 2) **Genesis 6:5** - After the fall and just before the flood God said this: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that **every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**” This is God’s assessment of man before the flood. The difference between Adam and us is that initially Adam had the liability for sin, but not the tendency to sin. We, on the other hand, have both the liability to sin and the tendency to sin.
- 3) **Genesis 8:21** - After the fall of Adam and Eve and after the flood, God said this: “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for **the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth.**” This is God’s assessment of man after the flood.

There is nothing in these statements (**Gen. 6:5; Gen. 8:21**) that gives the impression man has a good will that makes good, God-honoring choices. The testimony of Scripture is just opposite. One might ask if this is true of us, how is it that we did not become totally evil? The answer is the preventative grace of God restrained us. The truth is man becomes as depraved as God permits him to become and because of His grace, He prevents total evil. But as in most cases God does not get credit for it. As the David Hamilton and Phil McHugh song says, “Were it not for grace, I can tell you where I’d be, wandering down some pointless path to nowhere and forever running but losing the race.” The only thing that prevents any of us from becoming totally evil is the grace of God.

- 4) **Deuteronomy 32:28-29** - “For they are a nation lacking counsel and there is no understanding in them. **Would that they were wise, that they understood this...**” What exactly did Moses want God’s people to be wise enough to understand? **That there was “no understanding in them.”** God wanted His people to acknowledge the truth about themselves, specifically that they were a nation who did not understand Him. This was a hard pill for Israel to swallow then and now because she believes she understands everything about God. She believed this even when God in the Person of Jesus Christ was in Jerusalem telling them they were blind when it came to God.
- 5) **Psalm 14:1-3** - David was a man after God’s own heart and part of what made him that was his honest realization that there is no one who does good, who seeks after God; all have turned aside and not even one person has a will to do anything good.
- 6) **Psalm 38:3** - David again says there is no soundness in his flesh and no health in his bones because of his sin. Well then we might ask, where did David ever expect to find spiritual victory? **Verse 15** - David’s hope was in the LORD. **Verse 22** - God was David’s salvation, David wasn’t his own salvation by his own choices.
- 7) **Ecclesiastes 3:18** - Solomon said, “I said to myself concerning the sons of men, God has surely tested them **in order for them to see that they are but beasts.**” Solomon realized that God wants us all to see what is true, we are but beasts. Why does God want us to see this- because it is precisely at this moment that we recognize His grace in permitting us to do anything victorious.

SPIRITUAL VICTORY (6)

- 8) **Ecclesiastes 7:20** - “Indeed **there is not a righteous man on earth** who continually does good and who never sins.” Do you get this? There is not one person who will use his will to become a righteous man on earth.
- 9) **Isaiah 64:6-7** - “For **all of us** have become like one who is unclean and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf and our iniquities, like a wind take us away and **there is no one who calls on Thy name, who arouses himself to take hold of Thee.**” Isaiah believe there wasn’t one person on earth who would choose to call on the name of the Lord and take hold of Him and His ways. In fact in **Isaiah 46:12** God said in a context of His sovereignty (v. 9-11) that people were far from His righteousness and stubborn-minded. Our heart, our mind, our will is in stubborn rebellion.
- 10) **Jeremiah 10:23** - “I know, O LORD, that a man’s way is not in himself; nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.” Jeremiah knew something most don’t; victory is never found by you using your will to direct your steps but it is found in the LORD (v. 24). He must do the corrective work if we are to have spiritual victory.
- 11) **Jeremiah 17:9** - The prophet Jeremiah said, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick, who can understand it?”(17:9) **The man who must know it and must admit it and understand it is the one who wants any spiritual victory.** The very context of this statement is that of trusting totally in the Lord, as opposed to trusting in man (17:5, 7-8). God’s Word does not encourage us to find victory over our depraved heart in ourselves, but in Him. This very context teaches Israel and us that hope is in Him, not ever in us (17:14). He wants us to look to Him and His Sanctuary for victory, not to ourselves. And this is a key missing link to spirituality.

These are just a few of the many, many passages that paint the true picture of our spiritual condition. Our will is not good and it will not make good choices and if we are to progress to spiritual victory, it starts by admitting what is Biblically and really true.

Category #2 - Some New Testament Passages.

When we turn to the New Testament we see that God’s Word gives us exactly the same portrait of ourselves.

- 1) **Luke 11:13** - Jesus classified His own disciples, who had just asked Him to teach them to pray, as evil. Why? Because in them lieth no good thing.
- 2) **John 5:40** - Jesus specifically said people were **unwilling to come to Him** for life. Man will not use his will to come to Christ. Martin Luther said that John is “an eloquent and powerful scourge of free will” (*Bondage of the Will*, p. 302).
- 3) **John 6:37** - Jesus said, “**All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.**” Jesus did not believe people came to Him because of a choice they made with their spiritual will, but by a choice His father made. Martin Luther said that “every statement concerning Christ (believe in Him) is a direct testimony against free will” (*Bondage of the Will*, p. 312).