

Our Own Will or God's Will

The act of following our own will is nothing more than a defection, a apostasy from God. Alas, this defection is easy, smooth, and pleasant; but the recovery from it, especially after years or even decades of following your own will, is bitter, troublesome, and very difficult; yes, even impossible beyond all the power of man. For man, by his own strength, can neither return, nor in any wise help himself, whether in will or deed. Man's will is captive, and his works are dead. Christ alone is the only One to help. He lays before us two means of assistance, the law of God and the Gospel; or simply put, the repentance and remission of sin.

Through the law of God you realize you are sinful, a habitual sinner. Only by true sorrow and brokenness of heart you sacrifice your own will to follow Christ. You become as nothing in your own eyes, and resign yourself wholly to Christ. Then grace and forgiveness of sin are conferred through Christ, and you, who was dead before, is now made alive by faith in Christ. Remember that no man by his own strength can convert and quicken himself. It is absolutely necessary that he hate, deny, and lose himself; that he be disgusted with, and die to his old self; and that his hope be placed entirely in God alone, by whose grace he expects to live and change as a true child of the Heavenly Father.

But even this self-loathing, denial, and mortification, are not the effect of our own will and ability. "It is not," says St. Paul, "of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Rom. 9:16. It is God therefore alone who operates all this in us by his grace, and by the power of his Holy Spirit: so that our justification is not derived from ourselves whatsoever, but from God alone, whose work and gift it is to give. For the most dangerous enemy any man has, is himself; insomuch that we have great reason to implore the Lord to deliver us from ourselves and all that we have done in sin, and then to bestow that which flows from His grace. By our own strength we are not able to perform the least good without the power of God. Who can endure us and show patience, love and mercy as we struggle with our old nature, but God, who is love itself, and from whom all other graces proceed? Therefore, God alone is our only help and support, when the help of mere men cannot avail. A man's own will forever increasingly corrupts and depraves him; but following the will of God perfects, purifies and restores him.