

Resist or Repent - the Will

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[0 : 00] Mark 8, 34.

And our Lord called the people unto him, with his disciples also.! And he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospels shall save it.

For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him, also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

[1 : 06] Deny yourself. Deny yourself. Self-will. Self-will.

It started in the garden, didn't it? With Adam. But even prior to that, with Satan himself, when he said, I will, I will, I will.

He said, I will ascend. I will be... Most high. The most high. Like the most high, didn't he? He said, I will. And that self-will we saw in Satan when he bent his will against the maker.

And sin at its heart has this rebellion. The self. As someone put it, the middle letter of sin. I.

Ego. Sin starts with the will unbound and rebellious. It started there with Satan. Willful. Defiant. I will. And then Adam followed suit.

[2 : 18] When Satan said, you will be as gods. Adam chose his own way. He chose to disobey. Self-will. We need to guard against that, people tonight.

It's obstinate. It's stiff-necked. It's that hardening of the heart. It's a decision. But we need to consider.

Will we choose self-will, selfishness, or will we choose godliness? Will you come to that place of saying, not my will, but thine be done.

So the opposite, if you like, of self-will is, what do you think? His will. Will. God's will.

Self-will. Or his will. Not my will, but thine be done. As our Lord himself prayed. Do you stop and ask yourself this.

[3 : 18] What is his will for me? What is God's will for me? Matthew 6 verse 10, it says, That familiar prayer, thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

Thy will be done. Heavenly Father, thy will be done. In earth. As it is in heaven. Is his will.

His will. His will being done on earth. Is his will being done in your life and mine? Or are you missing out on his perfect will?

I know Ian and I were chatting after this morning's message and talking about missionaries going to strange and dangerous places. And you'd want to be in the centre of God's will, wouldn't you?

In such a place. In such danger. In such terror. That they must stare in the face. You'd want to be sure you're in the centre of God's will.

[4 : 15] And we need to think of that too. For ourselves. Wherever we will be. Are we missing out on his perfect will? On his ultimate design for our life? And does the will of God matter for our life?

Of course it does. Does the will of God matter to you? Think of it for yourself. Put yourself in these questions. And consider. Am I in God's will?

Am I doing his will? Now we can all flippantly go about our way of life. And I know there's been times I've just gone willy-nilly doing things. We need to stop and think, don't we?

Am I rebelling against God? Is it self-will that I'm following? Or is it God's will? And do we stop and give consideration? What is the will of God for my life?

Does it matter to you to pray for God's will? To know and to do his will? And what's stopping you? Think of it. And I'm putting myself in this question.

[5 : 15] What's stopping you from doing the will of God? What's stopping you? What's that barrier? Could it be pride? Could it be pride? Could it be self-will?

Are you willing to deny yourself as our Lord says here? Deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow me. What's stopping you from bowing the knee to God's will?

Ask yourself that. Will you seek his will for your life? Friends, we need to be urged and challenged. I believe it's scriptural to challenge our thinking and to consider.

What steps am I taking to find the will of God for my life? And it's about stopping long enough to hear from God. What is the condition of your heart?

The condition of your heart. You know, on God's will side, you have to say humility is a good place to start. Humility. Humility. Humility is a good place to start.

[6 : 16] And Philippians 2, we read, Let nothing be done through strife of own glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Look, not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. There's much in there. We're just scratching the surface here. We're talking about humility.

[7 : 45] As Christ humbled himself, he made himself of how much reputation? None. Zero. Nothing. Of no reputation. Took upon him the form of a servant.

He humbled himself. Became obedient to death. The creator of life. Became obedient unto death. And friends, every knee will bow. It will bow.

Every tongue will confess. Let it be now that the knee bow. Let it be now that the tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, your Master. It is God which works within you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.

Friends, is God at work within you? Think of his will. Are you humbling yourself as our Lord? Show that example. Are you working out your salvation with fear and trembling?

Sometimes Christianity or churchianity is a mockery of the real thing. Where's the fear and trembling God? It's lacking.

[8 : 49] We treat our faith so carelessly at times, so lightly, so casually. We need to guard also against the opposite of humility.

What's that? Pride. Pride. The opposite of humility is pride. You know, I will. Self. And it can be evident in Christians.

Friends, it can be evident in me. Pride. We can get proud that we've got everything right. Now, we can get proud that our church has got everything down pat and we've just got everything perfect in our church.

You know, we've got the perfect pastor. Now, we can get proud. God forbid. We can get proud, brothers and sisters, can't we? And woe to us.

We don't want to get like that. Let's keep, keep me humble. You know, tell me all the faults after the service. Keep me humble. You know, we want to get rid of pride.

[9 : 47] We want to crucify pride. We want to crucify it. It's one of our biggest problems and the biggest problems in the church too because we can get proud about our knowledge. We can get proud about our training.

We can get proud about the brand of Christianity, about how right we are. And we can make the mistake, the mistake of being puffed up with our own sense of self-importance, puffed up, as it says in Corinthians, with our knowledge.

We can get proud that we know so much. And we could think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. And friends, let that not be true of any of us.

Please, pray for humility. Ask the Lord to help you and to help me. Romans 12, 3, it says, Through the grace given unto me, I say to every man that is among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.

It's very true, isn't it? Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. In Proverbs 21, verse 4, it says, of a number of things that God is against.

[10:59] In Proverbs 21, verse 4, it says, A high look and a proud heart and the ploughing of the wicked is sin. It's interesting, isn't it? A high look and a proud heart.

It seems like you see some of the pictures of some of the rock idols of our generation. It's probably of the younger generation now.

But some of the idols that the world looks up to, they're sitting there with their proud look. These superstars and yet they're crack addicts who are going to waste their lives and God forbid, sin, that they would be such a waste.

Such a waste. A high look, a proud heart, even the ploughing of the wicked, even the good things a wicked man does when he ploughing his land, it's sin. It's sin. Even the good things the wicked do are sin.

Even, you know, the greatest songs they've ever sung and all the fame and glory they amassed to themselves, the ploughing of the wicked is sin. And we can be filled with pride, brothers and sisters.

[12:04] We can be filled with pride as Christians too and we don't want to guard against having a high look and a proud heart. God will bypass us if that is so. Take heed that you be not deceived, our Lord says in Luke 21, verse 8.

And in 1 Peter 5, verse 5, it says, God resists the proud. He resists the proud. Do you want God to resist you? No. No. Whoa, that's a dangerous place to be, isn't it?

For God to resist you, then stop resisting him. Don't be in that camp. Learn to be pliable clay in the potter's hands.

God resists the proud. God resists the proud. Another characteristic of the self-will is hardness. Hardness. Think of it.

Friends, how is the condition of your heart tonight? Is it in a state of hardness? Harden not your heart. But, Psalm 95, verse 8, harden not your heart.

[13:09] You know, friends, people's hearts can become gospel-hardened. They can get hardened to the gospel. You see it down at the street preachers. They're hardened to the gospel.

They just think it's a big joke. That it's just something to laugh and scorn and mock and deride. Their hard hearts are hardened and getting harder.

The Lord says in Genesis 6, verse 3, my spirit will not always strive with man. Friends, the hardness of your heart is stopping God from doing his work in your life.

In 2 Chronicles 36, verse 13, it says of Zedekiah, he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. He did not humble himself before the word of God.

He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel. You know, have you got neck problems? The chiropractor might not be able to solve it but God can deal with the stiffness of your neck, with the hardness of your heart.

[14:15] Amen. The opposite of hardness is softness. Softness. How is your heart tonight? Is it hard or is it soft?

Is it soft? To the wooing of God's spirit. Cease resisting his wooing. Let go of the hardness of defiance, of self-seeking, of selfishness, of defiantly seeking your own way and instead seek to go God's way, God's way, God's will.

Be real with God. Repent and turn unto the Lord to receive that reality that he has for you. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Follow me, he says. It's a different track. It's a turning from self, from self's way, from self's will to God's will to God's way. As Evan Roberts, an old-time evangelist and revivalist, prayed, Bend me, O Lord.

Bend me, O Lord. That's an awesome prayer, isn't it? That's a prayer we can pray if you'll have that heart that is softened.

[15:31] As Jonathan Edwards, an old-time revival, said, Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's range as humility. It starts with that humility. It starts with that humility that will bring that softness.

Bend me, O Lord. How can our hard hearts be made tender and contrite? How can they be softened? As the Holy Spirit moves upon each heart, as we gather with God's people, as we hear His Word, as it penetrates through the hard shell that we build up against His Word. He can transform those stony hearts, those hard hearts, into hearts of clay. He can transform our deadness into His life.

He can touch those hard, those frozen, those icy, cold hearts into hearts that are softened and receptive. Friends, we see in Moses' day, Pharaoh's hardened heart grew harder.

As Pharaoh was challenged and each time there was a new threat, a new judgment, Pharaoh's heart grew harder and harder and harder.

[16:54] Harder and harder and harder. Friends, that's how some people are today. There's people that you might be telling of the Saviour, but their hearts are hard and they're growing harder, setting like concrete.

Our will must yield to the Holy Spirit as He melts the coldest heart. Thank God He can. Thank God He can. He can melt the hardest of hearts.

We're talking about finding significance. You know, it sounds a bit trendy, a bit new age.

Significance. Realize who you are. Realize who you are.

Now, we were in a church and they used to think, I am somebody. I am somebody. What does the word say? Nothing.

Job 25 verse 6, it says, we like a worm. It's like a worm. This morning, I got some of that lovely rain water and I had a look and there was something in it other than water.

[17:54] Some extra nutrition. There was a little worm in the water this morning. I don't know whether you'll be blessed with one, but I just had a good drink. Food and drink.

I avoided the worm. But you know, the Bible says we like a worm. Like a worm. Realize your significance today. Amen. Realize your significance.

But a worm. Insignificant, really. Feeble. Like a worm. Powerless. As Wesley put it, commenting on this verse, mean, vile, impotent, proceeding from corruption and returning to it, the son of any man. It's true even on the greatest and best of men. Let us then wonder at the condescension of God.

The condescension of God in taking such worms into covenant and communion with himself.

Think of it. Find your significance. You're but a worm. But the God of the universe condescended.

He stooped down and came and visited you.

[19:00] He became a man. Consider your significance tonight. Realize who you are. You know, my dog inspired me actually for this sermon tonight.

Because Julie and I, we've been away for some days and our dog was getting restless. We got home and there was a stormy night. He did his usual trick.

At 11 o'clock at night, he takes his station outside our window and he goes, and it goes on and on and on.

I had to go and deal with him. I had to deal with that defiance in my little dog. And I had to speak gruffly to him. No, you've never heard me speak like that.

I personally speak to Julie like that. Once in a blue moon. But no, the defiance in that little dog. And I had to shut him away somewhere where I couldn't hear him so I could try to get some sleep, but I still didn't end up getting sleep that night.

[20:02] But the defiance in that little dog is sometimes just like you and me, isn't it? Before God, we've got a pride, we've got a hardness, we're not softened, we're not humility, it's lacking.

There's a sense where we think we've got more significance than we really have, but really we're just a worm. But put it into the perspective of eternity, to consider the wonder of Calvary, of the span of the universe, of the dimensions of the almighty God, that he should compact himself into a human frame, and consider this unworthy speck of humanity, that he says to you in Isaiah 66 verse 2, to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. To this man will I look. That's significance, isn't it? When you get poor, when you get contrite in spirit, when you get trembling at his word. Isaiah 45 speaks of the maker and the pots, and it says, let the potsherd, or the little piece of pottery, strive with the potsherds of the earth.

Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, what makest thou, or thy work? He hath no hands. Well, unto him that strives with his maker. We can't strive without making it.

All we can do is come to the end of ourselves, to stop striving, and to realise that significance.

Realise that significance of Calvary. Realise how God wants to shake us from our apathy, to wake

us, to unsettle us, and let's not get complacent, and be at ease in Zion.

[21 : 46] And our Lord can sometimes use adversity to take us to that place of usefulness. Friends, on the one side you drop self will, self will, you've got pride, you've got hardness, and what does it lead to?

Uselessness. It's useless, you're useless, that's your significance without God, you're useless, it's vain, why are you even wasting your breath? On the other side, if you find God's will, if you trust him, you humble yourself, you bow down, and confess him as master, you have a softness in your heart, then something happens on the inside of you, and you know, you can be useful, you can have a usefulness of the kingdom of God, a usefulness, don't you want to be useful?

Don't you want to be used by God in some capacity? It's only as we come to that place of brokenness, of softness, of humility, that we can come to that place of usefulness.

Spurs have put it, by the preaching of Christ crucified, will their hearts be broken? The cross is God's hammer of love, wherewith he smites the hearts of men with irresistible blows.

That's the significance, the significance is Calvary today, the significance is Christ crucified for you, the bleeding one, the dying lamb, nailed, pierced, his compassion for you.

[23 : 33] The cross is God's hammer of love, with which he smites the hearts of men with irresistible blows. We have to submit, we have to leave self-will and turn to God in surrender, absolute surrender, to the God of new beginnings, God with us, to the mercy of God.

Consider the wonder of it, that God would favour us, that God would honour us. We heard this morning the preacher that God would honour us, the worms that we are.

How? You can choose two things to do. You can resist. You can resist God's will.

You can go your own way, you can be like Satan, I will, I will, I will. You can be like Adam, you shall be as God's, oh, I'll just do what I please.

Or you can repent. it's two things, two ways that we can go.

[24 : 44] You can resist or you can repent. God is not to blame if you go to hell. It's entirely your own doing.

It's your own choice. God is not to blame. You are responsible. You are responsible for your help. And friends, it's sin.

It's sin. Self-will is sin. It's your own way instead of God's way. Friends, we must repent. We must repent of pride, of stubbornness, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Make that call while you can. Friends, I know I'm preaching to many saved here tonight, but there's a chance you may not be saved. I'd like to make it as clear as I can.

As clear as I can. There's no mucking about. There's no second chance. As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after that, the judgment.

[25 : 50] You've got no guarantee of even seeing tomorrow. Make that call. Make that call. Call on the name of the Lord and be saved. Make that call while your lips can still move, while your tongue can still talk.

Make that call. Call on the name of the Lord and you shall be saved. And the invitation is still in the book and it's still relevant, it's still contemporary, it's still for the present day.

Revelation 22 2. And the spirit of the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is a thirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

You know, it's pretty easy to take a bit of water and ah, making it thirsty. the water of life. But friends, the water of life, he says, come, take, drink, whosoever will, come to the mercy seat.

And I just want to urge each one here tonight to consider, if I can recap quickly, where do we stand? Which side of the fence are you on? Will you resist, live in self-will, pride and hardness and be useless?

[27 : 10] Your life is vain. It's pointless. Or will you repent, trust him, seek his will, his face, deny yourself, take up your cross, follow him, in humility, realise your significance, you're but a worm.

And thank God that God loves worms. Amen? Whoa, I'm glad he loves worms. And find that softness towards him.

And Christians too. Hey, we can be guilty too. We can be guilty of being still on this side of the fence. We dabble with self-will all the time, don't we?

Let's be honest. We don't always seek God's will. We don't always pray. We don't always respond to God's word as we should.

