

21 THE CHRISTIAN'S CHOICE

Philippians 2:13 ...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Ephesians 5:17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

There are three ways in which our wills may be exercised to do something:

- By coercing – when one is forced to do what he would rather not do.
- By conforming – when one follows what he cannot avoid.
- By choosing – when one is free to do what he wants to do.

Coercion is a negative functioning of the will and has negative repercussions. If the will is not allowed to act freely, it will certainly react. Conformity submits to what is perceived as necessary or inevitable. But choice freely exercised, produces the highest motivation. However, in real life the degree of freedom of choice is usually constrained by many practical factors. But real freedom in exercising one's will depends not on the range of external choices available, but on the degree of inward agreement or willingness.

How then should a Christian exercise his will and choice? To lie back passively under the pretext of leaving everything to God is not trust but shirking of responsibility. In exercising the will and choice, the key difference for the Christian lies in the boundaries of his choice. He is not bound by external constraints in his choice but by the will of God. He deliberately limits his choice to what God chooses. He aligns his will to God's will. Decision-making becomes amazingly simplified when it is reduced to one option! There are no second causes or second choices when pursuing God's perfect will.

This does not come naturally to us. I have to bring myself to reckon that the initiative lies with God, not me. In the final analysis, it is not for me to sit down and decide what I would like to do or where I would like to go. I can consider all the factors and make all the calculations on a rational basis, but that does not necessarily make it a right spiritual choice. There may be things in the higher mind and purpose of God that are as yet hidden from my understanding and beyond my present grasp. Until that is revealed to me and my eyes are opened to see, they would have been entirely left out of my consideration. Thus a whole decision can be put on an entirely wrong footing. The crucial thing in the Christian's decision is to know the mind and will of God for him in the matter. All other factors are discountable. Until God shows me something through His Word, or confirms it with a providential confluence of circumstances, I have no basis for making a decision in the will of God.

The difficult part usually lies in the patient waiting for the unfolding of His will. The recognition of His will comes readily to one who lives in constant communion with God. There is clarity when there is an alignment of my desire with His Word and the situation, producing an inward assurance and rest. God's will is not so much a thing that we find as a state we are in. The trying thing is an interminable waiting without a clear summons or vision. Every fibre of your being strains to get up and get on with doing. But you cannot, if you are not to miss out God's highest and best. Waiting time is never wasting time when it comes to the will of God. *"Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Habakkuk 2:3).*