

DESIRE AND RESOLVE



It might be well to warn you that this message isn't going to contain any illustrations. No stories, not even a parable. To get anything out of the following paragraphs, you'll have to think with me. If you don't feel up to it you might want to skip this message.

What I want to share has bearing on what I believe God wants for the Body of Christ across the earth. Things may seem to be going well in our churches, at least on the surface. But if we are sensitive to the leading of the Spirit, we cannot help but know that we're not even scratching the surface of the job that lies before us. We know in our hearts that God desires to do much more through us than we are presently allowing him to do

The things that we long to see... like effectively bringing people into the Kingdom and establishing them as authentic disciples of Jesus, will happen only when we as individual believers have settled some issues in our own lives.

It is so easy to see what's wrong with the other guy's life. But let's take a few minutes to concentrate on our own need to repent. Let's block out everyone else's shortcomings and each consider what has to change in me if the Lord Jesus is to get the job done through me.

Many years ago there was a school of thought which suddenly went underground, but which is now beginning to make a dramatic reappearance on the world scene. This school of thought holds that a human being can accomplish almost anything if he or she learns to exercise the will. The person who succeeds in exercising his will against his own fears, against the elements of nature, and against his enemies will rule the world.

This person is the true Superman.

The nation, which learns how to unify its will and then assert that will against all other nations will become the master race.

You are what you will. You will accomplish what you... will to accomplish. Phenomenal things have been accomplished by people who adhere to this philosophy.

But the inspiration for this teaching is the same devil that told Eve that she and her husband would become like God if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is based on a lie.

All the willpower in the world will never enable you to jump twenty feet in the air, or to fly like a bird, or swim like a fish, or turn yourself into the Incredible Hulk who can uproot trees and tear down buildings with his bare hands.

Nor does the power of the human will do the job in the moral realm. How many times have we made up our minds that we are going to turn over a new leaf, "I'm never going to do that again," only to stumble again, and again, and again.

I do not understand my own actions. For I do what I do not want, but I do the very thing I hate. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. So I'm finding a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Romans 7:15-24

Who of us hasn't experienced this? Who of us, by the sheer power of the will, can overcome self-centeredness?

But the mistake we make, when we discover the futility of willpower in dealing with sin, is that we then tend to flop to the other extreme and believe that the will is useless.

*"For the good which I desire, I don't do;
but the evil which I don't desire, that I practice." v. 19 (WEB)*

"So what good is my will?"

We excuse the mediocre lives we live by pointing to the weakness of the human will. "After all, I'm not some kind of spiritual superman – I'm weak. I'm only human."

Granted all the willpower in the world will not enable me to sprout wings and fly. But it is within the power of my will to get myself out of bed in the morning at a decent hour.

Willpower will never make me sinless.

But it is within the power of my will to turn my back on my delusions and start following Jesus who is able to deliver me from sin.

Paul who wrote those words, "The good I would I do not do. The evil I would not that is the thing I do", also writes these words just a few verses down the page,

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

Romans 8:5,6

And to set the mind on the Spirit is an act of your will.

Further on the page:

"So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh -- for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the flesh you will live."

So the will joins the Holy Spirit and puts to death the deeds of the Body.

Jesus never treats us like robots or zombies. Everything he has to say to us is addressed to our will.

Jesus stands inside a doorway, which he has opened.

All the willpower in the world would never open that door for us. He opened it for us with his death and resurrection. Now he invites us to come through the door to him.

Standing outside the door we see the freedom and life and peace that he offers
– and we desire that.



Elizabeth Wang

But those blessings do not become ours until our desire for Jesus is transformed into resolve that gets up out of our chair and walks through the door.

***"If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink."
"He who believes in me out his heart will flow rivers of living water."***

We long for life from God.

We want the rivers of living water to flow out of us.

That's our desire. But the desire for these blessings God promises us in his Son will never bring them to us. The desire has to be vulcanized into resolve that goes through the door and receives blessings from the one who offers them...

Who draws near to Jesus.

Who doesn't try to grab the blessings from Jesus and leave him standing there.

But who comes to him and finds the blessings in Him.

So how do we turn our yearnings...our longings...our desire...into resolve?

Two things:

First we turn our desire for the Kingdom of God into resolve by setting our face toward the Kingdom and we quit looking back.

When the days drew near for Him to be received up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem. And He sent messengers ahead of Him, who went and entered the village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him; but the people would not receive Him, because His face was set toward Jerusalem.

Luke 9:51-53

As they were going along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has no place to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But he said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the Kingdom of God." Another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first go and say farewell to those of my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and then turns back is fit for the Kingdom of God."

Luke 9:57-62

Here we see the vivid contrast between Jesus, who has set his face toward Jerusalem, refusing to look back, and these would-be followers who have the very best intentions, but cannot let go of what's behind them.

*"Lord, I'll follow you wherever you go."
"Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests.
The Son of man has nowhere to lay his head."*

Immediately this man looks back to see where he's going to sleep, and he's out of it.

Jesus says to another one, "Follow me."

*"Lord, first let me go and bury my father."
"Let the dead bury their own dead,"
says Jesus, "but as for you, you go and preach the Kingdom of God."*

And there he hangs between his yearning for the Kingdom and his attachment to his old life, and he gets nowhere.

Lord, I'll follow you, but let me first go and say farewell to those at my home. No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God.

These well-intentioned disciples are moved by desire, which is a beautiful thing.

Their desire to follow Jesus springs up from a living seed and becomes a hopeful plant---until the sun gets hot. Then it looks back and wilts.

Jesus is moved by resolve. His face is set, and he keeps going.

So desire is a perfectly good thing. We need more of it. It was desire that drew us to Jesus in the first place. But that desire has to be transformed into resolve, resolve which sets its face toward the Kingdom and won't turn toward the left or to the right. Which puts its hand to the plow and won't look back.

Otherwise we become that hopeful plant that grows up only to wilt in the sun.



No root, no resolve. No resolve, no endurance.

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

Psalm 27:4

"One thing have I desired of the Lord" – that's desire. Praise God!

"...that will I seek after" – that's resolve. That's the act of the will.
Too many of us have stagnated at the stage of desire when it comes to our relationship with God.

We desire visions of Heaven.

We desire to live a radically committed life.

We desire to overcome sin.

And we even receive from God, in His goodness, beautiful tastes of things we desire. He gives us visions of Himself. And He has poured out upon us all kinds of blessings. Power has flowed down upon us from the Holy Spirit. We have seen fruit.

But in so many cases, it hasn't survived the heat of daily life.

We've tasted God's redemptive power.

We've seen God's light.

We know that we are meant to live in God's kingdom atmosphere all the time.

Yet the vision never seems to take on substance in our lives. Because instead of looking through the door and fixing our eyes on the Lord who waits for us on the other side, always calling us to himself...

....we keep looking back.

And what is in there waiting to be ours, will not really be ours until we quit looking back and start moving toward the vision and keep moving until it becomes ours. Until we shake ourselves loose from everything that tries to hold us back.

Which brings us to the second thing, which has to happen if our desire is ever to be fired up and turned into resolve:

We are going to have to disengage ourselves – violently, if necessary – from everything which tries to hold us on the wrong side of the door.

Why do you think Jesus says to Peter, whom he loves,

"Get ye behind me, Satan. You're a hindrance to me. You're on the side of man not of God."

You're hindering me, Peter, because you're trying to keep me from getting to the cross.

I'm not going to let you do it.

Our Lord does this with his own mother.

"Woman, what have I to do with you? My time has not yet come..... Who are my mother and my brothers? Who ever hears the word of God and keeps it."

"Those who do the will of God."

He keeps pushing his own mother away because Mary senses something terrible might happen to her son and she's trying to protect him.

Oh well, maybe Jesus had to do that, but I don't know if I could."

"Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned to them and said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even, his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "He began to build, and was not able to finish." Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with 10,000 to win against him who comes against him with 20,000? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks for terms of peace. So, therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."

Luke 14: 25-33



The only way in ... is to shake ourselves loose and renounce the things that hold us out.

Somehow our up-and-down, hot-and-cold, in-and-out desire for the Kingdom has to become such a deep-rooted resolve that it is willing to tear itself away from anything that tries to tempt it back toward "safety."

We are still going to walk through this world. We cannot withdraw from the world to escape conflict. The Lord God himself has put us here. We are going to keep our responsibilities and fulfill them. We're going to do our jobs well. We're going to play with our children. We're going to rest by the river.

But always with a heart, which keeps everything but the Kingdom at a distance – even if we have to hate our own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and especially our own life.

*"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after;
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."*

It is possible to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives – to live in his presence; to know his peace; to walk in his light; to do his will; to feed his sheep; to manifest his Kingdom.

But this life of union with God in the midst of the confusion of this world will not be ours until we resolve to go in and get it.

Not desire – resolve.

Until we set our face with Jesus – to go with him to Jerusalem and the cross which waits for each of us there – even if we have to tear ourselves violently away from anything that tries to detain us.



For the Joy Set Before Me Eric Holmlund

May God help us, this day, to settle the conflict that rages in our hearts and turn our desire for him into resolve.

Prayer:

Worthy Lord, we truly desire your life, your peace, your presence. We long for your Living Water to be poured into us and from us. Transform these desires into resolve. May we stop looking back. May we break the grip of anything that holds us back from your promises. Deliver us from our own lack of resolve, our weaknesses, our excuses. May we fix our hearts on you, set our face on you and get up and do what it takes to follow you unimpeded to your Kingdom.

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THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN

Original Circa 1980, Edited 2006

This is found in the booklet "The Renewed Mind"... which can be mailed out upon request.