

WILL AND UNDERSTANDING

Series 2 Lesson 10

U N I T Y

CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL LESSONS

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QUESTIONS

for

Series 2 Lesson 10

WILL AND UNDERSTANDING

1. What is will? What is understanding? What is the relation of will to understanding?
2. What is the will of God and what is it to do the will of God?
3. Explain the Scripture "Resist not him that is evil" (Matt. 5:39).
4. What does a state of mental resistance indicate?
5. How does man exercise control of his faculties and their expression?
6. How should children be taught in their formative years to use will and understanding?
7. Why is it unwise for one individual to dominate another?
8. What has free will to do with expression?
9. What has the will to do with the forming of a perfect physical body?
10. What is it to be reconciled to God? Give three affirmations that have helped you to bring about this reconciliation in your own consciousness and in your body and affairs.

"WILL AND UNDERSTANDING"

Series 2 Lesson 10

As we study the faculty of will and the faculty of understanding, we learn that each is a divine idea in God Mind, a spiritual power, a spiritual pattern or principle to be used by man. Each is a mental faculty operating in man's consciousness and manifesting as a part of his body organism. The will is the executive idea and the understanding is the "knowing" idea, the reasoning principle. In the individual consciousness these two must always work together, according to the Christ standard, in order to produce harmony and fulfillment in one's soul, body, and affairs. "The will is the executive power of the mind. . . . In all systems of thought concentration and spiritual attainment, the will, the executive faculty, plays the leading part" (Keep a True Lent, pages 156, 194).

Will is the power to act without restriction from any source; the privilege to use all the powers of God within, either in a constructive way or in a destructive way to fulfill all the desires an individual may have. The will is the power to affirm and deny, to say "yes" and "no." "The will must be dealt with in every movement because it is the very essence of self-consciousness" (Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, page 577).

Understanding is the power or faculty that enables one to know, to vision, to see, and to feel. It is the power that enables one to forget past mistakes and shortcomings of himself and others and come into a higher state of consciousness. Understanding provides the vision, and the will provides the motive power by which the vision can become manifest in one's life. Understanding is expressed by and through the will. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18 A.V.). Without understanding of the Source of our good and how to attain that good, we could not live. Without the motive power to act (will) upon the vision, we should perish.

"There is a knowing quality in Divine Mind. God is supreme knowing. That in man which comprehends is understanding; it knows and compares in wisdom. Its comparisons are not made in the realm of form, but in the realm of ideas" (Christian Healing, page 112).

Man, created in the image and after the likeness of God, is endowed with divine freedom and the power to exercise that freedom as he chooses. Man's heritage is all the ideas of Divine Mind--all the powers of Being, all the qualities of God--thus making man a special unit in universal life. He may enter into and live the life universal wherein he places himself consciously in unity with all the good that is provided by his Creator for his unfoldment and well-being. Or he may feel separate from God, from his fellow man, and from his fellow creatures and try to live that way. God never forces Himself on man, therefore man is left free to use his powers either constructively or destructively. Man would be a mere machine had he not the privilege of making use of the powers that are inherent in him in whatsoever way he may choose.

The right to exercise freedom of will was given to man in the very beginning. His misuse of this privilege brought upon the world all the burden of sin and of sorrow that it has since experienced. In the allegory in the second chapter of Genesis, we find man, as the first Adam, experiencing suffering through an ignorant use of his will for the sake of what he considered personal advantage. The second Adam, or Jesus Christ, "the resurrected Adam" (Talks on Truth, page 137), stands His testing with regard to the righteous use of the will and by His victory lifts up the race.

This may seem contradictory to the statement that man has free will. If he must "give up" his will, is he free? To answer this correctly we must consider "understanding" in its relation to "will":

The divine, universal will is good. "It is not the will of your Father . . . that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. 18:14). This text indicates the will of the Father toward His children. The Psalmist compares the love of God with the love of earthly parents and argues that God loves men and wills only good for them, even as fathers after the flesh "will" good for their children. An understanding of God as Father eliminates from man's consciousness the error belief that God wills suffering for man. Any loving father or mother would be grieved to have a child think the parent willed suffering, and no child that persisted in such a thought would be considered normal. Much more should this be true in our relations with God. Bible texts that seem to indicate a supreme will of cruelty should not be accepted with such an interpretation.

Nature affords us valuable illustrations that help to make clear the question of God's will. In nature there is an invisible power that continuously moves to bring into manifestation all its different elements in the same way that God moves to have His perfect ideas (elements) brought into expression. The one tendency of this power in nature is to produce perfect specimens of each species in order that beauty and harmony may abound. When a tree is scarred, the processes of nature heal the wound, barren places are covered with vegetation of some kind, dead stumps are covered with vines. As there is a great silent power in nature moving for complete expression of nature's products, so there is a great moving activity in the universe that tends toward perfect expression. This universal movement is not anything apart from the movement in nature nor from the movement in man. The cause or source of this movement toward perfection in nature, in man, and in everything else in the universe, is what we call "the will of God."

It has been found that some cases of illness do not respond readily to spiritual treatment because the belief has been fixed in the patient's mind that God wills suffering. The patient should be treated to the end that he may understand that the divine will, God's purpose for all His creation, is only good. When the patient accepts this premise, he experiences in his body and affairs the harmony that is "the will of God." Another mistaken belief that man has in "giving up" to the will of God is that he must become negative or inert--waiting, as it were, for some outside power to impel him to action. God is omnipresent and, therefore, there is just as much activity in man as there is anywhere else in the universe.

"Giving up" to the will of God is not a negative process; it consists in accepting one's deepest and truest impulses as the will of God and giving these impulses expression.

The next point to clear up in learning the right use of the faculty of will is the difference between the faculty of will and the personal use of this faculty. In man's true estate he has understanding and wills to act upon that which is true and right. This is the will faculty functioning at one with the divine will. What is so often called the "personal will" is the ignorant, selfish use of the mental faculty that we call the will. It is this unrighteous use of the will faculty that is to be given up to the divine, universal will. Man is free only when he exercises his will faculty in divine understanding. He is in bondage when he allows the will faculty to be dominated by selfish desire. When one is following Spirit and seeking to do the will of God he should count all his experiences as stepping-stones to good.

One must be willing to give up limited desires of the personal man in order to enter into the joys of the universal. When manifest man is unenlightened, his life is largely devoted to unworthy aims and his thoughts are welded to the material only. Yet this renunciation of limited concepts of self can be and must be made before man can enter into the realization of what the "will of God" is. If one does not give up willingly, the law itself seeks to bring about an adjustment.

When the individual will faculty is consciously one with God through spiritual understanding, then is fulfilled the promise, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). "Ask whatsoever ye will" is the privilege of men who pray in the understanding of themselves as the Christ of God.

The righteous use of the faculty of will is the open door to the fulfillment of all the promises of God. The Scriptures confirm this in the following verses: "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa. 1:19). "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching" (John 7:17). "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:17). Every blessing is for men when they will to do the will of God, therefore "be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephes. 5:17), and "that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col. 1:9).

Throughout His ministry Jesus taught the Father's will; but something more is needed than just to know the "letter" of His teachings. Spiritual quickening is necessary. "But there is a spirit in man, And the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8).

An intellectual comprehension of Truth only does not meet the full requirement of exercising the faculty of will in spiritual understanding. "Intellectual knowledge comes first in the soul's development, then a deeper understanding of principles follows until the whole man ripens into wisdom" (Keep a True Lent, page 155).

The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask what I shall give thee" (I Kings 3:5). Solomon replied, "Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil" (I Kings 3:9). The Lord was pleased because Solomon had asked for wisdom instead of riches and honor, and said, "Behold, I have done according to thy word: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart . . . And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor" (I Kings 3:12, 13). Understanding has, therefore, been called the "key to all good." Solomon chose that which he most desired--understanding--and because he chose wisely, the Lord bestowed great riches upon him. So it is with us: understanding is our "key to all good" for understanding opens the door to health, prosperity, love, and happiness. Often we seek for understanding in the outer or through other persons rather than in seeking for it within ourselves. As we endeavor to understand others, then we find the fulfillment of our own desire for understanding.

It was immediately after this occurrence that two women appealed to Solomon to decide whose child it was that they both claimed. "And the king said, Fetch me a sword . . . And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spake the woman, whose the living child was, unto the king, for her heart yearned over her son, and she said, Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, It shall be neither mine nor thine; divide it. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: She is the mother thereof" (I Kings 3:24-27). This is a fine example of intuitive understanding on the part of Solomon. Instead of the usual taking of testimony and the various methods of proving the case by witnesses, Solomon appealed directly to the heart and got the truth instantly. No amount of exoteric testimony would have accomplished what the appeal to the heart of the mother brought forth instantly. Some Truth students become so enamored of the revelations through the head that they fail to go on to the unfoldment of spiritual understanding that comes from God through the heart.

To "do the will of God" is to think and to express oneself in harmony with the Truth of Being (God). As stated before, Jesus taught the Father's will. He put Truth into simple form for our benefit when He gave His commandments--"and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3); they are the way to life. When they are interpreted according to the "letter," some of them seem indeed like hard sayings; but to one in spiritual understanding, interpreted according to the "spirit [that] giveth life" (II Cor. 3:6), they are a lamp to the feet and a light upon the way, rejoicing the soul.

The necessity of a clear understanding of the words of Jesus may be illustrated by this commandment: "Resist not him that is evil" (Matt. 5:39) or, as the margin reads, "Resist not evil." Two men may have an equally great desire to "do the will of God" in the matter of taking the right attitude toward evil and may accept this command as their light. However, one may interpret it literally, while the other interprets it in spiritual understanding. The one who follows the literal interpretation finds himself becoming negative, and error conditions grow larger and larger, threatening to overthrow him. The other holds himself in tune with Spirit, and while he does not resist evil conditions he takes a positive attitude

toward good and thus overcomes all beliefs in evil as a creation of God. Through ignorance the one fails to exercise his will; the other exercises his will in spiritual understanding.

A state of resistance is always evidence of an unyielding personal will or limited use of the faculty of will. When consciously linked with God, man increases his capacity to use his will righteously, and his life becomes more Christlike in manifestation.

The Old Testament narrates that Joseph had two sons. "And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: For, said he, God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction" (Gen. 41:51, 52). The oldest son, Manasseh, had power to forget--to erase through an understanding of Truth--all the accumulated burden of negative thoughts, even those of heredity. Understanding here denotes the ability to deny, the passive or receptive activity of mind. The other son, Ephraim, could add to or make fruitful the "land" that seemed to be a place of affliction. Manasseh represents "understanding," and Ephraim stands for "will." The will is the positive or affirmative quality, the affirmative attitude of mind. These two sons of Joseph inherited his allotment in the Promised Land, which represents the redeemed and perfected body. Their allotment was together; they were never separated. These processes in consciousness are symbolized in the body by the front brain, which is their field of operation. When the will is working strongly we corrugate the brow, and the quick understanding causes the eyes to flash. The first step that a beginner in Truth takes is to set up a new and better state of consciousness, based on the Absolute (God). He forgets or denies reality to the not-good, and brings into vivid remembrance the good by affirming it alone to be the real. These two mental processes should go hand in hand as shown by the joint ownership by Manasseh and Ephraim in the Promised Land. All that we realize, all that becomes part of our character, must enter our consciousness through these mental processes. We must know for ourselves and our knowledge must come through conscious understanding; then it must be expressed by the will. The understanding and will faculties should be especially active in the one who would control the sensations of the body.

In the New Testament, Matthew and Thomas represent will and understanding.

"Matthew--gift of Jehovah . . . given wholly unto Jehovah. . . . represents the will faculty in man. . . ."

"The will always enters into man's decisions. The will makes the final choice to give up all and follow Jesus. This lesson on the surrendering of the old beliefs and conditions, that the greater increase of good may come into one's life, is based on Matthew because Matthew represents the will. . . . Under the spiritual law, the will becomes a producer. . . . When the individual will has become a disciple of the Christ, spiritual I AM, the schooling of the man begins. . . ."

"Thomas is the disciple of Jesus Christ who represents the understanding faculty in man. . . .

"Among the disciples of Jesus, Thomas stood for the head, representing reason and intellectual perception. Jesus did not ignore Thomas' demand for physical evidence of His identity, but respected it" (Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, pages 433, 434, 654).

Some have called Thomas "doubting Thomas" because he sought proof upon which to base his faith. But it must be conceded that he had an inquiring mind, one that sought the Truth about all things. Thomas had a strong, positive faith like Peter's, and in some ways it manifested itself like Peter's faith. However Peter's faith seemed more optimistic than that of Thomas. Thomas is thought by many Bible students to have had a pessimistic streak in him, although probably most of this supposition is based on one incident.

Thomas, the earnest one, the disciple who was determined to understand so that he could carry out whatever was expected of him, asked the question that probably was in the minds of others, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?" (John 14:5). Here "Thomas represents reason functioning in the realm of sense, seeking to discern the things of Spirit through outer signs. The truth contained in Jesus' answer to Thomas, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me,' [John 14:6], is that the I AM in man, or the Christ, is the open door to the Kingdom of God" (Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, page 654).

The above statement, which has meant so much to Christians through the centuries, was made because Thomas, the disciple who sought to understand, dared ask his question. Now, thanks to Thomas' question and Jesus' answer, we may know the way. The I AM in man, or the Christ, is the open door to the kingdom of God.

To what extent do we have control over our faculties and their expression? As spiritual beings we have inherited dominion and authority over every faculty and its expression. However, we have not always recognized, accepted, and used our right to control mind activity, and adverse conditions have been formed in our body and affairs. In order to exercise control over the faculties and their expression, we must begin to exercise the will faculty in spiritual understanding. We begin with the recognition and acknowledgment of the Christ Mind in us, the realm of pure knowing. This realm is the realm of divine ideas or patterns for our thinking. Then, through denial, affirmation, meditation, prayer, and the practice of the Presence in daily living, we align our thoughts with the Christ Mind, thus "bringing every thought into a harmonious relation to eternal unchangeable principles" (Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, page 654). By aligning the conscious phase of the mind (intellect) with the Christ Mind (Superconscious) only that which is good and true is given to the subconscious phase. Thus, a perfect mind action is established and control over our faculties and their expression is exercised in divine order.

That which is stored in the subconscious phase of mind is "subjective." The tape recorder is a good illustration of this. The recorder never stores up music or sounds of any kind except as they are "spoken" into it. The tape record, when once made, can, under right conditions, be repeated any number of times or its impressions erased. Whatever is accepted by the conscious phase of mind is stored in the subconscious, and the subconscious "makes" or produces the conditions of the body and the environment in which we live. The subconscious phase of mind may seem to be beyond the control of the conscious phase but control is always within reach of the one who exercises his faculty of will in understanding. If we let all kinds of thoughts into our conscious phase of mind, we will store them in our subconscious phase. If we sing a song, or give a groan, it is all recorded within. This accounts for every condition that we experience. Sometimes we wonder why we find ourselves in the midst of certain conditions, not understanding that they are reactions or the "sounding forth" of the records that have been impressed on our subconscious.

We must make unity in understanding with the great knowing Mind. In Divine Mind there is no such thing as ignorance. We should never say, "I do not know." When we say this, we draw a cloud of ignorance over our consciousness. Children are sometimes kept in bondage by parents and teachers holding them to be dull and slow of comprehension. We may help such children by declaring for them, "God is your intelligence."

The will of children should never be broken but should be strengthened. Children should be taught to do right because it is right and good, instead of being forced to follow the will of others. We must make clear to children that all good comes through obedience to spiritual law and that it can come in no other way; that conscious, deliberate, and wholehearted observance of known laws will insure success and happiness. Children should be shown the results that follow from making a wrong choice, from using the will to bring about results that are selfish and unwise. Right understanding of their relation to God's laws should be pointed out to children so that they may see how to exercise their will faculty righteously (through understanding) thus making wise and loving decisions in matters that come to them for action.

The underlying principle of life is God, Absolute Good, and all of man's calculations in life should have their beginning in this truth. Man's life will become stable only when built upon this principle. God is Spirit, and the things of God must be spiritually discerned. Through discernment we understand God; through understanding God we become wise in the application of God's ideals or powers in us. Through the right use of these powers we come into knowledge of God and of who and what man is.

In Lesson Three of Series Two it was explained that:

"Ideal man is I AM; manifest man is I will. I AM is the Lord God, Jehovah, of the Scriptures, and I will is the Adam. One represents the inner man, and the other the outer or formed man. It is the I AM that forms and

breathes into the I will man 'the breath of life' . . .
 In the realm of the ideal, we are I AM; when we are
 expressing and interpreting the ideas of Divine Mind
 in our thoughts and in our acts, we are I will."

Everything centers about the will, therefore, nothing should ever be done that interferes with the freedom of one's own will or the will of others.

"Like a fountain that never faileth,
 My life and will are free;
 Therefore whatever belongeth to God
 Rightfully belongeth to me."--Selected.

Those who submit themselves to hypnotism and mediumship weaken the will faculty; instead of exercising the will in the right way themselves they surrender it and gradually lose conscious dominion. The whole consciousness is thrown into disorder because the will faculty, having been denied its rights, has lost its hold and can no longer control the processes of thinking and feeling.

In all the affairs of life the will should be respected. We should never try to compel friends and relatives to follow our patterns of living of what is right, even in small matters. Parents should never dominate children but guide them; husbands should never dominate wives; wives should never dominate their husbands. Children should be taught the laws of life and obedience to Truth, but they should be allowed freedom to express their spiritual powers. The will directs the other faculties of the mind and must be free to do this. Impulses arise within the individual in the form of good motives, good intentions. Without free will they cannot be expressed, and this results in loss of some form of manifest good to the individual and to the community. Repression of the will faculty causes suffering because the spiritual qualities such as life, love, and wisdom cannot come forth to produce the "abundant life" of which Jesus spoke.

A text in the Authorized Version of the Bible reads, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12 A.V.). A more reasonable translation is given in the German, which makes the passage read thus: "The kingdom of heaven is open to invasion by the resolute will, and the resolute will taketh it by assertion." This is so clear that it scarcely needs comment. All students of Truth have experienced the taking of the kingdom by assertion or affirmation, and they know that it often requires a very resolute will because of the negative states of consciousness that have formed through neglect or ignorant exercise of the will faculty.

There is a great difference between entering into the realization of life, strength, power and merely receiving suggestions of these qualities. Suggestion is from without, and it may be based on either Truth or error; spiritual realization is from within and is always Truth. Truth is first "suggested" to the individual, but for it to be realization he must let Spirit within reveal the Truth back of the words that were "suggested." Statements of Truth spoken in understanding quicken the mind to an abiding consciousness of the Truth of Being, and permanent health and happiness is the result.

"Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11)--the perfect man. Building is expression; it is the work of the will using the creative power of God. When built in spiritual understanding, the structure will not fall. The will working without understanding has (through the subconscious phase of mind) built many error conditions into the body, making it a tabernacle instead of an everlasting temple. These errors are pictures made by the imaging faculty. There must be understanding as to what change is to be made in the image, and there must also be the faith that it can be changed, and the will to carry the change into effect. When these errors and the tabernacle-states-of-consciousness that they have formed are dissolved by denial, then "we have a building from God . . . eternal, in the heavens" (II Cor. 5:1) that is, a spiritual consciousness. Then are we clothed with the perfect Christ body.

"Be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:20) means "Be willing that His will be done." Submission to the divine will is not a negative giving up to circumstances and conditions but a blending of man's use of will with God's through the understanding that back of all that appears is the great universal will, willing only good.

What we really will to do, that we do. Sometimes we think we will to do when we merely have a desire or a longing or a wish to do. Desire is more of a reaching out of the soul for satisfaction. When the will acts in accord with the desire, then we do the thing we want to do. To will is to do, and the power must come from within. We may will to do a thing we do not desire to do, or we may very much desire to do something that we do not will to do. We may desire to be well and strong, but before this is accomplished in fact we must will to be well and make active our powers to that end. We must will until we have retrained the subconscious in the ways of Spirit, and then automatically we shall express in mind, body, and affairs the perfection which the I AM is. "Willing" is not a hard personal effort. It is only so when the unenlightened man is trying to carry out some of his ambitions. The will in its true estate acts easily and accomplishes wonders without apparent effort. In divine order it works from within, from the I AM, instead of from the outer consciousness. When man learns to go within and make himself consciously one with the Supreme Will, he will be able to control and direct all the functions of the body as well as the activities of the mind and the heart (i.e., thinking and feeling).

The following statements may be used in establishing conscious union with the divine will:

"Not my will, but thine, be done."

I will to do the will of God.

I am free to do the will of God.

I delight to do Thy will, O God.

I exercise power, mastery, and dominion through Jesus Christ and not through the limited use of the will faculty.

SOLOMON'S COUNSEL

"My son, if thou wilt receive my words,
And lay up my commandments with thee;
So as to incline thine ear unto wisdom,
And apply thy heart to understanding;
Yea, if thou cry after discernment,
And lift up thy voice for understanding;
If thou seek her as silver,
And search for her as for hid treasures:
Then shalt thou understand the fear of Jehovah,
And find the knowledge of God.
For Jehovah giveth wisdom;
Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding:
He layeth up sound wisdom for the upright;
He is a shield to them that walk in integrity;
That he may guard the paths of justice,
And preserve the way of his saints.
Then shalt thou understand righteousness and justice,
And equity, yea, every good path.
For wisdom shall enter into thy heart,
And knowledge shall be pleasant unto thy soul;
Discretion shall watch over thee;
Understanding shall keep thee."

--Proverbs 2:1-11.