

WILL POWER

Can any one truthfully say they are developing – through fervent prayer and Bible study a strong iron will?

The development of a firm will is a most important key to overcoming sin. In fact, the final reward of God's called will depend, in great measure, upon how much he has rightly developed God's willpower over sinning.

A steadfast servant for God will always have a strong "Will" to overcome Satan's pulls

After so many years in God's Church we are still hearing many find themselves giving in to the pulls of the their sinful human nature, instead of resisting sinful human nature! Many brethren are not exercising the willpower which God expects of them!

Of all creatures on this earth, man alone possesses a will—the power to choose or decide for himself. Man alone is a free moral agent— animals are not. They cannot choose! They are slaves to instinct— they just do what comes naturally!

Human beings, however, must overcome, through power of will, the pulls of the human flesh. Human will must be **exercised!** Willpower, like muscle-power, must be developed through the right kind of exercise.

When we do physical exercise our muscles become stronger. When we exercise willpower, we will become stronger willed. Every time one makes himself do what he knows is right instead of what he would like to do, he strengthens his will in overcoming sin. But every time one weakens and does what he knows is wrong he erode the power of will. There is a saying, that every body likes to be right, but few like to do right! This is true **not** only of people in the world, but unfortunately, this is all too true of many called in God's church! Many brethren are suffering from this infirmity of the will!

Many called have lots of wish power, but little or **no** real willpower! We all have a wish bone, but at times, very little backbone! The spirit is willing, but the flesh is extremely weak!

God almighty made all human beings free moral agents. We have the power to choose between right and wrong, good and evil, obedience and disobedience, eternal life or eternal death! The gift of choice, this power to decide for ourselves whether we will go God's way or man's way, (under the sway of satan) is a precious gift!

Almighty God could have made human beings as mere fleshly robots! He could have made it impossible for us to sin, so we **could not** have gone wrong. He could have made us in such a way that we would never – even once, desire to go the wrong way.

Man is the very pinnacle of God's physical creation! God is molding and shaping human beings into God's, into sons for His own family. This God like character, which God is developing in man is the supreme master of all His creation! This can only be done through the instrumentality of free moral agency, there is no other way.

Man has his part in this spiritual creation through a God -man partner—ship. Man must voluntarily choose or decide whether or not, he will accept and follow God's way. This can only be done through man's free choice. Every man must choose.

When the Creator put Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, He gave them a choice as to whether or 'not' they would obey Him. "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden OF Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shalt not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shalt surely die" (Gen 2:15-17). You know the rest of that story by reading Gen 3: 1 - 24). It is now a record of history. Adam and Eve, and all human beings since that day, choose the wrong way, the way of disobedience, suffering and death!

Just before Moses died, he set before the people of Israel the way of "life and death." The way of "blessings and cursing's." The children of Israel was given the choice as to whether they would, obey God or

not. Notice, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: Therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live: That you may love the Lord your God, and that you may obey His voice, and that you may cleave unto Him: for He is your life, and the length of your days: that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swear unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (Deut 30:19 - 20). They chose to disobey, yet they promised obedience through lip service! That evidence is said in, Exo 19: 8, and in Exo 24: 3, 7. They never really set their wills steadfastly to obey God. They soon chose disobedience.

Moving on to their next generation and leader, Israel was again told they must choose whether or not -- they would obey God. Joshua 24, reveals that story. "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). They chose the way of least resistance, the way of sin!

In the time of the prophet Elijah, Israel was again told to choose, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, how long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). The vast majority of Israel has continued to follow Baal ever since.

The truth is, a lot of us, before conversion, chose the way of sin and death. We willed to go the wrong way. The apostle Paul writes in Rom.:3:10-11, "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God." Isaiah 53: 6 adds, "All we like sheep have gone astray.: we have turned every one to his own way..."

Lets turn our attention now to examples of some strong willed men of God. All of the great men of the Bible were without exception: men of strong purpose and iron will! They set their mind to go in a certain direction that certain direction was to obey God and in that direction they went

Noah, had to be strong-willed in order to resist the taunts, jeers, criticism and outright blasphemy of the skeptics and atheists of his day, who had never seen a rain storm that could threaten the life of all human existence on the earth? How ridiculous of "old Noah" to contemplate building such a gigantic ship!

Abraham's iron strong will power mixed with his faith, enabled him to promptly obey God, leaving his own country and his own kin behind. He was commanded to go into a completely strange land, a land about which he knew little or nothing about. The faith chapter reveals that to us. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb 11:8). In spite of innumerable obstacles, he obeyed his strong will and remained firm! He was determined. to obey God at all costs, even to the point of being willing to -sacrifice his son, **Isaac**, that iron strong will is read of in Gen. 22:1-18.

Isaac, too, was a determined man, so was **Jacob**. **Jacob's** iron strong will determination was shown by his bulldog tenacity when he wrestled all night with God, and only let the Lord go after first receiving a blessing. **Jacob** literally wrestled, strained and struggled, in the dirt all night with the one who became Christ (Gen. 32: 24-32.).

Joseph was also a man who exercised tremendous iron will power. It took a resolute, brave mind to resist the sexual advances of a lustful Egyptian temptress, we read of in Gen 39: 7 - 20) He had set his mind to obey God, regardless of the consequences, which in this instance meant humiliation and imprisonment. Verse 20, tells us, Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound."

Another example is **Moses**. There can be no question concerning **his willpower**, his resolve was to obey God. It took a very strong iron willed person to lead over two million unconverted, grumbling, rebellious Israelites from Egypt through the desert for forty long years.

Its noted in God's word, **King David's** turbulent life revealed a man of extraordinary willpower. From his youth until the day of his death, he was in constant turmoil and struggle, yet he chose to obey God. Through the greater part of his life, he was very firm, diligently following God, in the face of much persecution, opposition and temptation. He said, "I. am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress" (Psa. 17:3). **David** set his will to obey God! **Elijah, Daniel and many other** Old Testament prophets were men of strong will.

Above all, Jesus Christ, so set His iron will to obey His heavenly Father, that He never once veered from that course which He had chosen. He is the only man who **never** violated His own conscience, who never-

weakened, who never let sin triumph over Him even momentarily, no, not so much as once!

We are told to follow His example in I Pet. 2: 21, “For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”

Many of the “great” men of this world have been men of having a strong iron will, men of bulldog determination: Sir. Winston Churchill was such a man, His success was determined more by his strong will than by any other quality of character.

The great failures of recorded history resulted more from weak wills than from anything else. Looking now at the other side of the coin we find Bible weaklings. The weaklings mentioned in the Bible were all men of little or no will power.

Esau didn't have enough will power to control his appetite. He was willing to sell his tremendous Birthright for a small bowl of soup! He was rough and ready, hardy and masculine and strong in body, but weak of will! As a result of a great blessing passed from him and his descendants to the children of Israel. His lack of self-restraint and not having the will to patiently wait until food could be prepared for him.

Jacob's firstborn son, Reuben was a weak willed person. He was the rightful heir to a double blessing which should have passed to the firstborn son, but he lost out because of his weak will. He knew what was right, but did not have a strong enough will to do the right thing. He succumbed to sexual temptation and lost his birthright. His weak willed, “Unstable as water” character disqualified him and his descendants from receiving the chief birthright blessings, Gen 49:3-4) tells of this history. “Reuben, you art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: unstable as water, you shalt not excel; because you went up to your father's bed; then defiled you it.”

In the New Testament, lets now see the source of **Paul's** iron will power. **The Apostle Paul** was certainly one of the strongest willed men of God's called. Before his conversion, he was breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, and was zealously persecuting the saints, binding them over into prison. Acts 9:1 says, “And Saul, yet breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.”

Paul continues to speak of his great woefully, misdirected zeal toward God in Acts 22:3 “And I persecuted this the Christian way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.” And in Acts 26:9 -11, Paul confessed, “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.... and many of the saints did I shut up in prison; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them. Often in every Synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities that I went.” **The Apostle Paul** was a very strong willed person. Sincerely and with all his might persecuted the early Churches of God before his conversion

But, after Jesus Christ struck him down, and revealed to him that he was misdirecting his zeal by actually fighting against God and His church, the Apostle Paul quickly changed his wayward course. He set his mind purposefully to follow Jesus, the Christ

The fourteen New Testament epistles which he wrote, are towering monuments, revealing his firm iron will and determination to follow, obey and diligently serve Jesus the Christ—at all costs! After Paul's conversion however, he realized just how weak he really was in personal character. He explained about his weak human nature in the 7th chapter of Romans verses 6 - 25, Then he also said in Rom 7: 18, “For to will [that is to choose to do right or good] is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not in my human flesh.”

The Apostle Paul showed that he had the iron power to will to choose or decide, but he did not have the power or the means inherently with in him by which he could always make himself do the right thing.

Realizing his weak human nature, he exclaimed, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom 7:24). His answer, God would in verse 25, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Paul knew that his human will, strong though it was, was not sufficient in itself to enable him to be an over-comer. He made this clear to the called at Philippi. “For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure”(Phil. 2:13).

This setting of the will to obey God can only take place after God opens our minds and after He draws

us to Him, by His Holy Spirit.

This does not mean that God will do it all for you, no, we must do our part! God's Holy Spirit will, however, strengthen the human will, if we are willing!

Weak-willed characters were commanded, "Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might!" (Eccl. 9:10.). It takes a great deal of willpower to be zealous in every endeavor, activity or enterprise which you undertake. God almighty wants us to exercise our will continuously. He wants us to develop iron strong willpower to overcome our sins, so we will be ready for His Kingdom.

It takes mastery of the will (not just empty words) to enable one to enter God's Kingdom. Christ made this very clear in Matt 7, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord; shall, enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21). He further warned, in Luke 13: 24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you will seek to enter in and shall not be able." The parable of the sower of seed clearly spotlights the weak wills of certain individuals who fall by the wayside. There are many people who would like to enter into the kingdom They wish they could be in God's kingdom but very few are willing to pay the price, very few during this age will to obey God at all cost!

Many people desire health, happiness, prosperity, or eternal life, but few are willing to put forth the necessary energy to achieve that goal! It has been said, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Every New Year's Day [on the secular calendar] millions resolve to do better, but very few really change.

A true called out one however, must change—must overcome, if they want to be in God's kingdom! We all must understand, human will is limited, it must be strengthened by the Spirit of God.

Before the Apostle Peter received supernatural power from the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, he was not as strong-willed as he thought he was. He solemnly assured Christ that he would never deny Him. "Jesus said unto him, [Peter] verily I say unto you, that this night, before the cock crow, you shalt deny Me three times. Peter said unto Him, though I should die with You, yet will I Not deny You. Likewise also said all the disciples" Later the same night, however, he denied Him three times! He even denied knowing Jesus Christ, that is seen in verses 69-75 in Matt 26.

On the day of Pentecost, the spirit of God entered into the Apostle Peter. He then became a truly changed man, a new man. Now he was able to stand up and boldly tell the Jews that they had betrayed and crucified the very Son of God, their Saviour" (Acts.2 23, 36).

Many people, even before conversion, develop strong wills! This is right and good. But, like the Apostle Paul, before his conversion, his willpower, talents; abilities, and energies were often misdirected.

God Almighty wants us to develop a iron strong will **but He dose not want us to be strong willed** in a wrong direction. He does not want us to be self willed, a strong will plus a rebellious attitude that equals stubbornness. God knows that the way that appears right to us will only end in death (Proverbs 14: 12).


The truly called out ones follows Christ. They work daily to have Christ's mind and attitude. We are told in Phil 2:5, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Those who wilfully sin, knowingly and. deliberately set their minds, their wills in rebellion against God and His perfect will, will be annihilated. Their awful doom is described in Malachi 4:1 - 3, "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear My name shall the sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be Ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, Saith the Lord of Hosts."

Only over comers are to be saved. Whatever you do to develop a strong iron will, make sure that your will is channeled in the right direction. It is only those who firmly set their will, those who "endure to the end" (Mat. 24:13), Those who truly "overcome" will inherit the kingdom of God.

Daily you must strengthen your willpower through the Holy Spirit of God, by doing what you know to be right, rather than by following the course of least resistance— the pull of human nature. We have to set our mind, set our jaw, to choose, to determine, to will with all our might to obey God, if we wish to make it into God's kingdom.

We, like the Apostle Paul, will have to determine in our minds that we are not going to let anything keep us from serving Christ and from receiving our reward, found in 2 John 8 and in Rev 3:11.

If we, set our wills to obey God, come what may, the time will come when we also, like Paul can say: “I have fought a good, fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me on that day and not to me only, but unto all them also that Love His appearing” (2 Tim 4: 7- 8), 

James Russell