

Willful & Willing

Prayer

Good morning, this morning we will be looking at what the word of God means when it says willingly...

Let's start with a basic definition"

- 1: inclined or favourably disposed in mind: **READY** *willing and eager to help*
- 2: prompt to act or respond: *lending a willing hand*
- 3: done, borne, or accepted by choice or without reluctance: *a willing sacrifice*
- 4: of or relating to the will or power of choosing: **VOLITIONAL**: readily, of ones own free will

Now Let's look at some synonyms for this powerful word:

voluntarily, of one's own free will, of one's own accord, of one's own volition, by choice;
readily, without hesitation, without reluctance, ungrudgingly, cheerfully, happily, gladly, with pleasure,
with good grace, eagerly, enthusiastically; freely, spontaneously, unforced;

From the Greek work "hekousios" (hek-oo-see'-ose) from the root word "hekousion" and the adjective "hekon" (hek-own)

This word may appear as either: wilfully or willingly.

In addition to these basic definitions we see in the scripture these words are used to mean voluntarily, willingly, of ones own accord (decision) as above.

for example: To sin wilfully as opposed to sins committed inconsiderately, and from ignorance or from weakness.

In our recent sermon studies we have seen that intention is significant in our actions as Christians. Today we continue this vein of thought, but seek to understand what the word of God means when it says willingly.

I have often said that our church is not a cruise ship, but rather a life boat. So taking that analogy a bit further let's look at an example of willfulness from a negative perspective.

An old sailor repeatedly got lost at sea, so his friends gave him a compass and urged him to use it. The next time he went out in his boat, he followed their advice and took the compass with him. But as usual he became hopelessly confused and was unable to find land.

Finally he was rescued by his friends. Disgusted and impatient with him, that asked, "Why didn't you use that compass we gave you? You could have saved us a lot of trouble!"

The Sailor responded, "I didn't care to! I wanted to go North, but as hard as I tried to make the needle aim in that direction, it just kept pointing Southeast."

You see the old sailor was so certain he knew which was North that he wilfully tried to force his own personal beliefs on his compass. Unable to do so, he tossed it aside as worthless and failed to benefit from the guidance it offered...

Today as we navigate the seas of life in our christian walk. We have been given a compass and instruction on how to use it. When we cannot make the bible say what we want it to say; or make it reflect what we personally believe to be true, do we toss it aside as the sailor did his compass and by so doing become hopelessly lost or will we embrace what it has to say and be willing to embrace its truth.

So let's start with a brief survey on willful disobedience to God's word.

In our modern culture many have become complacent to sin and so do not take it seriously. After all God will keep forgiving us for everything we do, so why try?

The truth is somewhat different than this perception...

Turn with me to Hebrews 6:4-6 ESV

For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, (speaking of Christians here), who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

When we repeatedly and willfully remain in our sin we are showing contempt for our saviour...

Matthew 7:21-23 ESV also warns us not to take our salvation for granted but to pursue righteousness. It says:

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven.

I'll let that sink in for just a minute...

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven. But the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (obedience) On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness."

I think one more scripture will drive the point on willful disobedience home... Turn with me to Hebrews 10:26-31 ESV:

"For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgement, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of Grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people."

The good news is that Jesus has paid for our sin and if we repent.. (not simple say we are sorry and keep sinning) but we willfully turn away from our sin, God looks at the intentions of our heart, not our

success. We do have forgiveness, but we are not to outrage the Spirit of Grace by taking Christ's sacrifice for granted.

Romans 3:23 tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. God knows we have sinned and has provided a way of escape in the sacrifice of his one and only son Jesus. But if we willfully continue in our sin when we know the truth we imperil ourselves.

We have a compass, that compass is the word of God. It might not always say what we want to hear, but it does say what we need to hear.

Now let's flip the coin...

What of willingly?

Let's look at some scripture shall we...

Isaiah 1:19 – If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land

1 Peter 5:1-4 - So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

In this scripture the leaders are told that their hearts must be right. They must willingly, eagerly and enthusiastically embrace caring for God's children in their care. It is not just enough to do it, nor is it right to do it for personal gain, it must be willfully. Finally, I want to point out that this is not to be done in a controlling way but in love with a willing and self-sacrificial attitude.

1 Chronicles 28:9 - "And you, Solomon my son, know that God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever."

Christianity is a heart relationship. It is not enough just to look good or simply do the right things, but we must approach our callings with a willing mind and a pure heart.

You see when we serve the Lord our will must be in order. Ephesians 6:7 tells us that we are to render service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man.

God knows that we will sometimes fail. But we should not be apathetic or complacent in our failure. We should live our lives and walk in accordance with 2 Timothy 2:15 where it reads: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

The scripture itself acknowledges that we will in fact fail. That we will sin. We are admonished to do our best.

I have often heard the argument that I cannot sin because I have been saved... This is a common error in doctrine. Scripture clearly tells us in 1 John 1:8 - "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves

and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.”

This is why it is so important that we understand that we are covered by Christ's righteousness not our own. Imputed righteousness is Christ's righteousness that covers us for our sin. The message today is to not take that forgiveness and covering lightly since the intention of our heart relationship with Christ matters.

It seems that we need to die to our willful disobedience to God's will and fully embrace life in him. 2 Corinthians 5:15 says: “And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. We cannot lose sight of our purpose. If we look at 2 Corinthians 2:14, part of that purpose is given to us... “But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.”

God corrects those whom he loves. We have the Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us, but how does he do it. Sometimes he uses conviction. We feel that something is wrong and needs to change. This is far different from condemnation which is a tool of the enemy. Romans 8:1 clearly tells us: “There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

We are called to a life of righteousness. Turn with me to Romans 6:1-23 ESV where it is nicely summed up for all modern Christians

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So if we truly examine our hearts today, we begin to ask some serious questions:

- Why am I here this morning? What motivated me to come?
- Have I truly given over my life to wilful obedience to God?
- Am I here out of fear, duty or obligation?
- What are my intentions as I walk through my week as a Christian?
- Am I taking the grace that I have for granted?
- Am I truly trying my best to live for God?
- Do I appreciate the significance of what Christ has done for me?

Am I willingly embracing the direction of the word of God and the Holy Spirit or am I willfully choosing to seek guidance from that compass only when it agrees with my personal feelings.

Finally, our Church is here to help us to encourage us and to teach us. It is a lighthouse in the darkness. Believers, it can sometimes be hard in our walk with Christ and we need to climb out of the sea onto the lifeboat.

So if I should not be coming to church out of obligation or ritual, why should I come?

- We come to express our love to God
- It builds up our spiritual strength so that we can have joy to overcome the challenges we face as Christians in this life.
- God inhabits the praises of his people so we can experience God's presence together
- We can be encouraged and supported by other believers. It promotes fellowship, friendship, unity and trust as we practice Agape love towards one another
- It is an act of obedience to God. When we do it with a willing heart it pleases God
- It follows the biblical principles of spiritual accountability
- It brings our spiritual strength in prayer together. 5 of you shall put 100 to flight but 100 of you shall put 10000 to flight. (cf Lev 26:8)
- We do it to put aside time in accordance with God's direction to honour the Lord's day

In summary,

Just like the other sermons in this series the emphasis is on our relationship with God, not merely empty religious practice. God wants us to come to him obediently, willingly and with joyful hearts. Mistakes, failures and struggles are expected and forgiven. We do need to realize that apathy and willful disobedience are not okay.