

## Will of Man or Power of Christ?

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**Psalms 110:3** Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

In this modern era, there are numerous examples of what is called Christian doctrine that deny the fundamental truth of this verse. We seem to be living in a time when the foundational truth of salvation coming to people through the all-powerful work of a God who is totally self-sufficient has been totally derailed, and for it, supposed ministers of the gospel have substituted a message that Christ is working overtime because He is always coming to people, knocking on their hearts doors, and waiting to be invited in. Nothing could be further from the truth! But, mis-directed preaching has, again and again, used the statement by Christ in **Rev. 3:20** to claim that Christ stands helplessly outside a lost sinner's heart and knocks, waiting to be invited in. On the other hand, even the most elementary study of this portion of the Word of God will show us that this statement is made to the Lord's churches, and specifically to individual born-again believers, and is a declaration by our Lord to them that they can advance their fellowship with Him by opening the door of fellowship as a voluntary ability and choice. No such invitation is ever given to lost sinners because they are incapable of hearing such an invitation, and because the Lord knows that it will take an act of His own power to renovate the will of even His own elect so that they "shall be willing" to respond to Him at all.

Folks, the difference between what really happens at the time of the salvation of a human soul and what so many so-called Christian preachers claim is very often one of the most important dividing lines between sound ministers and those who have gone off the deep end concerning the doctrine of human agency. What role humans play in the new birth process has been so corrupted in Christian thought that we can find some elements of the false religion of worshiping the free will of man in almost any group of even true believers today. For that reason, I want to take some time today to expose this very erroneous doctrine that has crept into our churches. I only pray that the Lord will show to all of us today that salvation by grace includes the fact that if God does not act to make a person willing to come to Him...and that as the very first action taken in the salvation process...then no person ever does, nor ever would, receive the Lord and begin a relationship with Him.

### I. Note, our verse says that it is God who makes His people willing

- What is meant by the Lord making His people willing in the day of His power?
  - ▶ First, it must be seen as a statement from God that before the day of His power, or apart from the day of His power, even His people are either unwilling or, at best, apathetic or unaware
    - **Rom. 9:16** So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.
    - Why is this true? See **John 5:40** "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." (Humans in their natural state are unwilling to come to Christ)

- Second, it suggests that it takes the Lord’s power to make His people willing.
  - ▶ When I think of this fact, I remember Ezekiel’s uncertainty (**Ezek. 37**) when God took him to a valley of dry bones and asked him if they could live. Ezekiel said “Oh Lord God, thou knowest?” Then the Lord told him to prophesy to those bones, and as soon as those bones heard the word of God they came to life. This is a great word picture of what happens to the Lord’s people when they are dead in trespasses and sins. As soon as God makes His word effective in their souls, they have the will and power to live; but not until.
  
- Third, there is nothing here which suggests that He tries to make other people (that are not His appointed children) willing. I mention this because the kind of presentation many preachers make about Jesus Christ “wanting” to save somebody makes it look like He is trying to persuade them to change their will so they make a decision in His favor; they single-handedly change their viewpoint and by their own power decide to be willing to come to Him.
  - ▶ See what Christ has to say about the unbelievers which some preachers speak to as though they have the last word as to whether they will or will not become believers. These words of the Lord more clearly explain why He would never attempt to plead to be allowed into the hearts of other people who are not His appointed people - **John 10:26-27** “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:”

## II. Let’s do a quick review of some things which show that misusing the doctrine of free will and exalting it to a kind of dominating force has crept in all around us:

- Some quotes from nationally known preachers:
  - ▶ “...make a decision for Christ, today...” rather than, “has Christ done something for you today; have you been brought to repentance and want to be saved. Have you experienced faith in Him today; trusting Him as the one who has paid your sin debt?”
  - ▶ “...if you are willing to let Him come in...” - rather than, “has He made you willing to let Him come in?”
  - ▶ “...you can change your destiny by deciding for Christ...” (This puts your destiny into your hands and makes Christ to stand on the sidelines until you make a decision - rather than: “Christ can show you an eternal destiny of heaven if you believe on Him.”).
  - ▶ Preachers have even misused **Rom. 10:9**: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”
    - This has been interpreted to mean that this confession and believing is the result of a decision made by a person, and that decision brought salvation.
      - ✓ Answer: **Prov. 16:1** “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, *is* from the LORD.” The Lord makes a soul willing by renewing the heart; then that heart believes and that mouth confesses.
  
- Christian website quotes:
  - ▶ “He is ready and willing to do even more for you, if you will let Him.”
  - ▶ “Jesus is calling out to you. He will come and live in you if you will let Him.”

- Both these statements make Christ subservient to your will rather than presenting Christ as the one who empowers a regenerated will in you, by which you “let Him.”
- ▶ “Talk to Jesus and **invite Him** to come into your heart and life and save you from your sins”
- ▶ Now listen to the testimony of Christ regarding His role in bringing eternal life to His own: **John 17:2** “As **thou hast given him power over all flesh**, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”
  - God knew that the will of man was such that every soul was UN-willing to come to Christ. But it was the intent of God to make His people WILLING in the day when Christ came to their souls in power. This is what He meant (power over all flesh).
- Songs/Hymns -
  - ▶ “Let Jesus Come Into Your Heart” - p. 244; the entire message of this song is designed supposedly to persuade unbelievers to give Christ consent to come into their hearts; when in fact, the work of converting people into a willing state is done by the power of the Lord; afterward, they are willing to receive him and need no persuasion.
  - ▶ “Have You Any room for Jesus” p. 241 (4<sup>th</sup> verse esp. and chorus) - The invitation of Christ, stated here as pleading, does not occur until the target person is made willing. The “Bid him enter, while you may” (chorus) makes Christ dependent on you saying it is OK for Him to come into your heart.
  - ▶ The gist of this kind of presentation is to **make Christ dependent on the human will** (as it is in its unchanged state) before He can bring salvation to the soul.
  - ▶ This is directly contradictory to our verse and every biblical fact about the sovereignty of God.

### III. What does all this have to do with us?

- A scriptural testimony about the work of Christ depends on us presenting that work accurately
  - ▶ What the Lord does with our testimony hinges on whether it is in agreement with what His word teaches
  - ▶ People’s understanding of the absolute power of God, and the dependency of humans on Christ alone for salvation hinges on whether we tell it correctly or not.
  - ▶ Any suggestion that Christ is pleading and waiting for you to do something so He can come into your heart is a message that it takes more than Jesus Christ to save you. It is a message that it takes Jesus pleading and waiting, and you giving permission and allowing Him to do something. That is a gospel of works!
  - ▶ We should review what we tell people about how to come to Christ;
  - ▶ Also, review what songs we sing and reject those which seem to make Christ subservient to the will and decisions of men.