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## True Religion Is Not Feeling but Willing

One of the puzzling questions likely to turn up sooner or later to vex the seeking Christian is how he can fulfill the scriptural command to love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. The earnest Christian, as he meditates on his sacred obligation to love God and mankind, may experience a sense of frustration gendered by the knowledge that he just cannot seem to work up any emotional thrill over his Lord or his brothers. He wants to, but he cannot. The delightful wells of feeling simply will not flow. Many honest persons have become discouraged by the absence of religious emotion and concluded that they are not really Christian after all. They conclude that they must have missed the way somewhere back there and their religion is little more than an empty profession. So for a while they belabor themselves for their

coldness and finally settle into a state of dull discouragement, hardly knowing what to think. They do believe in God; they do indeed trust Christ as their Savior, but the love they hoped to feel consistently eludes them. What is the trouble? The problem is not a light one. A real difficulty is involved, one that may be stated in the form of a question: How can I love by command? Of all the emotions of which the soul is capable, love is by far the freest, the most unreasoning, the one least likely to spring up at the call of duty or obligation and surely the one that will not come at the command of another. No law has ever been passed that can compel one moral being to love another, for by the very nature of it love must be voluntary. No one can be coerced or frightened into loving anyone. Love just does not come that way. So what are we to do with our Lord's command to love God and our neighbor? To find our way out of the shadows and into the cheerful sunlight we

need only to know that there are two kinds of love: the love of *feeling* and the love of *willing*. The one lies in the emotions, the other in the will. Over the one we may have little control. It comes and goes, rises and falls, flares up and disappears as it chooses, and changes from hot to warm to cool and back to warm again very much as does the weather. Such love was not in the mind of Christ when He told His people to love God and each other. As well command a butterfly to light on our shoulder as to attempt to command this whimsical kind of affection to visit our hearts. The love the Bible enjoins is not the love of feeling; it is *the love of willing, the willed tendency of the heart*. (For these two happy phrases I am indebted to another, a master of the inner life whose pen was only a short time ago stilled by death.) God never intended that such a being as man should be the plaything of his feelings. The

### *Continuing...*

emotional life is a proper and noble part of the total personality, but it is, by its very nature, of secondary importance. *Religion lies in the will, and so does righteousness.* The only good that God recognized is a willed good; the only valid holiness is a willed holiness. It should be a cheering thought that before God every man is what he wills to be. The first requirement in conversion is a rectified will. "If any man will," says our Lord, and leaves it there. To meet the requirements of love toward God the soul need but will to love and the miracle begins to blossom like the budding of Aaron's rod.

The will is the automatic pilot that keeps the soul on course. "Flying is easy," said a friend who flies his own plane. "Just take her up, point her in the direction you want her to go and set the pilot. After that she'll fly herself." While we must not press the figure too far, it is yet blessedly true that the will, not the feelings, determines moral direction.

The root of all evil in human nature is the corruption of the will. The thoughts and intents of the heart are wrong and as a consequence the whole life is wrong. Repentance is primarily a change of moral purpose, a sudden and often violent reversal of the soul's direction. The prodigal son took his first step upward from the pigsty when he said, "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15:18). As he had once willed to leave his father's house, now he willed to return. His subsequent action proved his expressed purpose to be sincere. He did return.

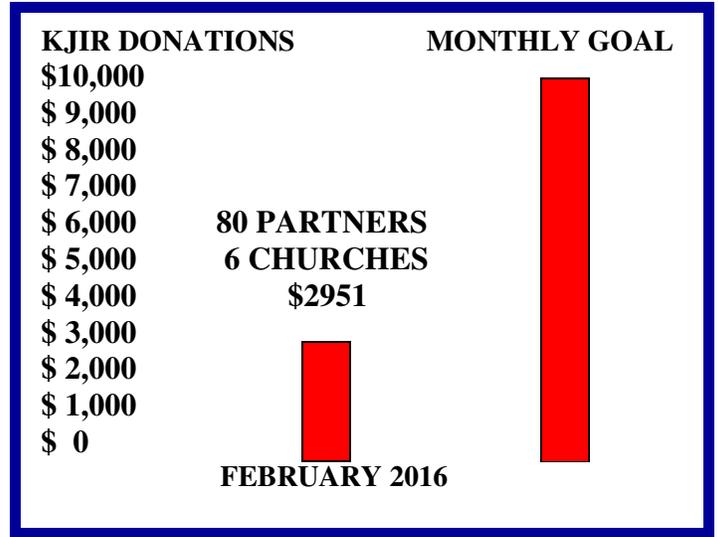
Someone may infer from the above that we are ruling out the joy of the Lord as a valid part of the Christian life.

While no one who reads these columns regularly would be likely to draw such erroneous conclusion, a chance reader might be led astray; a further word of explanation is therefore indicated:

To love God with all our heart we must first of all *will* to do so. We should repent our lack of love and determine from this moment on to make God the object of our devotion.

We should set our affections on things above and aim our hearts toward Christ and heavenly things. We should read the Scriptures devotionally every day and prayerfully obey them, always firmly *willing* to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourself.

If we do these things, we may be sure that we shall experience a wonderful change in our whole inward life. We shall soon find to our great delight that our feelings are becoming less erratic and are beginning to move in the direction of the "willed tendency of the heart." Our emotions will become disciplined and directed. We shall begin to taste the "piercing sweetness" of the love of Christ. Our religious affection will begin to mount



evenly on steady wings instead of flitting about idly without purpose or intelligent direction. The whole life, like a delicate instrument, will be tuned to sing the praises of Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

But first of all we must will, for the will is master of the heart.

**A.W. Tozer**

## **KJIR Radio Is A Listener Supported Christian Radio Station**

### **Will**

You can step out of his will and miss His blessings, but God will go on and bring about His end. God may have great blessings for you, a high calling for you, great possibilities for you, but be careful lest you forfeit and throw them away by refusing to walk in His highest will. Remember that you have within your heart something that came to you from God and is like God – the power to choose, the power to refuse, the throne of your will.

**A.B. Simpson**

### **Love**

We cannot know anything about love unless we dwell in God and God in us. All true love must come from Him and as we live in the light of His presence and the warm atmosphere of His fellowship, we shall love even as He loves, and we shall reflect on others the radiance which is shining in our hearts from his.

**A.B. Simpson**