

The Preparations of the Heart

By Elder David Pyles

The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord. – Prov 16:1

Many years ago, I listened in disbelief as a radio minister claimed there was one thing the otherwise Omnipotent God of Heaven could not do. The minister claimed that God could not go against our will, by which I assumed He meant in the matter of eternal salvation. This statement was so grossly errant that I had no expectation of ever hearing it again. Instead, I have heard it several times since that date, and from various sources. Such claims have evidently become central to the manmade theology believed by many modern Christians.

The above text is sufficient to lay these claims to rest. It not only says that God prepares the heart, but that He does it even to the extent of producing a profession of the tongue. This truth is corroborated by a multitude of scriptures. A few notable examples are: Phil 2:13, which says that God works within us both to will and to do of His good pleasure; Acts 15:9, which speaks of believing saints whose hearts God had purified by faith; Acts 16:14 speaks of a saint named Lydia whose heart the Lord opened to believe the gospel; Acts 13:48 speaks of those who believed on account of being ordained by God to eternal life. These and many like cases illustrate a famous Psalm that says, “*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power...*” (Ps 110:3). Observe that His people are not willing in the day of His “weakness,” as is suggested by this humanly-contrived doctrine, but their willingness is in the day of His *power* – clearly implying that His power upon their heart is what produces their will to obey Him. This is corroborated by yet another Psalm that says, “*Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts...*” (Ps 65:4). The same principles were taught with absolute clarity by Jesus, who said no man could come to Him unless drawn by the Father (Jn 6:44), but He then added that every man so drawn will surely come (vs 45. Also 6:37-40). Paul summarized all this by saying, “*So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy,*” (Rom 9:16). But this absurd theory says exactly the opposite, brazenly asserting that God is powerless against human will, so that the final outcome swings not on God but on the mortal that willeth and runneth.

Even more incredible is the fact that anyone would be so gullible to believe such claims notwithstanding the plain testimony of their own personal experience. Almost every day of life, there are events and circumstances that go against our will, but upon later reflection, it will be seen that the hand of God was at work in them, overruling our wishes and enforcing higher and wiser ends. These frequent experiences clearly show that God has no qualms whatsoever about going against our will. We should be very grateful for this. No man would be saved to Heaven were it not so. *“For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls,”* (1Peter 2:25).

The spiritual conscience also teaches this theory to be patently false. All true Christians will happily concur with Paul when he said, *“but by the grace of God I am what I am,”* (1Cor 15:10). The same Christians will also be deeply convicted that such grace does nothing to relieve them of their responsibilities. Rather, it increases them. They are both enabled and obligated by the grace they have been given to obey the God who gave it. Hence, Paul continued by saying, *“and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all...”* (1Cor 15:10). Likely, whoever hatched up this absurd theory intended to impress upon men the importance that they act responsibly. This would of course be a very worthy end – worthy enough that it deserves a far better argument than one that is diametrically opposed by scripture, experience and the testimony of conscience. Reasonable minds will not find such arguments to be very persuasive. The best way to motivate men is by using the reasons and incentives the Holy Spirit gives in the Bible, and not by doctrines deriving from the imaginations of uninspired, human minds.