

Resisting God's Will

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Yeshua:

It is written, *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35 & 38-39). "For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5, NKJV).¹*

I read this verse with the assurance from God that "nothing" can separate me from His love. Even with my rebellious nature, there is nothing even I can do to separate myself from God—His love and presence are inseparable.

However, I have also realized that I can resist God's will for my life in my freedom to choose. His love, no, but His desires and direction? Yes. The question is: how do we know what is God's will for our lives?

Seventeen years ago, I made a crucial decision that changed my life. I chose to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and died on the cross to pay and atone for my sins. At that moment, I was justified and made right before God, and I inherited the righteousness of Christ. These words of Jesus had pierced my heart: *"If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24)*. However, as I continued to read the New Testament, I discovered that much more of what Jesus said troubled me.

Jesus told His disciples, *"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44)*. Sell everything I have I asked the Lord? I had spent the past thirty years building my career and securing my kingdom—a house, retirement income, and more.

But Jesus said: *"No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62)*. "Plowing a field by hand," I questioned? That sounds like a lot of work for me. And He wants me to use both my hands? In other words, He wants my total commitment, not halfway in. I wondered. Maybe I am not fit for the Kingdom?

Jesus said: *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14:23)*. *"By this all will know that you are My*

disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). Greater love? Greater than what I thought? And what does this greater love look like? The Lord then spoke this parable to me:

Two friends travel into the wilderness with only one bottle of water between them. One of the men is carrying the bottle. They reach their halfway destination by the end of the day—a small oasis in the middle of the desert shaded by a few Palm trees. In every direction is nothing but parched earth, scorched by the relentless pounding of the hot sun.

Upon arriving at this oasis, the friends discover the only well of water is completely dry. They realize they only have one bottle of water, and only enough to sustain one of them on their final leg of the journey or their return if they choose to turn around. And if they decide to share the water, they will both die.

According to Jewish Law, the man holding the water in his hand is entitled to drink all of it. He is holding the key to life in his hand. Additionally, the Law of the Old Testament (loving your neighbor as yourself) did not require us to sacrifice our life for their benefit. The law had its natural limit—it was finite.

But now Jesus has made for us a better covenant—a spiritual law that is infinite. And in doing so, He raised the standard of love—considerably. The parable now becomes clear.

Jesus is the one who holds the key to life in His hand, and He has chosen to give us the bottle of living water so that we might live, and He will die for us. He was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for His friends.

Jesus had now placed another crucial decision before me: Was I willing to sacrifice my dreams to help the Lord fulfill His? And more, He gave His life for mine. Would I now be willing to give my life for others?

The Apostle John wrote: "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren: (1 John 3:16). And Jesus said: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

Jesus also challenged Peter when He said: "Will you lay down your life for My sake?" (John 13:38). Jesus had affirmed His will in serving His heavenly Father when He said: "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:15).

What was my cross? And how was I to lay down my life for others?

For me, I find the cross remains the place where I chose to crucify, to kill something that I hold dear to myself. I need to kill my dreams and desires and submit to God's will in my life. Jesus was not looking for believers. He was looking for disciples, and a disciple imitates his master and appears and acts just like him in every way.

It is written, *"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"* (Galatians 5:24). And Jesus said: *"He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me"* (Matthew 10:38).

Jesus was selective about those He chose to serve Him, as it is written, *"And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him"* (Mark 3:13). *"For many are called, but few are chosen"* (Matthew 22:14).

"I want to be one of Jesus's chosen servants," I said to the Lord. And I want to hear His words one day, inviting me into His Kingdom: *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord"* (Matthew 25:21).

Day by day, the Lord continues to challenge me to surrender my life to Him. He challenges me to pray. He challenges me to worship and praise Him. He challenges me to read His word. He challenges me with my career and every physical need. He challenges me with my children. He challenges me with my wife. He challenges me to serve Him by serving others. And He challenges me to walk according to His will in every area of my life.

We need to kill our belief that we earn our provision and build our careers. We need to kill the idea that our children can be forced into following Jesus. We need to kill our dependence on our spouses to meet every selfish desire. We need to kill, and thus, we need to die to ourselves to live fully for Christ. I remember the Lord telling me: *"Eric, I cannot heal the areas of your life that you will not surrender to me."*

We cannot lose the love of Christ, but we can resist His will in our lives through willful disobedience, as it is written, *"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry"* (1 Samuel 15:23).

Yes, it is true, it is written, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit"* (Romans 8:1). No condemnation if we walk according to the Spirit of God.

Brothers and sisters, let us walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh, which is our old selfish nature, for it is written, *"[The] steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way"* (Psalm 37:23). *"In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself"* (Philippians 2:3). We need to pick up our cross daily and crucify our flesh so that we might become disciples of Christ, men, and women who would freely give the bottle of water in their hand to their friend in the wilderness, and even to our enemies, so that they might live, even if we die.

Amen!

ⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Bible (NKJV) unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.