

[R4517 : page 347]

## THE POWER OF THE WILL – SELF-CONTROL

– ROMANS 14:10-21. – NOVEMBER 28. –

**Golden Text:** – "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth." – Rom. 14:21.

IN TO-DAY'S study St. Paul, in his vigorous style, marks out the path of proper Christian conduct, in harmony with the second great commandment of the Law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The lesson may be applied in a measure to every intelligent being, but strictly, particularly, peculiarly, it applies to every consecrated member of the Church of Christ. All men have wills and it is important that all should learn to use them. As a man willeth, so is he! The will-less, the supine, are things, not truly men and women. To be a hero in the strife means to have a will, and in proportion to its correctness and strength will be the influence and value of the personality. Children should not be trained to have no will, but, contrariwise, to have a will, but to submit it to the proper rulers and guides of life – at first to parents and the earthly teachers and, later on, to the Divine will – fully, completely.

The Apostle is addressing those who submit their wills to the Lord – those who have accepted the Divine will, as instead of their own. The noblest and best of the people of God are those who have strong, iron wills, which they have fully submitted to the guidance and direction of the Lord – through the Bible, the holy Spirit and Divine Providence. "The Father seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in Truth."

## **DEVELOPING WILL POWER**

Some are born with strong wills; others rather weak-minded. In the world the latter sink or swim, survive or perish, in the vicissitudes of life, often controlled by the law of supply and demand and the survival of the fittest. The inequalities of birth are frequently accentuated by life's experiences and often disastrously. Some of the strong-willed become merchant princes and managers of large enterprises, and some become thieves and desperadoes – the outcome depending largely upon haphazard channels. The only safe course for any mariner on the sea of life is to take on board the great Pilot, the Lord Jesus. This Pilot will probably rarely guide into a haven of earthly riches or earthly popularity, but, if permitted, he will bring us safely to the proper haven.

Under this Pilot the human will is like a strong vessel with mighty masts and sails or powerful engines. The greater the power, the greater the capacity and the more useful. The proper Pilot will guide us not only safely past the rocks of disaster and shoals of sin, but to the haven of everlasting life and joy and peace and fellowship Divine.

But not merely the strong-willed need this Pilot; the weak-willed naturally need him just as much, for although they might not run upon the rocks with the same degree of force and make equally bad shipwreck, they are quite as likely to be caught upon the shoals of sin and, in a purposeless manner, fail to achieve anything in life.

## **NEW CREATURES IN CHRIST JESUS**

Those who during this age make a full surrender of their wills to the Lord and receive in return the begetting of the holy Spirit are Scripturally termed "new creatures in Christ Jesus." Their wills are brought into subjection to the will of God in

Christ. The lessons of God's Word and all the experiences of life under Divine supervision are promised to work for their good; to strengthen their wills if too weak; to make them properly pliable if too rigid, and in general, eventually to make of them the most that is possible in the present life in godliness, and to prepare them for the life that is to come.

Such are addressed by St. Paul in the present lesson. They are exhorted not to judge the brethren in the sense of condemning them, but rather to judge themselves, criticize themselves, and make of themselves shining examples, and thus to help the brethren and set a noble example before the world. All must give an account to the Lord sooner or later, and our judging them is unnecessary. Hence if we have judged or criticized each other in the past, we should avoid this in the future and merely criticize ourselves – our words, our deeds, our thoughts – that nothing in us shall put a stumbling block in the pathway of another.

The ceremonial cleanness or uncleanness of food is nothing to the Christian, who is free from all law except the Law of Love. But the Law of Love controls, and forbids us to stumble or even to grieve a brother less well-informed on the subject than ourselves. How could we, controlled by love, either eat or drink, act or speak in a manner that would cause injury to another? It is good to have liberty, but let us so use it as not to injure those less advanced. **[R4517 : page 348]**

The call of this Gospel Age is to joint-heirship with Christ in his Millennial Kingdom, and those so called are not under the bondage of the Jewish Law. They have greater liberty in Christ. But shall we say that the advantage of our relationship to the Lord as prospective heirs of the Kingdom consists chiefly in liberty to eat what we choose and to drink what we please? Surely not. These are but the lesser advantages of our blessed relationship to

Christ and the Kingdom. Our chief blessing consists in our "justification and peace and joy in the holy Spirit." – V. 17.

Let us appreciate these, our chief blessings and privileges of the present time, for, in so doing, we shall be well-pleasing in God's sight, and men also will approve our conduct. So, then, let us follow after the things which make for peace and things whereby we may edify one another. Let us not even risk injury to the cause of righteousness and work of God's grace in others by using our liberties in any manner contrary to their welfare. On the contrary, let us count it a privilege to void our rights, if thus we can glorify God and bless our fellows.

=====