God's Will and Man's Will

C. H. SPURGEON

C. H. Spurgeon · a sermon on Romans 9:16 and Revelation 22:17 (No. 442)



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"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." —Rom. 9:16. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." —Rev. 22:17.

The great controversy which for many ages has divided the Christian Church has hinged upon the difficult question of "the will." I need not say of that conflict that it has done much mischief to the Christian Church, undoubtedly it has; but I will rather say, that it has been fraught with incalculable usefulness; for it has thrust forward before the minds of Christians, precious truths, which, but for it, might have been kept in the shade. I believe that the two great doctrines of human responsibility and divine sovereignty have both been brought out the more prominently in the Christian Church by the fact that there is a class of strong-minded hard-headed men who magnify sovereignty at the expense of responsibility; and another earnest and useful class who uphold and maintain human responsibility oftentimes at the expense of divine sovereignty. I believe there is a needs-be for this in the finite character of the human mind, while the natural lethargy of the Church requires a kind of healthy irritation to arouse her powers and stimulate her exertions. The pebbles in the living stream of truth are worn smooth and round by friction. Who among us would wish to suspend a law of nature whose effects on the whole are good? I glory in that which at the present day is so much spoken against — sectarianism, for "sectarianism" is the cant phrase which our enemies use for all firm religious belief. I find it applied to all sorts of Christians; no matter what views he may hold, if a man be but in earnest, he is a sectarian at once. Success to sectarianism; let it live and flourish. When that is done with, farewell to the power of godliness. When we cease, each of us, to maintain our own views of truth, and to maintain those views firmly and strenuously, that truth shall fly out of the land, and error alone shall reign: this, indeed, is the object of our foes: under the cover of attacking sects, they attack true religion, and would drive it, if they could, from off the face of the earth. In the controversy which has raged, — a controversy which, I again say, I believe to have been really healthy, and which has done us all a vast amount of good — mistakes have arisen from two reasons. Some, brethren have altogether forgotten one order of truths, and then, in the next place, they have gone too far with others. We all have one blind eye, and too often we are like Nelson in the battle, we put the telescope to that blind eye, and then protest that we cannot see. I have heard of one man who said he had read the Bible through thirty-four times on his knees, but could not see a word about election in it; I think it very likely that he could not; kneeling is a very uncomfortable posture for reading, and possibly the superstition which would make the poor man perform this penance would disqualify him for using his reason; moreover, to get through the Book thirty-four times, he probably read in such a hurry that he did not know what he was reading, and might as well have been dreaming over "Robinson Crusoe" as

the Bible. He put the telescope to the blind eye. Many of us do that; we do not want to see a truth, and therefore we say we cannot see it. On the other hand, there are others who push a truth too far. "This is good; oh! this is precious!" say they, and then they think it is good for everything; that in fact, it is the only truth in the world. You know how often things are injured by over-praise; how a good medicine, which really was a great boon for a certain disease, comes to be despised utterly by the physician, because a certain quack has praised it up as being a universal cure; so puffery in doctrine leads to its dishonour. Truth has thus suffered on all sides; on the one hand brethren would not see all the truth, and on the other hand they magnified out of proportion that which they did see. You have seen those mirrors, those globes that are sometimes hung up in gardens; you walk up to them and you see your head ten times as large as your body, or you walk away and put yourself in another position, and then your feet are monstrous and the rest of your body is small; this is an ingenious toy, but I am sorry to say that many go to work with God's truth upon the model of this toy; they magnify one capital truth, till it becomes monstrous; they minify and speak little of another truth till it becomes altogether forgotten. In what I shall be able to say this morning you will probably detect the failing to which I allude, the common fault of humanity, and suspect that I also am magnifying one truth at the expense of another; but I will say this, before I proceed further, that it shall not be the case if I can help it, but I will endeavour honestly to bring out the truth as I have learned it, and if in ought ye see that I teach you what is contrary to the Word of God, reject it; but mark you if it be according to God's Word reject it at your peril; for when I have once delivered it to you, if ye receive it not the responsibility lies with you.

There are two things, then, this morning I shall have to talk about. The first is, that the work of salvation rests upon the will of God, and not upon the will of man; and secondly, the equally sure doctrine, that the will of man has its proper position in the work of salvation and is not to be ignored.

I. First, then, SALVATION HINGES UPON THE WILL OF GOD, AND NOT UPON THE WILL OF MAN.

So saith our text—"It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" by which is clearly meant that the reason why any man is saved is not because he wills it, but because God willed, according to that other passage, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." The whole scheme of salvation, we aver, from the first to the last, hinges and turns, and is dependant upon the absolute will of God and not upon the will of the creature.

This, we think, we can show in two or three ways; and first, we think that analogy furnishes us with a rather strong argument. There is a certain likeness between all God's works; if a painter shall paint three pictures, there is a certain identity of style about all the three which leads you to know that they are from the same hand. Or, if an author shall write three works upon three different subjects, yet there are qualities running through the whole, which will lead you to assert, "That is the same man's writing, I am certain, in the whole of the three books." Now what we find in the works of nature, we generally find to be correct with regard to the work of providence; and what is true of nature and of providence, is usually true with regard to the greater work of grace. Turn your thoughts, then, to the works of creation. There was a time when these works had no existence; the sun was not born; the young moon had not begun to

fill her horns; the stars were not; not even the illimitable void of space was then in existence. God dwelt alone without a creature. I ask you, with whom did he then take counsel? Who instructed him? Who had a voice in that council by which the wisdom of God was directed? Did it not rest with his own will whether he would make or not? Was not creation itself, when it lay in embryo in his thoughts entirely, in his keeping, so that he would or would not just as he pleased? And when he willed to create, did he not still exercise his own discretion and will as to what and how he would make? If he hath made the stars spheres, what reason was there for this but his own will? If he hath chosen that they should move in the circle rather than in any other orbit is it not God's own fiat that hath made them do so? And when this round world, this green earth on which we dwell, leaped from his moulding hand into its sunlit track, was not this also according to the divine will? Who ordained, save the Lord, that there the Himalayas should lift their heads and pierce the clouds, and that there the deep cavernous recesses of the sea should pierce earth's bowels of rock? Who, save himself ordained that yonder Sahara should be brown and sterile, and that yonder isle should laugh in the midst of the sea with joy over her own verdure? Who, I say, ordained this, save God? You see running through creation, from the tiniest animalcule up to the tall archangel who stands before the throne, this working of God's own will. Milton was nobly right when he represents the Eternal One as saying; "My goodness is most free To act or not: Necessity and Chance Approach not me, and what I will is fate."

He created as it pleased him; he made them as he chose; the potter exercised power over his clay to make his vessels as he willed, and to make them for what purposes he pleased. Think you that he has abdicated the throne of grace? Does he reign in creation and not in grace? Is he absolute king over nature and not over the greater works of the new nature? Is he Lord over the things which his hand made at first, and not King over the great regeneration, the new-making wherein he maketh all things new?

But take the works of Providence, I suppose there will be no dispute amongst us that in providential matters God ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will. If we should, however, be troubled with any doubts about that matter, we might hear the striking words of Nebuchadnezzar when, taught by God, he had repented of his pride — "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: he doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" From the first moment of human history even to the last, God's will shall be done. What though it be a catastrophe or a crime, there may be the second causes and the action of human evil but the great first cause is in all. If we could imagine that one human action had eluded the prescience or the predestination of God, we could suppose that the whole might have done so, and all things might drift to sea, anchorless, rudderless, a sport to every wave, the victim of tempest and hurricane. One leak in the ship of providence would sink her, one hour in which Omnipotence relaxed its grasp and she would fall to atoms. But it is the comfortable conviction of all God's people that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" and that God ruleth and overruleth, and reigneth in all acts of men and in all events that transpire; from seeming evil still producing good, and better still, and better still in infinite progression, still ordering all things according to the counsel of his will. And think you that he reigns in Providence and is King there, and not in grace? Has he given up the blood-bought land to be ruled by man, while common providence is left as a lonely

province to be his only heritage? He hath not let slip the reins of the great chariot of Providence, and think you that when Christ goeth forth in the chariot of his grace it is with steeds unguided, or driven only by chance, or by the fickle will of man? Oh, no, brethren! As surely as God's will is the axle of the universe, as certainly as God's will is the great heart of Providence sending its pulsings through even the most distant limbs of human act, so in grace let us rest assured that he is King, willing to do as he pleases, having mercy on whom he will have mercy, calling whom he chooses to call, quickening whom he wills, and fulfilling, despite man's hardness of heart, despite man's wilful rejection of Christ, his own purposes, his own decrees, without one of them falling to the ground. We think, then, that analogy helps to strengthen us in the declaration of the text that salvation is not left with man's will.

2. But, secondly, we believe that the difficulties which surround the opposite theory are tremendous. In fact we cannot bear to look them in the face. If there be difficulties about ours, there are ten times more about the opposite. We think that the difficulties which surround our belief that salvation depends upon the will of God, arise from our ignorance in not understanding enough of God to be able to judge of them; but that the difficulties in the other case do not arise from that cause, but from certain great truths, clearly revealed, which stand in manifest opposition to the figment which our opponents have espoused. According to their theory — that salvation depends upon our own will — you have first of all this difficulty to meet, that you have made the purpose of God in the great plan of salvation entirely contingent. You have an "if" put upon everything. Christ may die, but it is not certain according to their theory that he will redeem a great multitude; nay, not certain that he will redeem any, since the efficacy of the redemption, according to that plan, rests not in its own intrinsic power, but in the will of man accepting that redemption. Hence if man be, as we aver he always is, if he be a bond slave as to his will, and will not yield to the invitation of God's grace, then in such a case the atonement of Christ would be valueless, useless, and altogether in vain, for not a soul would be saved by it; and, even when souls are saved by it, according to that theory, the efficacy, I say, lies not in the blood itself but in the will of man which gives it efficacy. Redemption is therefore made contingent; the cross shakes, the blood falls powerless on the ground, and atonement is a matter of perhaps. There is a heaven provided, but there may be no souls who will ever come there if their coming is to be of themselves. There is a fountain filled with blood, but there may be none who will ever wash in it unless divine purpose and power shall constrain them to come. You may look at any one promise of grace, but you cannot say over it, "This is the sure mercy of David;" for there is an "if," and a "but," a "perhaps," and a "peradventure." In fact the reins are gone out of God's hands; the linch-pin is taken away from the wheels of the creation; you have left the whole economy of grace and mercy to be the gathering together of fortuitous atoms impelled by man's own will, and what may become of it at the end nobody can know. We cannot tell on that theory whether God will be glorified or sin will triumph. Oh! how happy are we when we come back to the old-fashioned doctrines, and cast our anchor where it can get its grip in the eternal purpose and counsel of God, who worketh all things to the good pleasure of his will.

Then another difficulty comes in; not only is everything made contingent but it does seem to us as if man were thus made to be the supreme being in the universe. According to the freewill scheme the Lord intends good, but he must wait like a lackey on his own creature to know what his intention is; God wil-

leth good and would do it but he cannot, because he has an unwilling man who will not have God's good thing carried into effect. What do ye, sirs, but drag the Eternal from his throne, and lift up into it that fallen creature, man; for man, according to that theory, nods, and his nod is destiny. You must have a destiny somewhere; it must either be as God wills or as man wills. If it be as God wills, then Jehovah sits as sovereign upon his throne of glory, and all hosts obey him, and the world is safe; if not God, then you put man there, to say, "I will," or "I will not; if I will it I will enter heaven; if I will it I will despise the grace of God; if I will it I will conquer the Holy Spirit, for I am stronger than God, and stronger than omnipotence; if I will it I will make the blood of Christ of no effect, for I am mightier than that blood, mightier than the blood of the Son of God himself; Though God make his purpose, yet will I laugh at his purpose; it shall be my purpose that shall make his purpose stand, or make it fall." Why, sirs, if this be not Atheism, it is idolatry; it is putting man where God should be, and I shrink with solemn awe and horror from that doctrine which makes the grandest of God's works — the salvation of man — to be dependant upon the will of his creature whether it shall be accomplished or not. Glory I can and must in my text in its fullest sense. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

3. We think that the known condition of man is a very strong argument against the supposition that salvation depends upon his own will; and hence is a great confirmation of the truth that it depends upon the will of God; that it is God that chooses, and not man,— God who takes the first step, and not the creature. Sirs, on the theory that man comes to Christ of his own will, what do you with texts of Scripture which say that he is dead? "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." You will say that is a figure. I grant it; but what is the meaning of it? You say the meaning is, he is spiritually dead. Well, then I ask you, how can he perform the spiritual act of willing that which is right? He is alive enough to will that which is evil, only evil and that continually, but he is not alive to will that which is spiritually good. Do you not know, to turn to another Scripture, that he cannot even discern that which is spiritual? for the natural man knoweth not the things which be of God, seeing they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. Why, he has not a "spirit" with which to discern them; he has only a soul and body; but the third principle, implanted in regeneration, which is called in the Word of God, "the spirit," he knows nothing of, and he is therefore incapable, seeing he is dead and is without the vitalizing spirit, of doing what you say he does. Then, again, what make you of the words of our Saviour where he said to those who had heard even him, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Where is free-will after such a text as that? When Christ affirms that they will not who dare say they will? "Ah, but," you say, "they could if they would." Dear sir, I am not talking about that; I am not talking about if they would, the question is "will they?" and we say "no," they never will by nature. Man is so depraved, so set on mischief and the way of salvation is so obnoxious to his pride, so hateful to his lusts, that he cannot like it and will not like it, unless he who ordained the plan shall change his nature, and subdue his will. Mark, this stubborn will of man is his sin; he is not to be excused for it; he is guilty because he will not come; he is condemned because he will not come; because he will not believe in Christ therefore is condemnation resting upon him, but still the fact is not altered for all that, that he will not come by nature if left to himself. Well, then, if man will not how shall he be saved unless God shall make him willing? —

unless in some mysterious way, he who made the heart shall touch its mainspring so that it shall move in a direction opposite to that which it naturally follows.

4. But there is another argument which will come closer home to us. It is consistent with the universal experience of all God's people that salvation is of God's will. You will say, I have not had a very long life; I have not, but I have had a very extensive acquaintance with all sections of the Christian Church, and I solemnly protest before you, that I have never yet met with a man professing to be a Christian, let alone his really being so, who ever said that his coming to God was the result of his unassisted nature. Universally, I believe, without exception, the people of God will say it was the Holy Spirit that made them what they are; that they should have refused to come as others do unless God's grace had sweetly influenced their wills. There are some hymns in Mr. Wesley's hymn-book which are stronger upon this point than I could ever venture to be, for he puts prayers into the lips of the sinner in which God is even asked to force him to be saved by grace. Of course I can take no objection to a term so strong, but it goes to prove this, that among all sections of Christians, whether Arminian or Calvinistic, whatever their doctrinal sentiments may be, their experimental sentiments are the same. I do not think they would any of them refuse to join in the verse— "Oh! yes, I do love Jesus, Because he first loved me."

Nor would they find fault with our own hymn, "'Twas the same love that spread the feast That sweetly forced us in; Else we had still refused to taste And perish'd in our sin."

We bring out the crown and say, "On whose head shall we put it? Who ruled at the turning-point? Who decided this case?" and the universal Church of God, throwing away their creeds, would say, "Crown him; crown him; put it on his head, for he is worthy; he has made us to differ; he has done it and unto Him be the praise forever and ever." What staggers me is, that men can believe dogmas contrary to their own experience, — that they can hug that to their hearts as precious to which their own inward convictions must give the lie.

5. But lastly, in the way of argument and to bring out our great battering ram at the last. It is not after all, arguments from analogy, nor reasons from the difficulties of the opposite position, nor inferences from the known feebleness of human nature, nor even deductions from experience, that will settle this question once for all. To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Do me the pleasure then, to use your Bibles for a moment or two and let us see what Scripture saith on this main point. First, with regard to the matter of God's preparation, and his plan with regard to salvation. We turn to the apostle's words in the epistle to the Ephesians, and we find in the first chapter and the third verse, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will" — a double word you notice — it is according to the will of his will. No expression could be stronger in the original to show the entire absoluteness of this thing as depending on the will of God. It seems, then, that the choice of his people and their adoption is according to his will. So far we are satisfied, indeed, with the testimony of the apostle. Then in the ninth verse, "Having made known unto

us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him." So, then, it seems that the grand result of the gathering together of all the saved in Christ, as well as the primitive purpose, is according to the counsel of his will. What stronger proof can there be that salvation depends upon the will of God? Moreover, it says in the eleventh verse — "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:" a stronger expression than "of his will" — "of his own will," his free unbiased will, his will alone. As for redemption as well as for the eternal purpose— redemption is according to the will of God. You remember that verse in Hebrews, tenth chapter, ninth verse: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that he might establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified." So that the redemption offered up on Calvary, like the election made before the foundation of the world, is the result of the divine will. There will be little controversy here: the main point is about our new birth, and here we cannot allow of any diversity of opinion. Turn to the gospel according to John, the first chapter, and thirteenth verse. It is utterly impossible that human language could have put a stronger negative on the vainglorious claims of the human will than this passage does: "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." A passage equally clear is to be found in the Epistle of James, at the first chapter, and the eighteenth verse: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." In these passages — and they are not the only ones — the new birth is peremptorily and in the strongest language put down as being the fruit and effect of the will and purpose of God. As to sanctification which is the result and outgrowth of the new birth, that also is according to God's holy will. In the first of Thessalonians, fourth chapter, and third verse, we have, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." One more passage I shall need you to refer to, the sixth chapter, and thirty-ninth verse. Here we find that the preservation, the perseverance the resurrection, and the eternal glory of God's people, rests upon his will. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day; and this is the will of Him that sent me that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day." And indeed this is why the saints go to heaven at all, because in the seventeenth chapter of John, Christ is recorded as praying, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." We close, then, by noticing that according to Scripture there is not a single blessing in the new covenant which is not conferred upon us according to the will of God, and that as the vessel hangs upon the nail, so every blessing we receive hangs upon the absolute will and counsel of God, who gives these mercies even as he gives the gifts of the Spirit according as he wills. We shall now leave that point, and take the second great truth, and speak a little while upon it.

II. MAN'S WILL HAS ITS PROPER PLACE IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION.

"Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." According to this and many other texts of Scripture where man is addressed as a being having a will, it appears clear enough that men are not saved by compulsion. When a man receives the grace of Christ, he does not receive it against his will. No man shall be pardoned while he abhors the thought of forgiveness. No man shall have joy in the Lord if

he says, "I do not wish to rejoice in the Lord." Do not think that anybody shall have the angels pushing them behind into the gates of heaven. They must go there freely or else they will never go there at all. We are not saved against our will; nor again, mark you, is the will taken away; for God does not come and convert the intelligent free agent into a machine. When he turns the slave into a child, it is not by plucking out of him the will which he possesses. We are as free under grace as ever we were under sin; nay, we were slaves when we were under sin, and when the Son makes us free we are free indeed, and we were never free before. Erskine, in speaking of his own conversion, says he ran to Christ "with full consent against his will," by which he meant it was against his old will; against his will as it was till Christ came, but when Christ came, then he came to Christ with full consent, and was as willing to be saved— no, that is a cold word — as delighted, as pleased, as transported to receive Christ as if grace had not constrained him. But we hold and teach that though the will of man is not ignored, and men are not saved against their wills, that the work of the Spirit, which is the effect of the will of God, is to change the human will, and so make men willing in the day of God's power, working in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure. The work of the Spirit is consistent with the original laws and constitution of human nature. Ignorant men talk grossly and carnally about the work of the Spirit in the heart as if the heart were a lump of flesh, and the Holy Spirit turned it round mechanically. Now, brethren, how is your heart and my heart changed in any matter? Why, the instrument generally is persuasion. A friend sets before us a truth we did not know before; pleads with us; puts it in a new light, and then we say, "Now I see that," and then our hearts are changed towards the thing. Now, although no man's heart is changed by moral suasion in itself, yet the way in which the Spirit works in his heart, as far as we can detect it, is instrumentally by a blessed persuasion of the mind. I say not that men are saved by moral persuasion, or that this is the first cause, but I think it is frequently the visible means. As to the secret work, who knows how the Spirit works? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit;" but yet, as far as we can see, the Spirit makes a revelation of truth to the soul, whereby it seeth things in a different light from what it ever did before, and then the will cheerfully bows that neck which once was stiff as iron, and wears the yoke which once it despised, and wears it gladly, cheerfully, and joyfully. Yet, mark, the will is not gone; the will is treated as it should be treated; man is not acted upon as a machine, he is not polished like a piece of marble; he is not planed and smoothed like a plank of deal; but his mind is acted upon by the Spirit of God, in a manner quite consistent with mental laws. Man is thus made a new creature in Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and his own will is blessedly and sweetly made to yield.

Then, mark you — and this is a point which I want to put into the thoughts of any who are troubled about these things, — this gives the renewed soul a most blessed sign of grace, insomuch that if any man wills to be saved by Christ, if he wills to have sin forgiven through the precious blood, if he wills to live a holy life resting upon the atonement of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit that will is one of the most blessed signs of the mysterious working of the Spirit of God in his heart; such a sign is it that if it be real willingness, I will venture to assert that that man is not far from the kingdom. I say not that he is so saved that he himself may conclude he is, but there is a work begun which has the germ of salvation in it. If thou art willing depend upon it that God is willing. Soul, if thou art anxious after Christ, he is more

anxious after thee. If thou hast only one spark of true desire after him, that spark is a spark from the fire of his love to thee. He has drawn thee, or else thou wouldest never ran after him. If you are saying, "Come to me, Jesu," it is because he has come to you, though you do not know it. He has sought you as a lost sheep, and therefore you have sought him like a returning prodigal. He has swept the house to find you, as the woman swept for the lost piece of money, and now you seek him as a lost child would seek a father's face. Let your willingness to come to Christ be a hopeful sign and symptom.

But once more, and let me have the ear of the anxious yet again. It appears that when you have a willingness to come to Christ, there is a special promise for you. You know, my dear hearers, that we are not accustomed in this house of prayer to preach one side of truth, but we try if we can to preach it all. There are some brethren with small heads, who, when they have heard a strong doctrinal sermon, grow into hyper-Calvinists, and then when we preach an inviting sermon to poor sinners, they cannot understand it and say it is a yea and nay gospel. Believe me, it is not yea and nay, but yea and yea. We give our yea to all truth, and our nay we give to no doctrine of God. Can a sinner be saved when he wills to come to Christ? Yea. And if he does come, does he come because God brings him? Yea. We have no nays in our theology for any revealed truth. We do not shut the door on one word and open it to another. Those are the yea and nay people who have a nay to the poor sinner, when they profess to preach the gospel. As soon as a man has any willingness given to him, he has a special promise. Before he had that willingness he had an invitation. Before he had any willingness, it was his duty to believe in Christ, for it is not man's condition that gives him a right to believe. Men are to believe in obedience to God's command. God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and this is his great command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "This is the commandment, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom he has sent." Hence your right and your duty to believe; but once you have got the willingness, then you have a special promise — "Whosoever will let him come." That is a sort of extraordinary invitation. Methinks this is the utterance of the special call. You know how John Bunyan describes the special call in words to this effect. "The hen goes clucking about the farm yard all day long; that is the general call of the gospel; but she sees a hawk up in the sky, and she gives a sharp cry for her little ones to come and hide under her wings; that is the special call; they come and are safe." My text is a special call to some of you. Poor soul, are you willing to be saved? "O, sir, willing, willing indeed; I cannot use that word; I would give all I have if I might but be saved." Do you mean you would give it all in order to purchase it? "Oh no, sir, I do not mean that; I know I cannot purchase it; I know it is God's gift, but still, if I could but be saved, I would ask nothing else.

'Lord, deny me what thou wilt, Only ease me of my guilt; Suppliant at thy feet I lie, Give me Christ, or else I die.'"

Why, then the Lord speaks to you this morning, to you if not to any other man in the chapel he speaks to you and says — "Whosoever will let him come." You cannot say this does not mean you. When we give the general invitation, you may exempt yourself perhaps in some way or other, but you cannot now. You are willing, then come and take the water of life freely. "Had not I better pray?" It does not say so; it says, take the water of life. "But had not I better go home and get better?" No, take the water of life, and take

the water of life now. You are standing by the fountain outside there, and the water is flowing and you are willing to drink; you are picked out of a crowd who are standing round about, and you are specially invited by the person who built the fountain. He says, "Here is a special invitation for you; you are willing; come and drink." "Sir," you say, "I must go home and wash my pitcher." "No," says he, "come and drink." "But, sir, I want to go home and write a petition to you." "I do not want it," he says, "drink now, drink now." What would you do? If you were dying of thirst, you would just put your lips down and drink. Soul, do that now. Believe that Jesus Christ is able to save thee now. Trust thy soul in his hands now. No preparation is wanted. Whosoever will let him come; let him come at once and take the water of life freely. To take that water is simply to trust Christ; to repose on him; to take him to be your all in all. Oh that thou wouldest do it now!

Thou art willing; God has made thee willing. When the crusaders heard the voice of Peter the hermit as he bade them go to Jerusalem to take it from the hands of the invaders, they cried out at once, "Deus vult; God wills it; God wills it;" and every man plucked his sword from its scabbard, and set out to reach the holy sepulchre, for God willed it. So come and drink, sinner; God wills it. Trust Jesus; God wills it. If you will it, that is the sign that God wills it. "Father, thy will be done on earth even as it is in heaven." As sinners, humbly stoop to drink of the flowing crystal which streams from the sacred fountain which Jesus opened for his people; let it be said in heaven, "God's will is done; hallelujah, hallelujah!" "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" yet "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely."