

MEN OF GOOD WILL

By

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“Glory to God in the highest, and upon earth peace among men of good will.” (Luke 2:14).

Peace is that which all claim to want and which is accessible to all who have the capacity for it.

Many are perplexed by this verse as it is generally quoted from the King James Version: “On earth peace, good will toward men.” Obviously the coming of Christ did not bring peace to the world. Today there are about 45 nations involved in wars of some kind. However, we are not to conclude that Christ failed to fulfill what the angel said about Him. The original, from the Greek, is more correctly rendered “...peace among (or in) men of good will.”

Man is created in the image of God; therefore, there is in the very nature of man the consciousness of what is good. Instinctively one has a sense — however unrefined and undefined — of what is good and what is evil.

David sang, “Oh that man would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness.” (Psa. 107:8). This was what David longed for and what all the prophets, including David, expected to happen whenever the Messiah should actually appear in the flesh. Men of good will were expected to receive Christ, Who is the ultimate good.

And they did, but they were enormously outnumbered by men of ill will, who not only did not receive Him, but sought every means to shame Him, to blaspheme and kill Him.

To have a good will requires that we will the good. Of course, it is not without the grace of God, for it is one's view of the Creator that disposes Him to will the good. Furthermore, to have a good will means to have a will to live the best one knows how, that is, to live righteously at all time.

What this requires is simply the will to will it. Each one has his own will, and it belongs to that person alone. Away with all this modern rubbish that the wicked are not responsible for their wickedness; that it is the fault of society, or the parents or poverty. Certainly all of these have influence, but the bottom line is the individual will.

Paul was under Judeaistic influence for many years during which he severely persecuted Christians, but he was a man of good will, and when the truth came to him he turned around and gave up his career, his friends, his success in the world, and found peace, because his will was to do God's will.

It is something God has a right to expect from everyone. In creation He did for us what He never did for the other creatures of earth — gave us a will, the privilege of thinking His thoughts after Him and willing to do His will.

In the absence of good will all manner of evils captivate man's imagination and dictate his activities. One who does not will the good wills the evil and therefore has an ill will.

It is an ill will that lies beneath the so-called separation of church and state to destroy Christian influence in the affairs of men. What harm can the worship of Christ do to the state? Restricting Christianity to the affairs of the “church” is an attempt to give the state complete reign over the lives of all of its citizens, and thus deny the Lordship of Christ.

It is an ill will that promotes the efforts to take sexism out of the Bible. This is an attack against the very nature of humanity, that man is created both male and female. It is ill will behind the determination equalize all people. God is the one who creates differences and makes distinctions between men.

It is an ill will that works its way through the feminist movement and its attack on motherhood and marriage.

An ill will is the tie that binds the evolutionists together in their denial that the glory of creation — ever stretching beyond the most ingenious minds — is to be credited to God.

Good will is more than passing benevolence. One may think that to “live and let live” is the best evidence of good will. Just leave my neighbor alone, and let each person “do his own thing.” In the meantime, the neighbor may be suffering from the horrors of drug abuse, or he may be inflicting those horrors on other people. Spineless, passive silence is not the Biblical kind of good will. Good will demands a response. God had such concern for the plight of the race and the fact that death is at the end of the road for all those who travel the way of sin, that He willed the good even at the cost of His only begotten Son. “Not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (I John 4:10). We demonstrate good will when we desire the good welfare of others and are willing to do something about it.

A person of good will is optimistic. He is looking for the good as those in the first century, who were looking for the hope of Israel. They expected God’s will to be fulfilled according to the prophets. They were not shocked or surprised at the appearance of Jesus and heard Him gladly. On the day of Pentecost after just one very brief sermon and demonstration of God’s power 3,000 men believed the Gospel and were baptized into Christ Jesus. They didn’t question, they didn’t resist, they didn’t argue. They simply willed the will of God in responding to His commands. Perhaps nothing in the world is so plain as the will of God. Paul simply puts it this way: “Wherefore be you not unwise, but understand what the will of God is.” (Eph. 5:7). Then he goes on to explain that God’s will is that we be holy and without blemish before Him in love. (vs. 27).

Good will has little, if anything, to do with what is generally promoted as good will at this time of the year: putting a smile on your face, giving gifts to your friends, acting cheerful and pleasant to everyone for a season and above all cooperating with the effort to make the season financially profitable. Rather it has to do with knowing God and therefore knowing the good.

The response to knowing Him is to want to be like Him, to fulfill the purpose of our creation. This is made possible by Christ’s death for our sins, thus bringing us into fellowship with God that we might escape the punishment for sin (death) and live forever. This is the way of peace. Peace with God, inner peace, peace of mind, and peace with all other men of good will. It is the only way to peace and it is being claimed continually, but only by those of good will.

Jesus is a perfect demonstration of the man of good will. “I am come to do thy will, O God” (Heb.10:7). His obedience was constant and complete in every case, even to the extent of intense suffering, giving His cheek to the insulting blows of His enemies, giving His back to inhuman scourging, allowing the unjust accusations to stand, becoming sin on our behalf, and dying as a sinner in our stead. Why such obedience unto death? Because He knew that it was good and He willed the good.

What Jesus asserts is that God’s law is good. His commandments are not mere stop-gap measures to take the place of something worse; they are good in themselves.

The world sees these commands as oppressive and seeks a way to escape them, to find a satisfactory way of serving God without having to face the commandments of Christ. The will is exercised to the limit, but not for the good, for only what *God desires is good. Good will is the will to submit to God.*

By contrast Jewry is based on ill will, the rejection of Christ and therefore the rejection of that which is good. Mohammedism is based on a trust in its physical and military might against Christianity and therefore stems from ill will. The same can be said of other major religions, which exist primarily for the purpose of denying the good which is brought to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian faith is the religion of good will.

To resist His will is to live in opposition to the good and to be at war with God. It negates peace and leads ultimately to judgment and death. “All that hate me love death.” (Prov. 8:36);

The apostle Paul simply says “overcome evil with good.” (Rom. 12:21). This certainly is in contrast to the common practice of returning evil for evil, to return blow for blow and curse for curse. Such an attitude creates more ill will, confusion, misery and certainly destroys the possibility of peace.

Our warfare, the apostle explained, is a spiritual warfare, a war against sin and evil. The victory has already been won by our Lord Jesus Christ and men of good will align them- selves with Him in order that they too might be victorious.

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