Believe and Follow Christ to the End – A Matter of Will

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"Stand Forever" Episode 39

Do you remember the big picture?

Hello, I am Larry Corbridge, and this is Episode 39 of the *Stand Forever Series*. As I said in the first episode, the big picture is a big deal. Few things provide greater comfort, confidence, and clarity, than looking beyond present cares to see and remember the big picture. Except for the Holy Spirit, there may be nothing more helpful to brave life's perils than seeing and remembering the big picture—the whole map. So, what is it? What is the big picture?

When we stand back, the big picture looks like this:

A. The essential problem in life is separation from God Our Father.

- *Without God, chaos, darkness, and death prevail.*

B. Jesus Christ bridges the gap if we will believe and follow Him to the end and help others do the same.

- *He is the Way offsetting chaos, the Truth offsetting darkness, and the Life offsetting death.*

C. Therefore, cross the bridge and close the gap; Believe and follow Christ to the end, help others do the same and stand forever.

In the past 38 episodes, we have considered parts A and B of this syllogism. In the remaining few episodes of this series, we will focus on the conclusion, part C.

Follow Christ to the End—a Matter of Will

People generally do what they do based on their beliefs, but they don't always do all they believe. Believing alone is not enough. James said, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"[1] Belief is the spring from which works may flow, but the spring may be dammed. The fact you believe something doesn't mean you will do it. Something more is required.

[1] James 2:19-20

There is a notion that during the millennium people will have an advantage because the truth will be more widely known. The same notion is held for conditions on the other side of the veil, but it isn't necessarily true.

Why will not all join the Church and faithfully live the gospel during the millennium? And what about on the other side of the veil? Won't everyone get on course there? Why do people fall away today? Why do we not do all we believe today? Understanding no good thing comes from sin and all good things come from God, why do we transgress His commandments? Why do we sin, knowing better?

In the End, It's a Matter of Will

To the Jews who sought to kill Jesus because He healed on the Sabbath and said "God was his Father"[2] He said: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And *ye will not come to me*, that ye might have life."[3] That's the problem! *In the end that's the problem—will*.

They may think they have eternal life because of their knowledge of the scriptures, but the scriptures testify of Christ and yet they *will not come unto Christ*, not because they can't, but because they won't. *In the end, it is a matter of will*—not faith, not belief, not even knowledge, all of which are essential, but in the end it's a matter of will.

Great achievement is the result of having a destination (Point B) and getting a fix on where you are (Point A), plotting the line in between and staying on course. But all the plans and plotting amount to nothing unless you stay the course, and that's a matter of will.

President Russell M. Nelson taught that one of the Hebraic meanings of the word "Israel" is "let God prevail," which focuses on the central importance of will, let it happen. He said, "Thus the very name of *Israel* refers to a person who is *willing* to let God prevail in his or her life …. The word *willing* is crucial to this interpretation of *Israel*. We all have our agency. We can choose to be of Israel, or not. We can choose to let God prevail in our lives, or not. We can choose to let God be the most powerful influence in our lives, or not."

He continued: "The question for each of us, regardless of race, is the same. *Are you willing* to let God prevail in your life? *Are you willing* to let God be the most important influence in your life? *Will you* allow His words, His commandments, and

[2] John 5:18
[3] John 5:39-40; emphasis added

His covenants to influence what you do each day? *Will you* allow His voice to take priority over any other? *Are you willing* to let whatever He needs you to do take precedence over every other ambition? *Are you willing* to have your will swallowed up in His? … "[The Lord] loveth those who *will* have him to be their God."[4]

In tender words that betray a broken-heart, the Lord said, "And again, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen; yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem, as ye that have fallen; yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, *and ye would not*."[5] In the end, it's a matter of will.

Skeptics are not skeptical because of lack of evidence, rather because they will not believe.

A gay man asked to have his name removed from the records of the Church because *he was not willing* to abide by the law of chastity although he knew full well what was right. He had many partners over the course of the years that followed, until he turned from death to life, dark to light, emptiness to fulfillment, until he turned to the Lord and repented. He was rebaptized a member of the Church and had all his blessings restored. Throughout his journey he knew the truth. He knew the answers to the primary questions. The difference between the two paths was simply his will.

Lucifer and one-third of the hosts of heaven rejected God Our Father while in His presence! How does that happen? They were not ill-informed, rather unwilling to embrace Heavenly Father's plan.

Nephi (the son of Nephi and grandson of Helaman) was given such great power that it was not possible to disbelieve his words. Like Christ, he performed many miracles; he cast out devils and unclean spirits; he raised the dead and yet the general reaction among the people was anger and rejection. Like Christ only a few were "converted unto the Lord."[6] In the end, it's a matter of will.

Jesus taught if we do not hear Moses (meaning the scriptural record) and the prophets of our day, we would not be any more persuaded if one were to return from the dead:

> There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus,

[4] Russell M. Nelson, "Let God Prevail," *General Conference*, October 2020; emphasis added
[5] 3 Nephi 10:5; emphasis added. See also Matthew 23:37
[6] 3 Nephi 7:18-21

> which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man' table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.
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> And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.
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> Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.
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> Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, *If they hear not Moses and the prophets (scriptures and living prophets), neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*."[7]

It is this stubborn unwillingness to follow the Lord in blind disregard of daily signs and wonders that show the more excellent way,[8] that causes even God to repeatedly ask, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"[9]

The answer, of course, is nothing. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. Even God cannot save us from ourselves. Even the Lord Jesus Christ cannot save us against our will. For it is given to us to choose. We must not only know and believe the truth but marshal the will to live it. What are you willing to do, willing to sacrifice, willing to give, willing to suffer, willing to bear? What price are you willing to pay?

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[7] Luke 16:19-31; emphasis added
[8] Ether 12:11. See also 1 Corinthians 12:31
[9] Isaiah 5:4; See also Jacob 5:41, 47, 49

God reveals as much knowledge as we will receive, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little"[10] that we not be blinded by the light. If you receive what light you are given and continue in the light, the light will grow brighter and brighter until the perfect day.[11]

Everyone is given the light of Christ.[12] We all know better. In the day of judgment, "I didn't know" won't fly. Everyone knows enough and the will to be true to what you do know is the course to learn more, to make better and better choices until you make the best. Be faithful to the light you receive. In the end, it's a matter of will.

"After many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why doest thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore." And then the Lord God summed up the plan of redemption for all of us saying, "And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and *all mankind*, even *as many as will*."[13] From the beginning of time it has come down to will.

The Lord said, "And the Spirit and the bride (the Church) say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And *whosoever will*, let him take of the water of life freely."[14]

Another example, "And thus did I, the Lord God, appoint unto man the days of his probation—that by his natural death he might be raised in immortality unto eternal life, *even as many as would believe*."[15] The Lord then explained why some people *will* not believe saying, "For they love darkness rather than light, and their deeds are evil, and they receive their wages of whom they list to obey."[16]

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[10] 2 Nephi 28:30
[11] Doctrine and Covenants 50:24
[12] John 1:9; Doctrine and Covenants 84:46; 93:2
[13] Moses 5:6-9
[14] Revelation 22:17; emphasis added
[15] Doctrine and Covenants 29:43
[16] Doctrine and Covenants 29:45

In the days of Alma those who were unbelievers "were a separate people as to their faith, and remained so ever after, even in their carnal and sinful state; *for they would not call upon the Lord their God*."[17]

The virtue of will, the desires of the heart, and what you really want were dominant themes in the writings and teachings of Alma the Younger. He spoke of the fall of Adam and the pivotal role that will plays in the plan of redemption: "Wherefore, [God] gave commandments unto men, they having first transgressed the first commandments as to things which were temporal, and becoming as gods, knowing good from evil, placing themselves in a state to act, or being placed in a state to act *according to their wills and pleasures*, whether to do evil or to do good."[18]

He said in the Resurrection those who have desired real happiness will be raised to happiness, or good according to his desires of good, or evil according to his desires of evil. "If (one) hath repented of his sins, and desired righteousness until the end of his days, even so he shall be rewarded unto righteousness. … Now, the decrees of God are unalterable; therefore, the way is prepared that *whoso ever will* may walk therein and be saved."[19] You will get what you want the most. It is a matter of will for everyone.

Alma repeatedly taught this throughout the cities and villages of his day: "O ye workers of iniquity; ye that are puffed up in the vain things of the world, ye that have professed to have known the ways of righteousness nevertheless have gone astray, as sheep having no shepherd, notwithstanding a shepherd hath called after you and is still calling after you, *but ye will not hearken* unto his voice!"[20]

He spoke to the apostate Zoramites about a prophet, Zenock, who spoke out against a wicked people of his day and testified of the Son of God "and because the people *would not understand* his words they stoned him to death."[21] It was not that they could not understand, rather they would not.

Alma and Amulek weren't stoned by the Zoramites, but they were not much more successful than Zenock in his day. "And it came to pass that after the more popular part of the Zoramites had consulted together concerning the words which had been

[17] Mosiah 26:4
[18] Alma 12:31; emphasis added
[19] Alma 41:5-6, 8; emphasis added
[20] Alma 5:37; emphasis added
[21] Alma 33:17; emphasis added

preached unto them, they were angry because of the word, for it did destroy their craft; therefore *they would not hearken* unto the words."[22]

It was not that they could not hearken to the words of truth that fell on their ears, rather they would not. They would not give up their "craft," they would not change even for the truth. Some care less about truth than doing whatever they want and avoiding the expectation to make changes. Like a ship off course they would rather stubbornly sail into the dark ocean and become lost at sea, than correct their course to the safe harbor. In the end, it's a matter of will.

After recording the ministry of Christ in the Americas, Mormon gave this solemn warning: "And wo be unto him that *will not hearken* unto the words of Jesus, and also to them whom he hath chosen and sent among them; for whoso receiveth not the words of Jesus and the words of those whom he hath sent receiveth not him; and therefore *he will not receive them* at the last day; And it would be better for them if they had not been born."[23] That is the law of restoration—good for good, evil for evil; if you receive Him, He will receive you. You get what you give, and you get what you most want.

Priorities: What Do You Want?

The Lord said, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."[24] The word "lest" means "for fear that." Some people do not want to see and hear because of what would be required of them if they did.

Some of the most valuable sections of the Book of Mormon are the editorial summations of Mormon which usually begin with an introduction like "And thus we see." His commentary and perspective are especially valuable because they were informed by his careful review of over 1,000 years of history. After the account of Nephi and Lehi (the sons of Helaman) Mormon provided this insightful summary:

> And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

[22] Alma 35:3; emphasis added
[23] 3 Nephi 28:34-35; emphasis added
[24] Matthew 13:15

> Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do *forget the Lord* their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.
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> And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, *they will not remember him.*
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> O how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men; yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and to set their hearts upon the vain things of the world!
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> Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and *how slow are they to remember* the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's paths!
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> Behold, *they do not desire* that the Lord their God, who hath created them, should rule and reign over them; notwithstanding his great goodness and his mercy towards them, they do set at naught his counsels, and *they will not that he should be their guide.* O how great is the *nothingness* of the children of men.[25]

He might have said, "O how great is the foolishness of the children of men." King Limhi described the same condition in powerful imagery: "O how marvelous are the works of the Lord, and how long doth he suffer with his people; and how blind and impenetrable are the understandings of the children of men; for *they will not seek wisdom, neither do they desire that she should rule over them.* Yea, they are as a wild flock which fleeth from the shepherd, and scattereth, and are driven, and are devoured by the beasts of the forest."[26] They flee, turn away, from the Shepherd, the very One, the only One, to protect them.

[25] Helaman 12:1-6; emphasis added
[26] Mosiah 8:20-21

Will is choice, driven by desire. In the end, you will do what you most want to do, what you decide to do and, you will get what you want. So, what do you want? Not, what should you want, rather what do you really want? What do you think about most? What most influences the decisions you make? What drives you? Ask anyone if they want joy, peace, love, fulfillment, knowledge, the power of God and eternal life, and everyone will say, "yes." Who wouldn't? But no one really wants to pay the price.

Captain Moroni did not want to go to war, but he did because of a higher priority to defend their liberty, lands, families, peace, and religion.[27] Everyone wants ease, smooth water and comfort as well. Many want to do whatever they want to do and not be stretched and pulled in ways they don't want to be stretched and pulled. The question is not as simple as, "What do you want?" but "What do you want most?" because our desires often conflict. What are your priorities? What are your predominate desires?

A young woman left her marriage saying she wanted to do more things in her life before getting married; she didn't want to be married or be a member of the Church anymore. She got what she wanted. You must understand this. What you want most is monumentally important. The good you do will do you little good unless you want to do it. You can do the very things that should produce happiness, but if you don't want to do them you won't be happy even if you do them.

How can this be? This curious phenomenon of not benefiting personally from one's service and sacrifice is described in some of the most beautiful and profound passages of scripture.

> Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, *I am nothing*. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, *it profiteth me nothing*.[28]

These beautiful passages of scripture seem to say that even if one has great capacities, gifts, and talents, such as the gift of eloquence, the gift of prophesy, the gifts of knowledge and faith, and yet if his heart is not right, if he does not have charity, he is

[27] Alma 48:10-11
[28] 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; emphasis added

nothing. The Lord also revealed to Joseph Smith, that without faith, hope, and charity we can *do nothing*. "And if you have not faith, hope, and charity, *you can do nothing*."[29]

These verses in Corinthians that speak of "charity" also say that even if you give all of your goods to feed the poor, even if you give your body to be burned, lay down your life for the truth, if your heart is not right, you will not profit by it. Good will be done, the poor will be fed, and the truth defended, but the good that you do, will do you no good, unless your heart is right, *unless you have charity*.

Probably no one has taught this sobering truth more clearly than Moroni. He said:

> For behold, God hath said a man being evil [heart] cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift [two years of service], or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent *it profiteth him nothing*.
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> For behold, *it is not counted unto him for righteousness*.
>
> For behold, if a man being evil giveth a gift, *he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift*; wherefore he is counted evil before God.
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> And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and *it profiteth him nothing*, for God receiveth none such."[30]

This is kind of discouraging news! How can this be? Surely this can't really be true. Aren't we to be judged by our works, and if our works are good, will there not be blessings poured out upon us? Isn't that a basic tenet of the gospel?

The answers to these questions are to be found in understanding what it means to "profit" from our good works. One of the central blessings of life is *change*. It is to be changed to become more like Jesus Christ. It is to incorporate into your character, the qualities of His character. It is to move from one degree of intelligence and capacity to the next, and from there to the next, until you see God face to face and know Him as He knows you.

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[29] Doctrine and Covenants 18:19; emphasis added
[30] Moroni 7:6-9; emphasis added; See also Moroni 10:4

This process of transformation, this process of evolving, becoming, is the object of the gospel. Change is the design of faith in Christ, repentance, and baptism. Redemptive change happens by the power of the Holy Ghost. To profit from your good works therefore means to be changed by doing them. But that happens only when a good heart is behind good works. It happens only if you do not fight against God. It happens only if you unconditionally surrender your will to the Lord.

Maybe more than anyone, Alma had much to say about this. He explained to his son Corianton what he called "the law of restoration." He said that if your works are good *and* the desires of your hearts are good, you will be "restored to that which is good," or in other words you will "profit" as Paul said, or benefit from the good that you do.

> And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and *if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good*, that they should also, at the last day, be *restored unto that which is good*.
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> And if their works are evil they shall be restored unto them for evil. Therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order, every thing to its natural frame—mortality raised to immortality, corruption to incorruption—raised to endless happiness to inherit the kingdom of God, or to endless misery to inherit the kingdom of the devil, the one on one hand, the other on the other—
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> The *one raised to happiness according to his desires of happiness, or good according to his desires of good; and the other to evil according to his desires of evil*; for as he has desired to do evil all the day long even so shall he have his reward of evil when the night cometh.
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> And so it is on the other hand. If he hath repented of his sins, *and desired righteousness* until the end of his days, even so he shall be *rewarded unto righteousness*.[31]

Alma also said:

> I know that he (God) granteth unto men *according to their desire*, whether it be unto death or unto life, yea, I know that he alloteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, *according to their wills*,

[31] Alma 41:3-6; emphasis added

> whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction…he that knoweth good and evil, to him *it is given according to his desires, whether he desireth good or evil*, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience.[32]

In these verses, Alma essentially says that *you will get what you want*. If you want a "mess of pottage" then that is all you will get. If you want light, intelligence, strength, capacity, peace, contentment, grace, knowledge, power, happiness, mercy, joy, and every other good thing, then you may have those blessings. It is up to you. Whatever you want. It is a matter of will and will is a matter of the heart.

You cannot be spiritually changed against your will. It is contrary to agency. It is also contrary to the nature of things. It just can't happen.

Alma also said to Corianton:

> And now my son, all men that are in a state of nature, or I would say in a carnal state…they are in a *state contrary to the nature of happiness*. And now behold, is the meaning of the word restoration to take a thing of a natural state and place it in an unnatural state, or to *place it in a state opposite to its nature?*[33]

Don't misunderstand Alma's language. Don't misunderstand his use of the word "nature." Don't think "nature" means the way you are forevermore. That is a vicious and false doctrine. It is contrary to the true doctrine of hope. The truth is your nature can change. That is what this is all about. You may permit the Lord to change your nature if you give yourself to Him and do His work. *But He cannot work on what He does not have, and He cannot have you, unless you give yourself to Him*.

You give yourself to the Lord by giving Him your will. It is all you can give that God does not already have. If you give your time, talents, and resources to God and His work, you only return what He gives with each beat of your heart. But when you give yourself, when you give your will, you give the only thing God does not have and will never have unless you give it—you.

From the carol "In the Bleak Midwinter" we sing: "What can I give Him, Poor as I am? If I were a Shepherd, I would bring a lamb; If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;

[32] Alma 29:4-5; emphasis added
[33] Alma 41:11-12; emphasis added

Yet what I can I give Him, Give my heart."[34] And when you do that, you give Him everything.

As Alma says, happiness is the product of righteous works *and* righteous desires, desiring to do what the Lord would have you do. If your secret, heartfelt desires are rather to do what you want to do, more than what the Lord wants for you, *you will not be happy, and you will not profit from even your good works*, because you will be in a state that is "contrary to the nature of happiness". You cannot be in a condition or state that is opposite to your nature. You can't be in a state of happiness, whether now or in the eternities, *if you don't want to do* the things that lead to happiness, *even if you do those very things*. Do you hear this? *You can't be happy if you don't want to do the things that lead to happiness, even if you do those very things*.

Mormon recorded that the humble and faithful people in the day of Helaman and his sons, Nephi and Lehi, "did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, *which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God*.[35]

Do you see how important the desires of your heart are? You can do the very things that should produce happiness, but if you are all the time fighting them within, if you are all the time wishing and hoping and wanting to do your own thing, you will not be happy because your state, your frame of mind, will not be conducive to happiness. Your frame of mind will be conflicted, "contrary to the nature of happiness," and it will be for you as though you never did those good things at all.

We all want to be happy, but to be happy we must want to do the things that give rise to happiness. *Therefore, it is better to focus on hungering and thirsting after righteousness rather than happiness*. If we do, we will incidentally discover happiness.

Your world is in your head. Get your head right and your heart will follow, and you will be right.

In a similar vein Paul also taught:

> But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

[34] Christina Rossetti, *In the Bleak Midwinter*
[35] Helaman 3:35; emphasis added

> Every man according *as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver*.[36]

I remember when I first came across this scripture. It must have been a bad day, or worse yet maybe my heart was in a bad way. I remember thinking, "Oh man! It is not enough that I give and give, but now I have to smile when I do it, or it's not any good? What's next? Life blood?"

Why does God love and want us to become cheerful givers? Is it because He doesn't want any grumps in His house? No, it isn't that He wants a house of happy campers. *Rather it is you cannot be changed to become like him against your will*. That's why!

It comes as no surprise the disobedient are not changed. It is not surprising they do not incorporate into their character, the qualities of godliness. But it may be surprising and even disturbing that the unwilling obedient do not change either. But do you see that in his head and in his heart, he fights God, just like the disobedient.

Will is choice. Some choose darkness over light. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."[37] It is always a choice.

Some choose the thrill of the moment at the expense of joy and peace forever. Some choose the pizzazz of world over Christ, death over life, darkness over light and chaos over purpose. It is always a choice.

Life is not the sum of your choices, because there is much that happens to you, outside your control. But unlike life, *you* are the sum of your choices. Whatever happens (to you), you choose your response. You are what you think, say, hear, see and do. You do that. No one else. You may not be responsible for everything that happens to you, but you are responsible for who you are and who you are in the process of becoming.

Alma also said to Corianton, that we may partake of the waters of life freely and be satisfied, if we choose to, but if we don't want it, we will not be compelled to drink. "Therefore, O my son, whosoever *will* come may come and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever *will not* come the same is not compelled to come."[38]

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[36] 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; emphasis added
[37] John 3:19-20
[38] Alma 42:27; emphasis added

You cannot be changed to become more like God if within your heart you fight against God; if within your heart you resist, resent, and hold fast to what you rather would do. It is up to you; whatever you want the most. Choose best. Choose life. Choose Christ.

Will Is a Choice, Driven by Desire

One may excuse mistakes and failures thinking, "my will is just not strong enough" but it is a mistake to think of will as strength or heroic fortitude. The idea that "iron will" is necessary to realize your divine potential suggests only the strongest, the most able, will succeed. That is the Darwinian view of life's journey, "survival of the fittest" which flies in the face of the Lord's invitation to everyone to come unto Him and by Him return to God Our Father. Will is choice, driven by desire. "(T)hou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee."[39]

Will is the real you. God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, the plan of salvation, the gospel, ordinances, covenants, priesthood, good and evil, temptation and adversity are all independent of you; they are not you. Sure, they can become a part of you if you will, but they are separate from you. But your will is never separate from you because it is you. It is you selecting a desire among various desires in the moment of decision. You are free and independent of everyone and everything, bound only by reason and understanding.

Will you choose best? Will you choose Christ? Will you choose life? Will you stand forever? In the end, it is a matter of will.

[39] Moses 3:17