

## Overcoming (Part 4): Self-Will

by Martin G. Collins

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A sixteenth-century doctor, Thomas Fuller, once said, "Beware of no man more than thyself." In our efforts to overcome, we find this statement painfully true. Self-will is part of our human nature and always strives to make *self* the center of its own universe. In this selfish manner, our self-will desires to pull God from His throne and deny others justice and mercy to advance its own ambition. This sin is both dangerous and destructive.

A major theme of the Bible shows what God has done to save man from disasters that have overtaken him because of his self-will. In addition, it reveals man's persistent refusal to recognize God's greater will and its amazing benefits when followed. Man's own stubbornness is keeping him from lasting peace, health and prosperity! This Bible study will examine this presumptuous obstruction to overcoming.

1. What are some of the harsher characteristics of self-will? Genesis 49:5-7.

**Comment:** "Self-will" occurs only here in the Old Testament. In his curse on Simeon and Levi, Jacob says that in their self-will, they "dugged down a wall" (KJV), or "hamstrung an ox" (NKJV). Their vengeful, violent acts against Shechem cause Jacob to pronounce a curse on their anger because it manifested itself in fierceness and cruelty. As a result, the tribes of Simeon and Levi, given no inheritance, are scattered throughout Israel.

2. Can ambition be another form of self-will? Isaiah 14:13-14; Genesis 11:4; II Samuel 15:1-6.

**Comment:** How people feel about ambition is plain in the way they say, "I'm a go-getter" in a tone of pride and self-satisfaction. Many people greatly admire this expression of self-will. However, people often frustrate themselves when they try to accomplish and acquire things through their own will. In seeking security and prestige, self-will frequently develops into conformity to a social status, a peer group or an organization. In reality, it is slavery to sin.

3. Is presumptuousness a form of self-will? Deuteronomy 1:34-44; II Peter 2:10; Isaiah 45:9-10.

**Comment:** Israel willfully attacked the Amorites after God told them not to go, and their presumptuousness brought them bitter defeat. Peter says that all "who walk according to the flesh" are "presumptuous" as well as "self-willed." The Greek word Peter uses literally means "self-pleasing." It denotes the person who, dominated by self-interest and inconsiderate of others, arrogantly asserts his own will. The self-willed person so overvalues any decision he makes that he cannot be dissuaded.

4. Is a self-willed person inclined to listen to advice and act on it? Isaiah 28:9-12; Proverbs 21:24; John 8:42-47.

**Comment:** The person led by self-will commits a very serious sin by refusing to learn God's truth. The people of Ephraim became so proud and self-willed that they could not be taught individually or as a nation. They refused to hear any of God's instruction. One who refuses to listen to what God has to say is not of God.

5. Does God want self-willed men in His ministry? Titus 1:7; I Timothy 3:2-7.

**Comment:** Self-will is insisting stubbornly and arrogantly on one's way, as opposed to following the will of God. Paul states that a minister of God must not allow himself to be self-willed but must be led by and do God's will. What kind of minister would a person with false pride and stubbornness make?

6. What is the opposite of self-will? Matthew 6:10; 26:39; Romans 6:13; James 4:7-10.

**Comment:** Submitting to God's will is the first step in overcoming self-will. This requires obedience and that the law of God be written in our hearts. From this, David writes, we receive delight (Psalm 40:8). This process demands that we resist Satan, the father of pride, and develop true humility.

7. What benefits come from doing God's will? Romans 12:2; John 7:16-18.

**Comment:** Self-will conforms to the world and its beliefs; God's will does not. Doing God's will rather than our own provides understanding of true doctrine and discernment of truth. In the Old Testament, God reveals Himself and His will to pagan man through the agency of a chosen people. In the New Testament, He draws man to Himself in Jesus Christ, who took upon Himself our sins to reconcile us to the Father, becoming the Mediator between man and God. The continual aim of God is to re-establish communion between man and Himself, so that human will converts into His will.

Clearly, we should do, not our will, but God's. God has given us freedom and power, not to do as we want, but to do as He wants—and this is where our security lies. Apart from His will, we are like the undisciplined child—nervous, unstable, and blown about by the winds of whim because we really do not know what we ought to want. In due time, our continuance in doing the will of God will grant us the ultimate benefit: entrance into His glorious Kingdom!