

## A Message to the Graduates on Joseph, Theology and Your Will

When I praise the Lord I always praise Him for His attributes, His love and goodness and power and wisdom and His veracity, meaning His truthfulness, His peacefulness and joyfulness. Then I usually remember that **all His attributes are infinite and immutable.**

### Do You Know What “Infinite” Means?

It is the quality of being boundless, having no boundaries or limits. Something that is infinite is immeasurably or un-countably large. “Continuing endlessly in time” is one definition, but God’s existence is endless in both directions! He is the Alpha and Omega.

Our existence and our eternity has begun, but God’s eternal life is infinite—no beginning and no ending. He is omnipresent. He is bigger than the space-time continuum. Space, time and matter had a beginning; He spoke them into existence and so He is everywhere in them and He is also outside of them. He simply IS! He is not just powerful, He is omnipotent, all-powerful. He is not merely wise, He is omniscient, all-wise, He is omnipresent, He is omniscient, all-knowing. He is all-seeing.

**Since God is infinite, He could go back and follow your** life from conception to death as though you are the only one there, and then he could go back even further to my conception and follow my life as though I were the only one there. However, He doesn’t have to do it that way. He can personally follow along with each of our lives as though each of us is the only one there when everyone else is *also* there.

Think of a genius chess player playing 12 other chess players simultaneously. God can do something akin to that with over 6 billion people all around the world, all at the same time. **God had you personally in mind when He created the universe.** He knows the number of the diminishing hairs on your head and how many of your brain cells have died (and how many are left), and He *hears* every thought you have.

I wanted to tell the graduating seniors, especially, today that part of the “created in God’s image” package is your volition, your will. God has a will. He is sovereign, meaning He can do as He pleases. You also have a will, and it is free. We say “free will” but that is redundant. If you have a will, it is free. God didn’t give any of us an un-free will. Why bother? You can be willing, unwilling, strong-willed, weak-willed or willy-nilly, but if you have a will, it is a free will.

### You Are Responsible

Your will makes you a person, a human, but it also makes you responsible. “Volition” is another word for the will. Volition is the “act of making one’s own choices or decisions.” You have the volitional freedom to decide things, hence, you are not a robot.

**Satan hates it that we have this God-like capacity to choose**—so he invents religions, especially in the Eastern world, in which the adherents seek to be passive or will-less. That can be appealing. After all, if you don’t decide to want anything, you won’t be disappointed. If you choose to not feel anything, you won’t get angry. Contentment is defined as passivity. Historically, much of the East was impoverished and tragic, hence the appeal to be will-less.

*The “willingness principle” is all over the Bible. The Bible is certainly written as though God is extremely interested in what men, women, boys and girls decide to believe about Him. God knows at any given moment who is volitionally positive towards Him or volitionally negative towards Him.*

Many people try to hang out in the middle. They say they can't decide if they are positive or negative about God and about His Son, the only Savior of the world. They might say that they aren't sure He exists, which excuses them (they think). Many people to whom Carolyn and I have witnessed about the Lord over the years say they are intellectually undecided about God, as if being undecided about God relieves them of any responsibility or obligation to Him. But God seems to view a lack of positive volition towards Him *as* negative volition towards Him.

*Jesus said in John 3:15, “Whoever believes in [the son of God] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the Name of God’s one and only Son.”*

I guess we could paraphrase it as, “Whoever continues to choose to not believe keeps on remaining in a condemned condition.”

Jesus goes on to say, “*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved the darkness instead of the light because their deeds were evil.*” (John 3:18-20)

### **It’s About Willingness and Unwillingness**

Technically, you can wait until the last minute of your life to decide, but that is risky, and it means at last five things:

1. **You postpone or forfeit** having God’s righteousness imputed to you for most of your life;
2. **You forfeit** the possession of the Holy Spirit and the fruits of the spirit that He would have given you, like divine love, divine joy, divine peace, divine patience, kindness and goodness, and divine faithfulness, gentleness and self-control;
3. **You forfeit** your ability to get your loved ones into heaven by encouraging them to accept Christ like you did;
4. **You miss out** on the adventure of faith, a “never to be repeated adventure throughout all of eternity; and
5. By spending most of your life as a non-believing heathen **you forfeit many years in which you could have earned heavenly rewards**, which are distinct from your salvation, which is an unearned, unmerited, underserved gift from God, purchased by the blood of Christ.

**Acknowledging that it is up to you, God has benevolently commanded all men everywhere to believe.** If, during this message, a deacon signals me that this tinder-box of a building is on fire, I would command you to get out of here as orderly and quickly as possible! It’s not that I just like to be bossy. Going outside would be the right thing to do.

To obey God’s command to repent (to be willing) towards Him and believe in His dear son is the right thing to do. It is to obey the Gospel. It is the obedience of faith. Then, as you freely choose to obey or disobey His benevolent commands, you create your own integrity or impairment. You determine your own success or failure, your own joy or misery.

***That’s how freedom works; it makes you responsible.***

I talked to a guy once who attended West Point. Half way through he transferred to a state school. I said, "I guess you learned a lot of discipline at West Point." He replied, "Actually, I became more disciplined at the state school." "Really! How could that be?" I asked. He explained, "At West Point I just did as I was told; they told me when to get up, when to brush my teeth, when to eat, when to march, and when to study. At the state school I had to push myself to get out of bed and go to class—there was no one to prod me. I had to discipline myself or flunk."

### The World Doesn't Owe You a Living

You could ask, "Well, doesn't **God** owe me something? I didn't ask to be created." I don't know how to answer that, but I do know that He has offered you a successful journey on this planet, but He won't force success on you against your will. He initiates to you based on the "willingness" principle.

**God wants to share himself with you.** That doesn't mean you become God or a part of God. It does mean He is pleased to share His love and holiness with you.

1 John 4:8 says, "*God is love.*" God *is* love! He doesn't *fall* in love or *increase* in love. His love is already infinite and boundless towards you. Also, His love, like all the attributes of His essence, is immutable. He says, "*I change not.*" His love is not dependent on being attracted to you or having a certain rapport with you or being bribed or patronized by you. He loves you a little bit like how I love Natalie Carson, our eighth grandchild, who was born to our son Jonathan and his wife, Jennifer, on May 27! Natalie has a little of me in her and a little of Carolyn, and a lot of Jonathan and Jennifer in her, and yet she is unique in the universe. Natalie has done nothing to earn my love. As she grows older, she will commit sins. I know this about her, but I still love her.

**God, in eternity, knew all of your sins and failures.** His love never wavered, changed or diminished. His attributes never change, and His attributes do not compete with on another. He is completely loving, just and righteous at the same time.

When you put justice and righteousness together, you get holiness. God wants to share His holiness with you. "Holiness" is a good word, but it is an obscure word in our day, and its meaning is somewhat nebulous even to many Believers.

### Let's Call Holiness "God's Virtue and Integrity"

That's more definitive. God is not only good, He is consistently good. He is undivided, unimpaired, sound and separate from sin—or "holy." God cannot compromise His virtue or integrity. So how could He impute to people like us His righteousness and holiness? He did it by giving each of us a new, born again human spirit. Simultaneously, since our brand new human spirit was born of God and is sinless, since "*that which is born of God sinneth not,*" (1 John 3:9) the Holy Spirit could dwell in our spirit because it had become a suitable habitation for God. The very spirit of God and of Christ now lives in us. He is our Holy Symbiont, We have a symbiotic relationship with our Creator and with our spotless Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have been declared righteous *legally* as a result of believing in Christ. But also, that component of our being that is called the human spirit is righteous, *actually!* Our bodies and souls, which are not holy yet, can experience holiness by allowing the Holy Spirit to fill us, or control us. Our willingness to be filled releases the spirit to flow into our souls and bodies. **Mark it down—we believers in Jesus have God's virtue and integrity resident in us.** We just need to yield to the Holy Spirit with our wills, and He will release God's integrity and virtue into our souls and make our bodies "*slaves of righteousness.*" We were saved by grace, and now we live by grace. Now here is a thought for you:

## God's Divine Holiness in Us Deserves Blessing!

Let me review—God imparted His own virtue and integrity to us in exchange for our child-like faith. Since God loves Himself and His own goodness, he is now free to bless us personally because of His righteousness and holiness in us.

Our new spiritual condition of being born of God in our spirits, whereby we are declared righteous and actually *possess right now* righteous spirits, gives us believers the right blessings at the right time. This is true for all genuine believers, whether black, white, brown, Jewish, Gentile, male, female, young or old.

Because you are in Christ and Christ is in you, God continues to faithfully provide and inject grace provisions into your life for your whole life. The more willing you are, the more positive your volition is, the more you will experience seemingly coincidental blessings.

But it's not all about us! Each of us plays a role in revealing to Satan, the fallen angels and the good angels the absolute integrity of God. The free exercise of our wills in a dangerous world instructs the angels, **but for us these truths explode mankind's solutions for inequality.** It redefines "victimology." Mankind continually seeks to solve the problem of inequality and the victimization of unequal persons. I sympathize with all true victims, but I am not optimistic about man's solutions, whether the French Revolution or the Marxist revolution in Russia or the Cuban Revolution, which I grew up close to in Miami.

**Maybe equality will come in your lifetime, but in case it doesn't, take a lesson from Joseph** in Genesis 37 to 50. He experienced all of it. Back home as a boy in Palestine he was happy being exalted as superior to his brothers by his father, Jacob. When his brothers sold him to a caravan of Arabians, who resold him into slavery in Egypt, Joseph continued to be stable and content in the Lord. He kept his virtue and he kept his integrity. Then he was imprisoned on a trumped up morals charge, but his inward joy, stability and evident integrity remained. Then, as prime minister of Egypt, he maintained the same mental attitude he had always had all along the stony path of his life. In fact, the rejection, slavery, and unfair imprisonment tested and strengthened Joseph.

### Joseph Passed Several "Inequality Tests"

These tests developed his virtue and integrity even more and made him a blessing to God and to men, women and small children in two cultures—then, and by means of his story—to many generations of Bible-readers. Joseph's humility and integrity *pole-vaulted* him above his fellows in Egypt and above his brothers who came to Egypt. Because of how Joseph thought about life, he was promoted within the existing, unideal system. **He was victimized, but he refused to be a victim.** Victims, after all, are not responsible—abused children, for instance. Abused children even need to be told they are victims so they won't feel responsible for what happened.

**But you graduating seniors are no longer children,** and you need to be told that you are responsible for how you think about adversity in your life. Satan wants you to think like a non-responsible, passive, helpless victim. No matter where you go or what happens to you, you need to take responsibility for having a will of your own and for using it to get oriented to God's grace.

### What is "Grace Orientation"?

Getting oriented to grace means using the word of God like a mariner uses the sun to ascertain his direction. It means following the leading of the endwelling Holy Spirit like reading a compass. It means using the promise of God in order to get oriented to the truth that Jesus is standing by, waiting for you to cooperate with Him in His desire to bless your life.

**By the time you graduate and leave home you must understand that the most significant factor in your life is your own volition**, your own willingness towards God, your accessing of the Lord's virtue and integrity resident in you. The success of your life will not be determined by your genes or by your physical or emotional pathology. If you permit Him to, the Lord will lead you.

**THE LORD WANTS TO LEAD YOU FAR MORE THAN YOU WANT TO BE LED.**

**THE MENTAL ATTITUDE YOU HAVE TODAY WILL DETERMINE  
WHERE YOU WILL BE AND WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING TEN YEARS FROM NOW.**

**For any non-believers here**, let me add that the pay for sin is death, both physical and spiritual separation from God. Jesus' unlimited atonement declares that Christ died and paid for the sins of the entire human race. In other words, Christ purchased the salvation of every human being, and God desires that all believe in, trust in, Christ.

But God does not coerce the human will. You must choose to trust Him. Ultimately, man's will determines man's eternal destiny because, while not "wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), God will not force His will upon you. He will honor your choice.