

P.S.

Renewable resource

THE MAN ONCE SLATED to be the next President of the United States has had some interesting career changes. First businessman, then Bill Clinton's number two, Al Gore's latest incarnation as Oscar-winning film-maker and environmentalist is certainly an unconventional step. If his anti-global-warming documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* is any reflection of reality, the man spends his time travelling the world, educating governments, students, thought-leaders, and anyone else who will listen, about the perils of global warming as he lobbies for CO₂ reductions and struggles to save the planet.

My reason for mentioning Gore in this piece is not to make an environmental point; instead I want to pick up on something he said as his parting shot in his emotive Oscar acceptance speech in 2007: "*The will to act—that's a renewable resource*".

There is no doubt that human beings can muster the ability to bring about tremendous change in some spheres of life. From time to time they dig deep to make great personal sacrifices of resources, time or energy. In our own community also there is latent potential to act, a potential which is awakened periodically by particular circumstances, appeals and special initiatives. By God's grace, we have undertaken major coordinated preaching projects; for instance, the Bible Mission has been established and funded. People can be motivated to act: to give generously; to get involved; to give of what they have, whether it is through personal activity, or the support of finances, interest and prayer. All this is very positive, for it indicates that the sacrificial spirit of Christ is amongst us, and that our hearts have not become hard to the needs of others when we are awakened to them.

The will to act, then, as Gore stated, is indeed a renewable resource. We get knocked down; we get up and try again. We respond to an appeal; another appeal comes, and we (as a community) strive to give again. A preaching initiative takes place, and, after a while, we try another one.

I want, though, to focus more at the individual level. The Apostle Paul noted that, although we each age and our bodies ultimately crumble under the pressures of our human nature, our "inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). By God's grace, then, this inward man is a renewable resource, one whose dedication and commitment to God need not be exhausted by the ravages of time and circumstance.

This passage from Corinthians is tremendously encouraging. Our inward man is renewed because each day God gives us the strength, if we seek it, to be(come) spiritual people. It is renewed because He is able and willing to forgive us our sins so that we may stand clean and pure in His sight. It is renewed because He feeds us the spiritual food we need in His Word and in His nurturing of our characters. It is renewed because our fellowship with Him and with His Son can be maintained and developed through communication in prayer and meditation.

But what, specifically, of the will to act? For we certainly need such a will if we are to grow in Him, if we are to persist in the fight against sin, and if we are to carry out acts of service and sacrifice in His Name.

Al Gore's point about the will to act being a renewable resource was a clever one in the context of whether or not there is a human will to address the problem of climate change and increasingly move towards the use of renewable energy resources. But it is a point which applies to spiritual goals also. Our will to act can indeed be renewed, and we need it to be so, lest our will to serve our Father be overtaken by the poison of lethargy and cynicism. There is no place in discipleship for a defeatist attitude. We have to get up and try again, in whatever spiritual endeavour we are engaged.

For each of us it is worth knowing what it is that can catalyse us to act in our spiritual journey. What will make us more eager to serve, to give, to fellowship, to conquer? We need to identify those catalysts, whether it be personal Bible study, attending meetings, ensuring we maintain a regular and engaged prayer-life, listening to inspirational talks, exposing ourselves to the needs of others (being aware of their suffering, for instance), appreciating our own decrepitude and need—whatever it might be. It is probably all of the above, but, since we are all different, some will have a particularly powerful motivating effect upon us, and it is worth being sufficiently self-aware to know.

Gore's point in his anti-global-warming campaign is that it is not too late. What we need to do is to bring about change by invoking our will to act. In a more important spiritual sense, it is similarly not too late. The Master has not yet returned. What we must do is ensure that the will to act is renewed within us by exposing ourselves to the right spiritual catalysts.

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