

"I Believe In Freewill" "Me, Too"

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"That's where we differ", said my questioner, "I believe in freewill."

What do you mean by freewill? In one sense nothing can exist, or function, except God permits it, including man's will. Man is not God, he is not free and self-existent. Man's will is free only to the extent God allows. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1).

Yet, undoubtedly, God has allowed men a degree of freedom in their choices and decisions. He does not force us. Even the powerful, sovereign operations of God's grace in conversion do not drive men to unwilling obedience. Rather, the elect of God, for whom salvation has been eternally purposed are made gladly willing to receive forgiveness. They are happy converts. None will enter heaven who does not wish to be there.

Conversion is the work of God as the Holy Spirit acts on the souls of men; quickening, calling, convicting and converting until grace, forgiveness and salvation are the most desirable gifts upon earth to the sinner. "Thy people shall be willing" (Psalm 110:3).

We distinguish between natural and spiritual freedom of the will. Natural liberty exists in every action and situation. We can choose to eat or not; to drink, sit, stand, or walk. The human will has liberty in natural things. We may choose to love or hate, harbour grudges or forgive offence as our pleasure takes us. We may even fulfil religious activity, pray, sing, read scripture, attend public worship, hear the gospel.

Yet, our fallen nature spoils everything. A man can appear outwardly good, and do many things which have a show of moral good, even withstanding temptation, all by natural freewill. However, that is where it ends. In spiritual matters man has neither will, nor power to act in ways pleasing or acceptable to God. He cannot recover his spiritual condition or alter his eternal destination. He has no will to live spiritually, or respond spiritually, to God. Man's whole nature is opposed to God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual enmity and antagonism reigns in our flesh, mind, will and soul towards God and prevents us doing what is right in matters of faith, repentance, regeneration, conversion. The presence and dominion of evil means man's will is not free to choose God but instead bound and captive to sin and Satan.

The Bible speaks of man being polluted, carnal, a slave to sin, spiritually dead, impotent to do anything that is truly or spiritually good. By the fall of Adam and our union with him, it is impossible to please God, or do

spiritual good. Our freewill, for what it is worth, always leads to doing evil. Our thoughts, judgment, and affections by which the will is influenced and directed are depraved, ruined, and corrupt (Jeremiah 17:9). Nothing good originates in the human heart (James 1:17). Consequently, all spiritual activity must have its origin in God and ultimately people can act spiritually only through the enabling power of God's grace, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Man's freewill enables him to satisfy the lusts of the flesh but it does not, cannot, forge a relationship with God. Man has no spiritual desire or power to please God. The will slavishly serves the old man of sin.

Only when man's will is altered in the new creation and the effect of the fall removed by grace and conversion can man know peace with God. This is the message of the gospel. The dead must be made alive, captives freed, the blind made to see, hearts opened. Until and unless this happens at the behest of Almighty God, man's will is free only to take him down to hell.

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