

‘YOUR FREE WILL . . . ???’

Oh yes, you have a free will and you can choose how you think and it has the potential of making ‘man’ feel clever and important! It might even produce some good as well as evil! We are told if one gets the chance to hear the gospel and chooses to accept Christ, man will determine his destiny . . . similarly, if he refuses to choose to come to Christ, it also determines his destiny! However, our just God has also to deal with those who never had a chance to hear. Is the gospel a thing of chance? Just because man can make decisions regarding his natural life, he concludes that, regarding salvation, it must be the same . . . so man calls himself *a free moral agent* and so can accept or reject the Lord by his own choosing.

However, the Word of God contradicts him, declaring, *There is none righteous, no not one! There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God* (Rom. 3:10-11). Man is *totally depraved* in the sense that everything about his nature is in rebellion against God. Man is loyal to the god of darkness and *loves darkness rather than light*. His will is, therefore, not at all ‘free’. It is a slave to the flesh. Total depravity means that man, of his own “free will” can NEVER MAKE A DECISION FOR CHRIST. Our blessed Lord bluntly says, *You will not come to Me, that you might have life* (John. 5:40). Total depravity means that the natural man is completely incapable of discerning Truth. In fact, unregenerate man thinks of the things of God as being ridiculous! *The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him. Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (I Cor. 2:14).

Oh yes, man has a free choice on how he thinks and it has the potential of making ‘man’ feel clever and important! It might even produce some good as well as evil . . . but all that is in the natural realm which stems from the brain-mind which can only operate from what has been placed in it by inheritance or schooling etc.

Let us pose a question to you: **Whose will is the greatest — your’s or God’s?** God said that His will was to include all men in redemption. . . 2 Peter 2:9 says that *He is not WILLing that any perish* . . . therefore they must get redeemed. . . yet He lets us operate in our own will and make decisions of all types. Note this . . . God being Almighty God, knows ALL things . . . **Omniscient** is the word we use. So He always knows what you will choose. . . He even knows your thoughts before you think them . . . Wow! That’s foreknowledge and is reserved for God. He knew which tree Adam-Eve was going to choose and let her do it . . . knowing she would choose right in line with God’s ultimate purpose. God could have intervened and prevented Eve eating of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Couldn’t He? God knew it all beforehand and yet did nothing for it was the beginning of His working ALL things together for good. (Prov.16:9) *A man’s (unyielded) heart devises his way, but the Lord directs his steps* . (Prov.20:24) *Man’s goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way* . (Prov.21:1) *The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; He turns it whithersoever He will.*

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

(Romans 8:20) *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who has subjected the same in hope* . . . He knew what effect that would have on all of mankind. It didn’t concern Him one little bit. Why? He had already made provision for that in the ‘*Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*’ (Rev.13:8). Remember, God so loved **the world** . . . not just the Christians!

(Isaiah 43:13) *Yea, before the day was I am He; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand: I will work, and who shall stop it?* (Psalm 90:3) *Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.* When God speaks it is a command not an invitation! Man whom He loves and gave Himself for will receive much chastening (Heb.12:6) so that His will can affect man’s will. (Jerem.10:23) *O Lord, I know that the way of*

man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps .

The Holy Spirit so moves to change our thinking until we have His wisdom and His understanding released from the mind of Christ (see later).

All decisions that we make . . . our own unchecked brain in operation . . . are dependent upon circumstances, teaching and education and timing etc. It is very comforting to know that God rules in the affairs of man . . . in every situation. The Holy Spirit so moves to change our thinking until we have His wisdom and His understanding. Jesus says, *NO MAN CAN COME TO ME, except the Father which has sent Me draw him* (John. 6:44). When Almighty God draws one, he cannot help but come (decide) and if Almighty God is not drawing him at that time, he cannot come! Man is not saved by some illusionary act of his own *free will*. **Man is saved by grace**, the divine enablement of God who first gives him *Life* and then imparts faith in his heart as a free gift. Paul continues: *For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the Gift of God. It is not of works, lest any man should boast* (Eph. 2:8-9).

Observe! **Saving faith is the GIFT OF GOD, NOT AN EXERCISE OF MAN'S "FREE WILL"!** Man must believe, certainly, but it is not the old deceitful and desperately wicked, stony heart, nor the old carnal mind-brain which does the believing, but the faith graciously imparted by God as a gift into the heart of the man He is drawing . . . that is the agency of man's believing (John 6:29). God has decreed that the *works* of the flesh shall have no part in the "so great salvation" which He Himself provides. It is *His work* through the Gift of Life. He regenerated us when we were dead in sins. Life is His Gift. Faith is His Gift. We are saved by a faith which *is not of ourselves*. We believed by the faith which GOD GIVES, not by our own FREE WILL!

(2 Chron 20:6) *And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? And rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? And in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?* God rules the Christians and the heathen! How does He do it? By being God, **Omnipotent** . . . all powerful and He shows His power by knowing beforehand and using all the circumstances that surround each individual to bring forth His great plan of the ages.

TWO ALLEGORIES

Here are two allegories that just might help us grasp how our Sovereign God views this subject:

1). Imagine a large flat board with a rim around it. In the centre there is a small round hole just a little bigger than the marble that is in one of the corners. God's will is that the marble (you) goes down the hole which leads from the natural life to the supernatural life in Him.

God, being the Almighty Sovereign and having thus all knowledge . . . that means ALL . . . of every thought and action that ever was or will take place . . . He holds the board. The complete course that the marble (you) takes is known by God including all your stupid and unwise choices by which you missed the hole (mark!). However, since He holds the board and since He is greater than you or I, you will eventually go down that hole. Some go down this side of the grave . . . others go down the other side. Your exact course will always have the correcting touches from His hands to bring forth righteousness. The path you (the marble) have traversed is a result of your brain-mind making such reasonable (to you!) choices . . . the fruit of which is just a delay in you reaching your destiny (What God has purposed for you).

2). Imagine that you are a passenger on an ocean-going liner called 'Life'. God, being the Captain, is knowingly taking His ship to His chosen destination. You are on the ship and you can choose where you walk, who you associate with, what you eat, how you think, what you speak and so on . . . your free-will enables you to make all those decisions. Meantime the ship still goes onwards towards its destination and you go with it.

God's original purpose which is unchanged, is simply that He will bring man(kind) to His image and likeness (Gen.1:26). Surely there is no one stupid enough to say, 'Let's whoop it up now because we'll all get 'there' in the end'. Such action will cause nothing but pain in us and in others. A wise man avoids this by yielding to the Captain's wishes — why not? . . . For He holds the 'board'.

YOUR DECISION SOURCE? BRAIN-MIND OR HEART?

Your brain and your mind can only reason and express from that which you have put into it. ‘Use your head’ ... ‘Think! Man, think!’ ... your boss just might use those words to upbraid you. Your free-will can operate fully in the bounds of your intelligence that stems from your brain-mind. However, your heart also has its intelligence that is very different to that of your mind. *Keep thine heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life* (Prov.4:23). *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks* (Matt.12:34). Remember, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart* (mentioned first!), *and mind and strength* (more about that in *re-think* No.41).

When one personally begins the salvation experience, God takes away from you your *stony heart* that is lifeless due to the 100% domination coming from your brain where heartfelt expressions such as compassion do not exist and *replaces it with a heart of flesh* (Ezek.36:26) that can express the Christ in you. That is the summary of when we ‘give our hearts to the Lord’. The presence of God (His Spirit) operates in you, in your heart . . . *And because ye are sons* (maturing ones — no longer servants), *God has sent forth His Spirit into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father* (Gal.4:6). This presence of the Living Word, Christ-Jesus, will steadily overcome the ‘dead-letter’ input from your mind/brain. This results in *the renewing of your mind* (Rom.12:3) which in turn *changes us from glory to glory into the image of His Son*, Christ (2 Cor 3:18).

IN THE LONG RUN, YOUR FREE-WILL IS AN ILLUSION!

Your free-will appears to be 100% in control of your thoughts, will and emotions etc. This is an illusion when viewed from God’s perspective. When Christ is made ‘Lord’ of your life in response to a revelation of Himself to you, He speaks forth from your heart ... that still small voice that is no longer being squelched by a very active brain-mind. Quoting scriptures of what God did many years ago ... from numerous ‘bible studies’ taken in ... is what Paul calls the ‘letter-word’ and it is lifeless. One needs to be still and know the voice of the Spirit within your heart. Christ in one’s life simply means that He has control of the reigns of your heart so that your choices are now fully His. The only free-will that it looks like you have is when your ‘*tree of knowledge of good and evil*’ (your unrenewed mind-intelligence, spouts its words forth before the heart’s input can be realized. God’s will, desire and vision etc. for you is what switches your source of life from your mind to your heart which releases the mind of Christ into your brain-mind to renew it resulting in great peace.

If you have ‘*given your heart to the Lord*’, it is essential to have ‘*a heart-to-heart talk*’ with the Lord ... then it will be safe for you to ‘*follow your heart*’ resulting in doing Father’s will completely. So then, where has your free will gone? It is willingly yielded to Christ so that we can truthfully say, *Not my will be done but Thine*. So Our will is actually His will. It has been in His control all along! §