

Articles and Sermons :: mans free will

mans free will, on: 2009/8/17 22:22

47. Does the bible teach that man has free will?

When the question of free will arises, it is imperative that we define our terms very carefully. By "free" do we simply mean that we make real choices apart from external coercion, or do we mean that we can choose any theoretically possible option, without being necessarily constrained by our natural inclinations, prejudices, and desires? If we mean the former, then the term "free" is unnecessary and misleading, for real choice without external coercion is part of the very definition of "will". If I make any choice at all, I do so willingly, because it is what I want to do; I am not constrained from the outside, and therefore, I cannot say in my defense, "Something took control of my body and forced me to do what I didn't want to do— I'm not to blame!". No, whatever I have done, I have done willingly, and I am responsible to God for my actions.

But if we mean the latter, that we have the power to choose to do good or evil, to obey God or not to obey him, or at least to believe or disbelieve his gospel, as many people intend to suggest by the term "free will," then we are in direct contradiction to many scriptures. We are "free" to do what we want to do, but we are bound in what we want by our evil nature and desires. We may do as we please, but we cannot please as we please. We cannot use our will to shape our natures, but rather, our natures determine how we will use our wills. Thus, the bible says very often, and in many different ways, that we are utterly bound in sin. In our flesh, we cannot please God (Rom. 8:5-8), we cannot understand the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14; John 3:3, 10-13; 14:17), we cannot seek God (Rom. 3:11), we cannot believe in God (John 6:44, 65; 10:26; 12:37-41), we cannot do anything good at all (Job 15:14-16; Prov. 20:9; Jer 13:23; Rom. 3:10-18). We are utterly captive to sin (John 8:34; Rom. 6:20; Tit. 3:3), we are prisoners of the devil and constrained to do his desires (John 8:43-45, 2 Tim. 2:25-26; 1 John 5:19), every impulse of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil continually (Gen. 6:5), and so every action we perform, no matter how "good" we think it is, is actually evil, nothing but "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). Ever since the fall, we are not free to do anything good whatsoever; and we can only begin to do good as the Spirit gives us a new nature (Ezek. 36:26-27). We are only free when the Son sets us free (John 8:36).

John Calvin has very adeptly expressed these truths in his treatise on the Bondage and Liberation of the Will:

"...we allow that man has choice and that it is self-determined, so that if he does anything evil, it should be imputed to him and to his own voluntary choosing. We do away with coercion and force, because this contradicts the nature of the will and cannot coexist with it. We deny that choice is free, because through man's innate wickedness it is of necessity driven to what is evil and cannot seek anything but evil. And from this it is possible to deduce what a great difference there is between necessity and coercion. For we do not say that man is dragged unwillingly into sinning, but that because his will is corrupt he is held captive under the yoke of sin and therefore of necessity will in an evil way. For where there is bondage, there is necessity. But it makes a great difference whether the bondage is voluntary or coerced. We locate the necessity to sin precisely in corruption of the will, from which follows that it is self-determined." John Calvin from *Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, pg. 69-70

For Further Study:

Freedom/Bondage of the Will at Monergism.com

Eleven (11) Reasons to Reject Libertarian Free Will by John Hendryx

Monergism Copyright © 2008

Re: mans free will - posted by LoveHim, on: 2009/8/18 0:16

47. Does the bible teach that man has free will?

Oh no, not again. :-D

Count me out brother/sister.

But thanks be to God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ that we don't have to be Calvinists or Arminians, but merely Christians..

Take care friend. ;-)

Re: , on: 2009/8/18 0:24

i found this to be a very good answer. I am not a calvinist or arminian but i believe this a true answer that is true to the biblical text.

Re: - posted by rainydaygirl, on: 2009/8/18 0:25

What will posting this thread do but bring about yet another endless debate.

Jesus Christ is all that matters! The only name I want to be known by is Jesus!!!

with care
rdg

Re: - posted by LoveHim, on: 2009/8/18 0:37

i found this to be a very good answer. I am not a calvinist or arminian but i believe this a true answer that is true to the biblical text

Yeah I have no doubt that you do. All I am saying like rainydaygirl, is it will only lead to a Calvinist vs. Arminian debate. If you want to search that, there are probably at least 50 or more threads that debate this very subject.

That is all I was trying to say man.

Phil

Re: , on: 2009/8/18 0:38

We are free to choose good or to choose evil. We are free to obey our flesh or to obey God. Men are free to obey or disobey the knowledge that they have.

Some think that our flesh forces our will or that our nature determines our will. If that is true, how did Adam, Eve, and Lucifer sin? The Bible even says that homosexuals do that which is against nature. Your will is free to obey or disobey your nature. Our conscienc is part of our nature and our conscience tells us not to sin, yet many do anyways.

Free will is presupposed all throughout the Bible.

God repented of making mankind when He saw how wicked they had become. Why would He repent of making them when He saw them sinning unless He made them capable of not sinning? For forms us in the womb. Why wouldn't He form us with the ability to obey Him?

Every time the Bible talks about judgment, it presupposes free will. Why would God punish men for disobeying Him unless they were capable of obeying Him? It would be cruel and unjust to punish the lame for not walking! So also it would be cruel and unjust to punish men for disobedience unless they were capable of obedience.

Sodom and Gomorrah was punished? Why unless they had a free will? Nineveh was going to be punished but repented. How, unless they had a free will?

The Bible even says that God tested men to see if they would obey Him or not. Why do this unless it was possible for

them to obey?

Jesus rebuked the cities that did not repent. Why rebuke them unless it was possible for them to repent?

Stephen rebuked men for being uncircumcised in hearts and for resisting the Holy Spirit. Why rebuke them unless it was their choice and unless they could have chosen different??

The Early Church said, "only heretics deny free will" because all of the Church believed in free will and only the Gnostics denied it, until Augustine converted from Gnosticism and joined the Church and brought a lot of Gnosticism with him.

This was an article I recently read and greatly enjoyed:

(<http://www.injesus.com/index.php?modulemessage&taskview&MIDMB007GMP&GroupID0B0078JH&label&pagingall>)
Man's Ability To Obey God

Re: , on: 2009/8/18 0:39

Quote:

-----What will posting this thread do but bring about yet another endless debate.

I wish that SermonIndex would stop allowing Calvinism to be promoted so heavily on this website. It is very sad to see.

Re: , on: 2009/8/18 1:22

Not being a calvinist myself but seeing that this is true and biblical is all that matters , you might disagree but to me and many this is accurate of scripture. I would like to point out again like i have before just like calvinism and arminianism have their own interpretation on what scripture says so do we, so now we must stop talking about them because you say it causes division, but guess what anything that anybody says on here that is not referenced towards calvinism or arminianism and other doctrines can still cause disagreements and division no matter what way we look at it. Look i think the earth is young you think it is old , we can still post information on it if it is true to us and we think through our study that is true, even though we can not perfectly prove it. What i am trying to say is you have your own views you post on here from yourself not from some other teaching but your own personal belief on scripture and what not, and you our telling me that it is o.k to post those personal beliefs of yours even though everyone would disagree with you but because it is not a well known dispute it can be posted. I think it is hypocritical. Yes i posted something that is of a calvinist belief but i truly believe it is biblical and i did delete a quote from john calvin at the bottom of it so their would not be a big dispute but it still has been one. But this a true statement about our free will and i already had someone thank me for posting it. I am not defending calvinism or anything of the like but this my friend is what the bible teaches and i agree 100 percent with it. i am sorry if you our upset by it, i don't want to start disagreements but this site is full of everyone on here with their different beliefs and their our sermons of many of the same men who disagreed but it is all here for everyone to read or hear for possibly helping that someone in their walk with God. I know somebody it has already helped, but if we dislike what i have wrote or posted you simply just don't need to read it or go any farther than reading it. I don't know how much i disagree with some on this site with but sometimes you just have to say it is not worth arguing about. For some their our some true treasures in things on this site and for some this article might be one of them.

Re: , on: 2009/8/18 1:36

But i would like to apologize if i hurt anyone at all with this, this was not my intention. I do care and love you guys so i am very sorry if i have done so. Most that know me know i did not do that for the sake of pride, i know God would convict me about that.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2009/8/18 1:53

yes i am convinced scripture does teach free will, and i believe it also teaches God is sovereign at the same time, for one how could God keep you accountable for something you never could chose to begin with? how can he send men to hell if they never had the ability to chose how to live and what to do? i know these answers are not easy but i have found for myself we have a choice, but at the same time all good gifts come from the father, we can not take credit for any thing, we can not say i chose this and therefore i am worthy of salvation, but on the other hand we can not say " I can not repent or live for God since God has not granted me repentance" since God commanded all men to repent, and to me it seem a violation to Gods character to blaim him to command men to do that which they can not do and then throw them in hell because they never did what they never could.

God is love, and we should love God and man with all our heart, and love is always a free choice, you can not "force" love, you can not force or make a robot to love you, you can program a robot to love you, but that is not true love, true love comes from a free choice. If God would force us to love him, he could force us to always keep his commandments, he could force us to never sin, but he does not

why?

adam had free will, he had no sinful nature to blaim, the angels had free will, and God has free will, and we where created in his image.

to what % it works out, mans free will and Gods sovereignty i do not know, but some days I sense Gods sovereignty to a degree i stand in awe and amazement that we can breathe his holy air without dying on the spot polluting it without sinful bodies, other days i can almost weep due to the fact we dont chose him more in our lifes.

i know these are not scripture, but if we read the early church fathers, they write strongly about Gods sovergnity, they where strong believers in that, but also at the same time in mans free will. here are some quotations, its not an either or, even tho many say it is, scripture never says believe either or, we can reconcile these two seemingly opposites by Gods grace and a humble approach to scripture, God never reveal anything to those who are proud and already know it all.

"If a man were created evil, he would not deserve punishment, since he was not evil of himself, being unable to do anything else than what he was made for." Justin Martyr (First Apology Chap. 43)

"If anyone is truly religious, he is a man of God; but if he is irreligious, he is a man of the devil, made such, not by nature, but by his own choice." Ignatius (Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume One, p. 61)

"The ScripturesÂ...emphasize the freedom of the will. They condemn those who sin, and approve those who do rightÂ... We are responsible for being bad and worthy of being cast outside. For it is not the nature in us that is the cause of the evil; rather, it is the voluntary choice that works evil." Origen (A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 289,

"Those who do not do it will receive the just judgment of God, because they had not work good when they had it in their power to do so. But if some had been made by nature bad, and others good, these latter would not be deserving of praise for being good, for they were created that way. Nor would the former be reprehensible, for that is how they were made. However, all men are of the same nature. They are all able to hold fast and to do what is good. On the other hand, they have the power to cast good from them and not to do it." Irenaeus (A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs by David Bercot, p. 287,

Ignatius of Antioch-

If any one is truly religious, he is a man of God; but if he is irreligious, he is a man of the devil, made such, not by nature, but by his own choice.

Polycarp- c. 69 AD-c. 155 AD.

But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom... 13

Irenaeus- (ca. 130-202)

Men are Possessed of Free Will, and Endowed with the Faculty of Making a Choice. It is Not True, Therefore, that Some are by Nature Good, and Others Bad.

Man is Endowed with the Faculty of Distinguishing Good and Evil; So That, Without Compulsion, He Has the Power, by His Own Will and Choice, to Perform God's Commandments, by Doing Which He Avoids the Evils Prepared for the Rebellious.

Justin Martyr- c. 100/114AD – c. 162/168 AD.

Man acts by his own free will and not by fate.

We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishments, chastisements, and rewards are rendered according to the merit of each man's actions. Otherwise, if all things happen by fate, then nothing is in our own power. For if it be predestined that one man be good and another man evil, then the first is not deserving of praise or the other to be blamed. Unless humans have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions-whatever they may be.... For neither would a man be worthy of reward or praise if he did not of himself choose the good, but was merely created for that end. Likewise, if a man were evil, he would not deserve punishment, since he was not evil of himself, being unable to do anything else than what he was made for.

But that you may not have a pretext for saying that Christ must have been crucified, and that those who transgressed must have been among your nation, and that the matter could not have been otherwise, I said briefly by anticipation, that God, wishing men and angels to follow His will, resolved to create them free to do righteousness; possessing reason, that they may know by whom they are created, and through whom they, not existing formerly, do now exist; and with a law that they should be judged by Him, if they do anything contrary to right reason: and of ourselves we, men and angels, shall be convicted of having acted sinfully, unless we repent beforehand. But if the word of God foretells that some angels and men shall be certainly punished, it did so because it foreknew that they would be unchangeably, but not because God had created them so.

Clement of Alexandria (190 AD)

A man by himself working and toiling at freedom from sinful desires achieves nothing. But if he plainly shows himself to be very eager and earnest about this, he attains it by the addition of the power of God. God works together with willing souls. But if the person abandons his eagerness, the spirit from God is also restrained. To save the unwilling is the act of one using compulsion; but to save the willing, that of one showing grace.

Neither praise nor condemnation, neither rewards nor punishments, are right if the soul does not have the power of choice and avoidance, if evil is involuntary.

Archelaus (250-300 AD)

All the creatures that God made, He made very good. And He gave to every individual the sense of free will, by which standard He also instituted the law of judgment.... And certainly whoever will, may keep the commandments. Whoever despises them and turns aside to what is contrary to them, shall yet without doubt have to face this law of judgment.... There can be no doubt that every individual, in using his own proper power of will, may shape his course in whatever direction he pleases.

Methodius (260-315 AD)

Those who decide that man does not have free will, but say that he is governed by the unavoidable necessities of fate, are guilty of impiety toward God Himself, making Him out to be the cause and author of human evils.

these men are not scripture, but its interesting reading what the early church believed and thought since these men preserved scripture for us, how they also interpreted them, and they thought and read greek, they lived in the same culture as Jesus and in same time period, so some "weight" does their thoughts carry, i read another view once posted by brother

r TJ, from another perspective, i will try find it and we have a view from the other side as well for balance, even tho i dont agree with the article he posted, there was much to consider that i can not dismiss from scripture. Ill post it if i find it

Re: , on: 2009/8/18 2:24

Free will is the power of choice, the ability to choose between obedience and disobedience.

Quote:

-----yes i am convinced scripture does tech free will

Man's ability to obey God or disobey God is explicitly and implicitly taught in Scriptures like these:

“And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him” (Gen. 4:6-7);

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life” (Deut. 30:19);

“And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no” (Deut. 8:2);

“Choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Josh. 24:15);

“That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not” (Judges 2:22)

Re: - posted by Axe1338, on: 2009/8/18 10:21

Monergism & Synergism, Calvinism & Arminianism, are biblically parallel truth's. Although I lean more towards one side I believe both are true.

Re: , on: 2009/8/18 12:33

Hhhhhmmmm thanks for that post it is good to hear from the early church fathers. I think we have free will to but our free will now because we our lost and dead to sin and do the things of our flesh and we our blinded and our spiritual eyes our closed because of that. We only see the things as the world sees it and we love the things of the world, the things of God our foreign to us. Knowing that we our enemies of God by works we do not do anything still to change that. Our free will is to do what our sinful desires want and yes sometimes we make good decisions to do good and be nice and care about others but it is not like it would be in the fulness of the holy spirit, when we our lost we do things for selfish reasons most of the time or out of fear but not to serve God and love and not for the glory of God , we can't being lost our minds do not even think of him. Before you were saved did you care about the things of God and about living for gods glory, all of us should be saying no. We were dead in our sins and spiritually discerned. Our free will was to do whatever our sinful flesh desired, even if that meant good to some others. But we never were serving God. The question i think is that we think that we would have chosen God by our own free will, but we simply won't choose God unless God through holy spirit convicts and draws us to his son Jesus Christ and take the veil off our eyes. Has not that happened to you before in which you were once blind and then the veil was taken off of you because of the grace of God who did draws us as scripture says, nobody can come to Jesus unless the father draws him. That drawing is by the power of God, not by us and we know that. We have free will but like i said we were born sinners and our mothers womb we were born sinners, we do the things that our nature wants and that is not to live for God, it is still free will brothers and sisters because your doing it and choosing things but your nature is sinful and only desires and knows sin. When God saves you you our choosing still but you our listening and able to do because of the grace of God through his holy spirit, that is why it is all by his grace that we desire him and serve him and believe on him and thats why he gets all the glory. Look at all the lost around you do they desire to do the things of God by their own free will or could they care less. You have a misunderstanding what that article is saying, it is saying exactly what i just said but better.

Hey this is not to start another argument but doesn't david bercot believe in a works salvation, i was reading his book that you recommended and it seemed that he believed that, am i wrong?

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2009/8/18 13:03

Quote:
-----Monergism & Synergism, Calvinism & Arminianism, are biblically parallel truth's. Although I lean more towards one side I believe both are true.

Brother,

These systems of thought are mutually exclusive. It is impossible for both to be true.

With care in Christ,
Taylor

Re: - posted by Axe1338, on: 2009/8/18 14:16

Quote:
-----These systems of thought are mutually exclusive. It is impossible for both to be true.

The bible shows both clearly exist, for example Jesus says "no one comes to the father lest the spirit draw him" but Jesus also says "you will not come to me that you may have life." So is it up to God or us? Both.

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2009/8/18 15:46

Axe,

The Bible shows both what clearly exists? The fact that the Bible indicates that man has a responsibility to come to God, while also showing that nobody can come to God apart from the Spirit does not mean that Calvinism and Arminianism are both true. I could admit that it is theoretically possible for two generally contradicting systems to both share some elements of truth, while neither one is correct. But it is impossible for two systems which present contradictory statements to both be true in the same, full sense.

Based on our Lord's statement that no man can come to the Father lest the Spirit draws them, what can we conclude about those to whom Jesus says will not come to him? Well, we can conclude what the statement plainly says, that they do not desire to come to Jesus. Also, we can affirm the deeper, underlying reason why they won't come to Jesus, namely, that the Spirit has not drawn them.

With care in Christ,
Taylor

Re: , on: 2009/8/18 16:01

Quote:
-----Based on our Lord's statement that no man can come to the Father lest the Spirit draws them

I thought that this was a good explanation of how this verse is compatible with free will:

“No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:44

This passage must not be isolated or left alone because the following verse explains what it means. It is a sound principle of hermeneutics to allow the Bible to interpret itself. The context of a passage helps us to understand the passage itself. The following verse says, "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." John 6:45

How then are men drawn by the Father? Are men drawn by a constitutional change? No. Men are drawn by moral means. Coming to Christ is a choice of the will, therefore the means used to bring about this choice are means which respect and regard the will of man. Coming to Christ is a choice of the will; therefore God brings men to Christ by influencing their will. God teaches men and this is what influences men to come to Jesus. The drawing of God is through revelation. This is no doubt how the Apostle Paul was converted (Acts 9:4), by a revelation of Jesus Christ. The Father draws men to His Son, by granting them a revelation of His Son and what He has done for us on the cross. "And if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

If verse 44 was talking about a constitutional change, it could not be brought about by teaching as verse 45 says. Teaching has no tendency or ability to change the constitution of man. But if the drawing is brought about by teaching, as verse 45 says, then the drawing in verse 44 must be an influence upon the will of man. Truth influences the will and therefore teaching the truth has the ability to change the will of man.

I was pleased to find out that Albert Barnes also interpreted this passage the same way that I do. He said, "In the conversion of the sinner God enlightens the mind John 6:45, he inclines the will Psalms 110:3, and he influences the soul by motives, by just views of his law, by his love, his commands, and his threatenings; by a desire of happiness, and a consciousness of danger; by the Holy Spirit applying truth to the mind, and urging him to yield himself to the Saviour. So that, while God inclines him, and will have all the glory, man yields without compulsion; the obstacles are removed, and he becomes a willing servant of God." He goes on to say, "Shall be all taught of God - This explains the preceding verse. It is by the teaching of his Word and Spirit that men are drawn to God. This shows that it is not compulsory, and that there is no obstacle in the way but a strong voluntary ignorance and unwillingness."

Regarding man's natural ability, man is only able to obey the truth that he knows. If a man does not know about Jesus, he is not able to believe in Jesus or to follow Jesus. Natural ability is not the ability to obey truth that you do not know; natural ability is the ability to obey the truth that you do know. Natural ability is not the ability to do the impossible (obey what is not known) but it is the ability to do the possible (obey what is known). Natural ability is the ability to obey, or disobey, the light or revelation that has been revealed or given. This is clearly stated by the Apostle Paul, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). This shows, not only the necessity of open air preaching, but also the necessity for the work of the Spirit who takes the truth preached and presses it powerful upon the minds of men to influence their will to believe and call upon the Lord.

The point is that those who have not heard cannot believe, which explains why those who have not been taught by the Father cannot come to the Son. This perfectly explains why no man can come to the Son, unless He is drawn by the Father. Unless the Father first teaches sinners about His Son, they are not capable of believing in, coming to, or following the Son. And unless the Father first convicts men of their sin, they will not see their need of coming to the Savior. Teaching must always come before obedience. Knowledge, or truth, is a precondition or requisite for obedience. The will of man can only obey, or disobey, the knowledge that the mind has. Does man have the natural ability to believe in Jesus, whether they know about Jesus or not? The answer is of course not. Natural ability cannot do the impossible. But does man have the natural ability to believe in Jesus, come to Jesus, and follow Jesus, once the truth about Jesus is revealed to them? The answer is yes.

I would also quickly add that the mind operates under the law of necessity, but the will operates under the law of liberty. That is, the mind must affirm truth when it is presented, but the will can obey or disobey the truth that is affirmed by the mind. We see this with the crowd that Stephen preached to. "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:10). Their minds, by necessity, affirmed the truth of what he preached. Their minds could not resist it. But it goes on to say, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit, as your Fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). Their will operated under liberty. Their will disobeyed and resisted the truth that their minds affirmed. The revelation that God grants is irresistible. Men cannot help but to know the truth, when God reveals it. But sinners reject and suppress the truth that they have (Romans 1:18). Yet, according to John 6:45, those who not only hear the truth, but actually learn from it, come to Jesus Christ. Those who do not learn from what they hear from the Father will not come to the Son. But those who hear from the Father, and choose to learn from it, will come to the Son. Men resist or yield to the drawing of God by choosing to learn from, or not learn from, the teaching that He gives

them.

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2009/8/18 18:54

truefaithsav,

I agree, God uses means to draw us to Himself, and these include teaching, other believers, and a variety of other things. However, we must also keep in mind that the natural man cannot receive the things of God unless his eyes are opened by God and he is given ears to hear.

Seeking to grow in grace and knowledge with you,
Taylor

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2009/8/18 20:16

I understand my response is long, and have therefore recorded myself dictating it. For an audio version (.mp3) please PM me.

For almost six months I have avoided these discussions on SI, but it is truly a great sorrow on my soul to see such worldly wisdom being spouted forth to the shame of Christ's redemption. I have written the following with grief and love, and no striving spirit, for the hope that Christ might be glorified. Please receive it as such.

Perhaps we may see more clearly if we look at the subject of the will from a different vantage?

May I ask in all seriousness, does God have a free will? To what extent? Is God free to lie? Could He sin if He wanted to?

"But He will never want to!" you exclaim.

And why not? How are you so certain that God will never choose to deceive, lust, or in any other way to sin?

You know that God will never choose to sin because you have an almost innate understanding that all choices of the will flow out from the nature of a being. God's choices reflect His nature, and His nature is holy. It is not the will which decides anything; the will is only that which acts upon the behalf of one's judgment, which is rooted in the heart, or "nature". Again, God's nature is immutably holy, therefore He wills only ever to do that which concurs with His holy judgment and gratifies His holy nature. In the sense that God is unchanging, He **cannot will** to sin, simply because **His nature will never approve of it**. His will and all wills, act only within the bounds of the nature and judgment of the willful being.

Let us turn this lens upon mankind. Our above statements are confirmed in Jeremiah 17:9-10, when God refers to man's heart as the "reins", or that which guides and controls the direction of a creature. In the same passage, we read, "I the Lord search the heart," and what does He find? Man is not holy. In fact, his heart, the seat of all judgment, is called "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Of Adam's fallen race it is written, "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." It is to the heart, and not the will, which Jesus points when He says, "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

When a man's heart approves of sin more than obedience, his will immediately sets about to fulfill the judgment of the heart. The will of the being can only perform that which the judgment of the heart most approves at a given time. One may wrestle in his judgment between several options, but the moment he has judged, the will acts in service to the judgment. The judgment receives its values from the heart, or nature.

For this reason we must understand that though man's will is not in bondage to the external control of any other person, yet his will is subject to his own nature. If his nature, the seat of judgment and desire, is dominated by sin and is captivated by the deceitful enticements of Satan, that man can and will only choose to follow sin. He will do so willingly, and cont

inuously until he is somehow brought to judge obedience as being more heartily desirable.

The bible teaches that man's judgment will entertain numerous carnal options, but will consistently refuse that which is spiritual.

"The natural man **does not receive** the things of the Spirit of God: for **they are foolishness** unto him: **neither can he know them**, because they are spiritually discerned."

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men **loved darkness rather than light**, because their deeds were evil. For **every one** that doeth evil **hateth the light, neither cometh to the light**, lest his deeds should be proved." John 3:19-20

According to his fallen nature man does not come to the light. He cannot, simply because it disgusts him. His judgment disapproves of holiness, humility, and grace, when compared to the pleasures of sin for a season. He needs desperately to receive a new nature, but the nature of man is received only at the time of conception. Hence Jesus says in this passage that, "unless a man is born again, he **cannot see** the kingdom of heaven." In other words, natural man needs a new nature, coming from a spiritual birth, in order to have eyes to see, that is, judgment which approves of God's means of redemption.

This natural hardness of man is so great that Jesus makes the breathtaking statement, "**no man comes to me...**"

Though this self-wrought sinful bondage is alone enough to prevent man from coming to Christ in faith, he is doubly prevented by the deceit of the devil. So greatly does the devil deceive unregenerate man, that the bible uses language such as, "bondage", "captivity", and "slave" to describe the subjected relationship man has to the devil.

Paul tells Timothy to instruct opponents with meekness, "for **perhaps God will give them repentance** to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are **taken captive by him at his will**." The entire basis of Christian meekness is the understanding that God is free to change hearts, which results in changed behavior. Teachers do not need to be headstrong and coerce people into obedience, since God has freedom to transform the hearts of men.

Paul adds elsewhere, "The god of this world (the devil) has **blinded the minds of the unbelievers**, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God."

This is precisely why unregenerate men must first be given "new hearts."

"A **new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you**: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an **heart of flesh**. And I will put my Spirit within you, and **cause you to walk in my statutes**, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Note that until God gives a new heart, the person has a stony, rebellious one. While he is yet a dead cold stone, God makes him a new living creation and places an obedient spirit within him. God does not need to make man will anything - He needs only to change man's nature, and the will of the man begins to act according to the new system of judgement.

This new nature is granted through the spiritual birth of regeneration. Just as those born of Adam are sinful, so those born of the Spirit are begotten after His holy nature. And how does this begetting come? According to the analogy of birth, it comes by the sovereign conception of the parent - the will of God and not of man. Those who receive Christ do so because they are first "born, **not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God**." To the Christians, Paul writes, "You hath he regenerated, who were **dead in trespasses and sins...** were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ**, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that **not of yourselves**: it is the **gift of God**:

Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his **workmanship, created in Christ Jesus** unto good works."

Note, it is salvation itself which is the gift, not merely the "offer" of salvation. It is being re-created which Paul is rejoicing in, and not the opportunity of re-creating ourselves through human volition.

Again, it is not enough for bad trees to will to produce good fruit; they must become entirely different "good trees." "Bad trees **cannot** bear good fruit." Is there any better fruit than faith in Christ. Every man is naturally a bad tree, and cannot please God.

If this topic has been expired, perhaps you will allow me to close with this brief explanation of sovereign grace.

What's the idea behind Sovereign Grace?

In the beginning God made man upright, capable either of obeying the Lord or choosing to sin. God covenanted with Adam in the garden, promising him life if he would obey the commands of God, and eternal death if he would not. The Lord was free to make this arrangement, even as He made similar arrangements with the angels.

When Adam fell, so did all the race which he federally represented. For this reason Paul writes, "through the offense of one many be dead," speaking not of physical death but of spiritual death which brings damnation. All men have the guilt not only of their Head, but have inherited the sinful nature of Adam, and so run immediately to many wicked inventions.

No amount of external obedience to God's Law can resolve the debt of justice which hangs over man. No choice or action of itself can merit eternal life. Worse, natural man wants neither heavenly life nor hellish punishment, but only sin forever. If a way could be found to give men life, and that way required man to quit sin, he would not take it. It is foolishness to him.

God the Son, born of a virgin, made under the Law, came and fulfilled the obedience which God required under the first covenant, and thereby merited eternal life for Himself and those He federally represented. He bore their sins, even the sins of all who would believe, and rose to justify them. Now He sends forth the Spirit to regenerate the elect, so that having receives new eyes, new natures, new hearts, and new spirits, they receive Christ in the gospel. These are even those who simply believe the promise of the gospel, that as many as come to Him shall in no wise be cast out", who have forsaken the world to trust that on account of His obedience they are justified of all things. Their choice to believe is their own, but the heart to believe is from God.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

"We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Re: , on: 2009/8/19 0:26

If these verses do not teach that man's will is free to choose between obedience and disobedience, than nothing ever would!

"Behold I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God.... And a curse if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God...." Deut. 11:26-28

Man is free to choose between blessing and cursing, between obedience and disobedience.

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life..." Deut. 30:19

"I have set before you" means that it is our choice. God does not make the choice for us. God gives us the freedom to choose. "life and death, blessing and cursing" means that we have two options which we can "choose" between.

Man is free by nature. It is very clear in the Bible that we are capable of obedience or disobedience, that our will is free to choose between these two options. Free will is part of our nature and therefore we are naturally free to choose between obeying the Lord or disobeying the Lord.

Nobody is forced to disobey and nobody is forced to obey. But we are free to do either. Those who sin are capable of no

t sinning. Those who don't sin are capable of sinning. Those who are loyal to God are capable of rebelling. Those who have rebelled against God are capable of obeying. The disobedient are capable of obeying and the obedient are capable of disobedience. Our will is always free to choose between these two options.

If our nature necessitated our will, nobody would ever sin, because our conscience tells us not to! If our nature determines our will, nobody would be a homosexual because that is against human nature! If our nature necessitated our will, Adam and Eve and Lucifer would not have sinned! Our nature does not necessitate our will, but part of our nature is free will.

ADAM CLARKE SAID ABOUT THESE VERSES:

"Deu 11:26

Behold, I set before you - a blessing and a curse - If God had not put it in the power of this people either to obey or disobey; if they had not had a free will, over which they had complete authority, to use it either in the way of willing or nilling; could God, with any propriety, have given such precepts as these, sanctioned with such promises and threatenings? If they were not free agents, they could not be punished for disobedience, nor could they, in any sense of the word, have been rewardable for obedience. A Stone is not rewardable because, in obedience to the laws of gravitation, it always tends to the center; nor is it punishable because, in being removed from that center, in its tending or falling towards it again it takes away the life of a man.

That God has given man a free, self-determining Will, which cannot be forced by any power but that which is omnipotent, and which God himself never will force, is declared in the most formal manner through the whole of the sacred writings. No argument can affect this, while the Bible is considered as a Divine revelation; no sophistry can explain away its evidence, as long as the accountableness of man for his conduct is admitted, and as long as the eternal bounds of moral good and evil remain, and the essential distinctions between vice and virtue exist. If ye will obey, (for God is ever ready to assist), ye shall live; if ye will disobey and refuse that help, ye shall die. So hath Jehovah spoken, and man cannot reverse it." Adam Clarke

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2009/8/19 1:36

truefaithsav, please receive this with all kindness... SI is, amongst other things, a forum for discussion, which entails reading and interacting intelligently and honestly with the posts of others. It seems unlikely that you read the entirety of mine, which is fine; but please do not respond to or misrepresent the posts of myself or others without reading them in their entirety.

I wrote several times that man is **not ultimately compelled** by any external force to do other than what he chooses to do. The limiting factor upon his will is his own heart, that is, his nature, which is corrupt. In that sense, and that only, his will is limited from certain choices, just as God Himself can only will that which is in accord with His nature.

Instead of proof-texting, please interact with the particular verses I discussed. And, in order not to play the hypocrite, I will respond to the passage which you raised.

Deuteronomy 30 demonstrates that man has a moral responsibility to do certain things, but it does not infer that he has or will ever have a heart for such obedience. This is famously demonstrated by Martin Luther, in his explanation of the difference between Imperatives and Indicatives.

In the bible, imperative statements are commands to do one thing or another, without reference to the ability or willingness of the one commanded. An imperative expresses duty, but says nothing of ability, or lack thereof. For instance, Jesus told many persons to do things which, according to nature, were impossible. He said to a paralytic, "take up your bed and walk." The command did not imply natural ability. To many unregenerate Israelites, God said, "love the Lord your God with **all** your heart." Did this imply that they, in their fallen condition, had the moral wherewithal to fulfill the command? Of course not. **Imperatives are often used to expose inability**, not to convey any indication of positive capability. To quote Luther,

"The commandments are not given inappropriately or pointlessly; but in order that through them the proud, blind man may learn the plague of his impotence, should he try to do as he is commanded." pg. 160

"...'if thou art willing' is a verb in the subjunctive mood, which asserts nothing...a conditional statement asserts nothing in

dicatively." "if thou art willing", "if thou hear", "if thou do" declare, not man's ability, but his duty. pg 157

" not what we can do, or do do...but what we ought to do, and what is required of us, so that our impotence may be made known to us and the knowledge of sin may be given to us." 174

Again, Luther writes,

"The passages of Scripture you cite are imperative; and they prove and establish nothing about the ability of man, but only lay down what is and what not to be done." pg 161

" simply say: "if thou wilt turn", telling man what he should do. When he knows it, and sees that he cannot do it, he will ask whence he may find ability to do it..." 164

To infer an indicative sense upon what may be an imperative passage is to **upset all of biblical understanding**. For instance, one may, as you did, read 'Choose you this day whom you will serve,' and thereby infer that the word 'choose' indicates one's native ability to fulfill the command. However, if one uses such flawed exegetical methods consistently, he must also infer an indicative sense upon all other 'command' passages.

For example, 'Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart' would then become either an indicative of an impossible reality - namely, that all people who hear that command really do only love God perfectly in this life, thus making an untrue promise out of the command - or that we are morally capable, of in our fallen state, of loving God perfectly.

If we as unregenerate persons were capable of this perfect love apart from grace, then what need was there then for grace to come upon us at all? And if one says, "grace enables us just enough to choose for ourselves to do these things by our free will", then we deny the very freedom of that will, showing that it needed enabling in order to do right! If the will needed enabling, it was to the same degree disabled - NOT free!

Thank you for your time.

Re: , on: 2009/8/19 1:55

Quote:
-----If we as unregenerate persons were capable of this perfect love apart from grace, then what need was there then for grace to come upon us at all?

An unregenerate person is someone who's moral character is totally sinful, whose character has never been changed. They are someone who could obey God because they have a free will but they refuse to do so.

Grace is not a force that brings a constitutional change or a constitutional enabling. Grace is divine influence.

Those who could obey God, but don't obey God, are in need of God's grace to influence them.

At Creation, God made us capable of obeying Him.
At conversion, the Holy Spirit makes us willing to obey Him.

The Holy Spirit, and grace, do not make us capable of obeying God, but they make us willing to obey God.

The sinner's problem is not inability but unwillingness. Therefore the solution to this problem is not a constitutional change, but a moral change. The solution is not an irresistible force, but resistible influence.

Catherine Booth said, "God did not require to make any change in the make of us. A scheme of theology has been thrust upon mankind which implies that God must alter human nature in order to save it. I do not mean altering it in its moral quality - making it righteous instead of sinful - but altering its constitution, saving us not as men and women, having all the capacities, propensities, and affections of humanity; that we must, so to speak, be reorganized before God can save us."

ve us. If I understand the Gospel, it makes no such assumptions, and comes to us with no such requirements.Â”

H. O. Wiley said, "Regeneration is a moral change wrought in the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit. This change is neither physical nor intellectual, although both the body and the mind may be affected by it. It is not a change in the substance of the soul, nor is it the addition of any new powers. Regeneration is not a metamorphosis of human nature. Man does not receive a new ego. His personal identity is the same in essence after regeneration as before. He has the same power of intellect, feeling and will, but these are given a new direction. God does not undo in the new creation what He did in the first creation. The change is, therefore, not in the natural constitution of man, but in his moral and spiritual nature. Furthermore, it is important to believe that the whole man, and not merely certain powers of his being, is the subject of this spiritual renewal."

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2009/8/19 2:04

Many elements of the last post I do agree with, the primary difference being that I believe this change is effectual upon all whom it is wrought. The change is irresistible in so much as it overcomes that sinful obstinacy which would oppose it. None are half-regenerate, and no regenerate person ceases to have faith.

When Wiley says, "these are given a new direction," he seems to imply that within man is something deeper than intelligence, feeling, and will, which ultimately directs all of these. I would contend that this is the heart, which, throughout scripture, is aptly called "new" in regeneration.

As well, you wrote that grace does not enable, but rather influences. I would again say, if it **needs** to be influenced in order to do something, it is, for all practical purposes of language, disabled. Do any men come to God without grace? No. Out of billions, the fact that none come to God apart from His influence tells very much upon the fixed direction of their souls, and in what sense they cannot will to repent and believe.

Re: , on: 2009/8/19 2:23

I played a board game tonight with a group of people which, on my own, I never would have played. I am not into that kind of thing. But they influenced me to do it, so I did.

Could I have chosen to do it without their influence? Sure. I have the ability to choose that.

Would I have chosen to do it without their influence? No. I am not really interested.

It is not that I was not capable of doing it, but that I was not willing, and therefore I needed their influence. The problem was not my ability but with my will.

The same goes with a sinner. **Could** a sinner obey God without the Holy Spirit's influence? Sure, they have a free will. But **would** a sinner obey God without the Holy Spirit's influence? No. They are not interested. Therefore they need the help of the Holy Spirit to influence them.

It is not that sinners are not capable of obeying God but that sinners are not willing to obey God. Therefore they need the Holy Spirit to influence them into conversion. The sinners problem is not their ability, it is their will.

Re: - posted by whyme, on: 2009/8/19 10:31

trufaithsav,

please consider two passages that would seem to run counter to your positions that lack of belief is due to a lack of teaching and divine influence.

Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness, since what may be known about God is plain to them.

and,

John 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light.....

What I wonder about is why people who claim God doesn't force people to believe aren't going crazy when God says in His Word that the devil enslaves men and blinds them to the truth. Talk about external force. The reason for no objection is that whatever force the devil exerts does nothing to coerce a man because everyone really knows the nature of man is towards evil so it really isn't force when the man does what the devil wants because it is really what the man's own nature wants to do anyway.

Re: , on: 2009/8/19 17:15

Quote:
-----please consider two passages that would seem to run counter to your positions that lack of belief is due to a lack of teaching and divine influence.

Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness, since what may be known about God is plain to them.

and,

John 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light.....

A sinner is someone who disobeys the knowledge that they have, specifically the knowledge of the law (John 9:41; Romans 1:19-21; James 4:17). Being a sinner is not a passive state, it is an active state. Sinfulness is not an involuntary state of our nature which we are helplessly born into. Sinfulness is a voluntary state of our will which we have all deliberately decided to have, by disobeying the natural knowledge we have of God's moral law. Sinfulness is a selfish state if mind, which is contrary to the demands of the conscience.

A Christian is someone who has been brought to repentance by the truth of the Gospel (Romans 2:4, 6:17; 1 John 4:19), they are someone who obeys the knowledge of the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17). A Christian both believes and obeys the truth with all of their heart.

A reprobate is someone who has fully and continually disobeyed and rejected the knowledge of the law and the knowledge of the Gospel, someone who has rejected a great deal of light (Hebrews 6:4-6). The reason that a person who has rejected a great deal of light is reprobated is because it is the light that God uses as a means to bring us to repentance. If a person resists all the light that God uses to bring men to repentance then their cause is hopeless, their salvation is impossible. God wisely gives up on them, for why should He waste His time and energy anymore, and thus they are reprobated. God can do nothing more to save them. They have reprobated themselves by hardening their heart so much against the truth, and God has reprobated them by ceasing to draw them through the increase and influence of the truth. They resist the truth and therefore God gives them over to a delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). They resist the "truth", through which they "might be saved", and are therefore hopeless and abandoned.

Quote:
-----teaching and divine influence

God brings sinners to repentance and faith through the divine influence of teaching. Regeneration is through the divine i

nfluence of revelation.

The Holy Spirit presents the truths of sin and the Savior to the mind of man, and these truths are what influences man to change his ways and follow Jesus Christ.

“Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he TEACH sinners in the way.” (Psalms 25:8);

“Then will I TEACH transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be CONVERTED unto thee.” (Psalms 51:13);

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all TAUGHT of God. Everyman therefore that hath HEARD, and hath LEARNED of the Father, cometh unto me.” (John 6:44-45);

“And ye shall KNOW the TRUTH, and the TRUTH shall make you FREE.” (John 8:32);

“Now ye are CLEANE THROUGH THE WORD which I have SPOKEN unto you.” (John 15:3);

“SANCTIFY them THROUGH THY TRUTH: thy WORD is TRUTH.” (John 17:17);

“For though ye have ten thousand INSTRUCTORS in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have BEGOTTEN you through the GOSPEL.” (1 Corinthians 4:15);

“For the grace of God that BRINGETH SALVATION has APPEARED unto all men, TEACHING US that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” (Titus 2:11-12);

“Of his own will BEGAT he us WITH THE WORD OF TRUTH, that we should be a king of firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:18);

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted WORD, WHICH IS ABLE TO SAVE YOUR SOULS. But be ye DOERS OF THE WORD, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” (James 1:21-22);

“Seeing ye have PURIFIED your souls in OBEYING THE TRUTH through the Spirit. Being BORN AGAIN, not of corruptible seed, but of the incorruptible, BY THE WORD OF GOD, which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Peter 1:22-23);

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 2:20);

Regeneration is through revelation. Transformation is through the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2). This is precisely why we must be full of the Holy Spirit to effectively preach the Gospel (Luke 24:47-49), and why preaching the Gospel is so important (Romans 10:14), because it is the precious truths of the Gospel that the Holy Spirit uses to bring sinners to repentance. “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19). “Show thy marvelous loving-kindness, O thou that savest” (Ps. 17:7). “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). It is a revelation of Jesus Christ, and what He has done for us, that turns the unwilling into the willing, that turns the rebellious into the submissive and obedient. The strongest moral influence that could ever be exerted upon the will of man is when the revelation of Jesus Christ, and what He has done for us, is presented to the mind of man. Truth presented to the mind influences the will. Regeneration is when the Holy Spirit brings men to repentance and faith through the means of the truth of the Gospel.

Quote:

-----God doesn't force people to believe

Romans 6:17 says that we are saved by choice.

2 Corinthians 5:20 says it is our choice to be saved.

1 Peter 1:22-23 says that we are saved by choice.

Jesus clearly assumed man's ability to repent of their sins:

"Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not." Matt. 11:20

Re: - posted by Koheleth, on: 2009/8/19 17:19

Michael, I want to respond later to your first thorough post after I have read it through, but I think I can easily refute your view that there are imperative and indicative commands. Simply that it is not in keeping with the character of Christ or the Christian purpose.

Calvinism with its complicated theological system will never allow a person to become as a little child and enter the kingdom of heaven. Do you think Peter the fisherman understood the difference between imperative and indicative? No, Peter was a disciple, he was interested in serving, worshipping, being sanctified and used by the Master. There was no time for complex theology.

And so, without any complex arguments of my own, I simply say that Calvinism is opposed to the lives and spirits of many of the greatest saints, in that it would exclude them. Yes, there are hundreds of great saints, just to name Spurgeon as one, who could understand the system and teach on it, but Christianity is not nearly so proprietary as to demand exacting definitions or the educational equivalent of what the scribes and Pharisees had to experience. Calvinism makes the same theological demands on the average godly person that they attempted to, and in doing so it wrongly adds to God's word.

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2009/8/19 19:29

Koheleth, thank you for your time.

Koheleth wrote,

"Calvinism with its complicated theological system will never allow a person to become as a little child and enter the kingdom of heaven."

We differ in what sense one must be "as a little child." The passage to which you refer presents the disciples arguing about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom; in contrast to their pretentious assumptions, Christ draws attention to the apparent unimportance of a nameless child, as becoming God's servants. The sense in which we must "become as little children" is not that we forfeit intelligence, but that we must own ourselves as insignificant dependents!

Contrary to your view, Paul requires Timothy to continue earnestly in his studies of the scriptures. Apparently years of ministry alongside the premier Apostle had not resolved all of what could be learned and taught for Timothy.

Moreover, neither I nor any other historic Predestinarian will say that one needs to understand the finest doctrinal minutiae to be saved; a sinner needs only to believe that all his running and willing are of themselves insufficient - even bloody rags - to appease God's Lawful wrath, and that through faith in Christ's redemption he may be counted righteous with the imputed obedience of Jesus. He must only know to look away from his will, and to the work of Christ on the cross!

Koheleth also wrote,

"Do you think Peter the fisherman understood the difference between imperative and indicative?"

Yes, I do believe Peter understood the difference, just like you and every sensible person does. Whether or not Peter knew the Greek equivalent terms of "imperative" and "indicative" makes little difference; when Simon-Peter told the beggar at the gate to stretch forth his hand, the apostle knew a miracle was needed for the duty to be accomplished. He commanded something which was, for that man, humanly impossible. So yes, all reasonable persons, including Peter, understand that duty must not always imply ability, but that indicative commands are often a means of revealing inability.

For several years I was a manager over complicated water systems. During this time I often taught new employees certain tasks. If I saw one recklessly going ahead of my instructions, I would say, "The next step should be such-and-such. Now, do that." The heedless worker would soon realize that he could not continue, because he had botched several earlier steps which were necessary to proceed. Now, I did not tell him to perform that next step because I thought it was possible at that point for him to do it; I was reminding him that he had a job to do which he could not do without my assistance. I contend that the same is true in many portions of scripture.

Koheleth wrote,

"Peter was a disciple, he was interested in serving, worshiping, being sanctified and used by the Master. There was no time for complex theology."

It sounds as if your idea of a "disciple" lacks any discipline in that portion of the command, "love the Lord your God with... all your mind." What may seem complex to you is apparently not so difficult amongst many children which attend our local fellowship, who have memorized portions of the various orthodox creeds and confessions, who can explain from the scriptures the very subjects we are discussing. It is not becoming of Christians to minimize the expectations of discipleship to exclude careful exegesis and thought.

I would argue that the greatest difficulty in understanding the Predestinarian model of sovereign grace in salvation, is trying to square it with twenty or more years of carnal reasoning which posits Man's Will is the center of all that revolves.

As for your statement "no time... interested in serving, worshiping, being sanctified and used by the Master," this is a false dichotomy (read: separation) between study and sanctification or worship. There is room enough in the boat of Christian living to carry on study without jettisoning practical devotion. In fact, your view seems to encourage going to sea with all sails and no anchor. It is enough to say that virtually all the men held in greatest esteem for their service to Christ, of various stripes and stains, are united against such misguided phobia of comprehensive learning, and so, if we must brandish our opinions, I will demure to balance yours with theirs.

Koheleth wrote,

"Calvinism is opposed to the lives and spirits of many of the greatest saints"

And belief in the sovereign grace of God was likewise the blessed boon of many others, which proves nothing. Please interact with the cited scriptures.

Koheleth wrote,

"Christianity is not nearly so proprietary as to demand exacting definitions or the educational equivalent of what the scribes and Pharisees had to experience."

I have no formal education in any of these subjects, and have walked with Christ in truth for less than four years. Excluding the bible, I read an average of less than an hour a day. What some persons must be doing with their time, who are able to memorize thousands of other points of interest, and yet be incapable of learning a handful of doctrinal distinctions, is beyond me.

Christ and His Church are worth a little study.

PS: If you would like an .mp3 of myself and a brother preaching the gospel on the streets, I will send the link to you. I wouldn't want anyone to suppose I was locked in an ivory tower! ;-)

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2009/8/19 19:58

Just adding to thread...

Not everyone finds the doctrines of grace difficult to understand. I would say on a personal level they are much harder to accept than understand. One does not need to be able to fully articulate the deeper intricacies of the doctrines of grace to be a Christian. Some are simply not called, gifted, or even interested in theological concepts. This does not necessarily mean that someone would/does not believe or accept them.

For years I attempted to twist and turn scriptures every way I could in order to make sense of the topics surrounding the doctrines of grace that opposed all I had been taught as a child. I finally cried out to God. I told Him I was done trying to understand and would simply read His Word and leave all the "understanding" and "theology" to Him.

It was when I approached the Word with this simple child like reasoning that it all began to make sense. The Bible came alive all over again. It was like reading it for the first time.

Through the clarity of hindsight I now see that understanding was not nearly as much of an issue as was simply laying down my misguided presuppositions and accepting the fact that I had wrong knowledge about certain concepts. I asked God to break me and reconstruct me into a vessel He could fill with whatever knowledge He wanted.

I would be telling a lie if I did not admit to seeing the doctrines of grace throughout the entirety of the Bible. What was once fuzzy is now shockingly clear. I believe the doctrines of grace are simple to understand if presented clearly. I also believe the problem most often lies in accepting ideas and constructs that are opposed to our modern presuppositions. This is why Peter had no problem accepting a truly and completely sovereign God.

Re: - posted by Koheleth, on: 2009/8/19 23:29

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

We differ in what sense one must be "as a little child." The passage to which you refer presents the disciples arguing about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom; in contrast to their pretentious assumptions, Christ draws attention to the apparent unimportance of a nameless child, as becoming God's servants. The sense in which we must "become as little children" is not that we forfeit intelligence, but that we must own ourselves as insignificant dependents!

We have made no progress since I do not see that Jesus' point in the passage was that we confess we are insignificant dependents. I think his point was otherwise. And being as little children has nothing to do with forfeiting intelligence. Adults make things complex. Children usually operate by simple rules. Jesus said, "whoever humbles himself as this child."

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

Contrary to your view, Paul requires Timothy to continue earnestly in his studies of the scriptures. Apparently years of ministry alongside the premier Apostle had not resolved all of what could be learned and taught for Timothy.

Why is being alongside Paul relevant if it is God who does the work? Sounds like contradiction.

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

Moreover, neither I nor any other historic Predestinarian will say that one needs to understand the finest doctrinal minutiae to be saved; a sinner needs only to believe that all his running and willing are of themselves insufficient - even bloody rags - to appease God's Lawful wrath, and that through faith in Christ's redemption he may be counted righteous with the imputed obedience of Jesus. He must only know to look away from his will, and to the work of Christ on the cross!

This does not sound any different from the general view of salvation that anyone presents, so all is well and I agree. No distinctives here.

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

Koheleth also wrote,

"Do you think Peter the fisherman understood the difference between imperative and indicative?"

Yes, I do believe Peter understood the difference, just like you and every sensible person does. Whether or not Peter knew the Greek equivalent terms of "imperative" and "indicative" makes little difference; when Simon-Peter told the beggar at the gate to stretch forth his hand, the apostle knew a miracle was needed for the duty to be accomplished. He commanded something which was, for that man, humanly impossible. So yes, all reasonable persons, including Peter, understand that duty must not always imply ability, but that indicative commands are often a means of revealing inability.

We disagree here. I believe all commands in Scripture are given because God expects to be obeyed. Fully (and simply) expects man to respond to his Creator. Nothing else added or explained. I believe Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." But your system has Jesus say, "If you love me, keep my indicative commandments and not my imperative ones." All of a sudden, God no longer gives commands to be obeyed, but there are two classes of commandments. Please offer a Scripture lesson that clearly teaches this.

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

Koheleth wrote,

"Peter was a disciple, he was interested in serving, worshiping, being sanctified and used by the Master. There was no time for complex theology."

It sounds as if your idea of a "disciple" lacks any discipline in that portion of the command, "love the Lord your God with...all your mind." What may seem complex to you is apparently not so difficult amongst many children which attend our local fellowship, who have memorized portions of the various orthodox creeds and confessions, who can explain from the scriptures the very subjects we are discussing. It is not becoming of Christians to minimize the expectations of discipleship to exclude careful exegesis and thought.

Fine enough then. I love God and Christ and the Scriptures, and my life has been transformed! I have a new heart and my current life is a contrast of white to what once was black. However, your system would indicate I am a neglectful disciple because I do not receive or understand your doctrines. In fact, ultimately because God has not worked in my life so that I understand the Calvinist theological system, you could conclude I do not have any work of the Spirit. Where is evidence that God is at work in my life if I do not even understand the Scriptures? I do believe Calvinists are hard-pressed to demonstrate they do not relegate all other Christians to second-class citizens. I find it to be an elitist doctrinal group.

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

I would argue that the greatest difficulty in understanding the Predestinarian model of sovereign grace in salvation, is trying to square it with twenty or

more years of carnal reasoning which posits Man's Will is the center of all that revolves.

You seem to be implying here, again, that those who disagree with you are in "carnal reasoning". You admit no work of a new life or a new understanding on their part. They simply "do not understand the doctrines of grace". They are not as enlightened as yourself. As you said in the prior post, all that disagrees with you is "worldly wisdom". These are the terms you have used. It does not seem to me that the doctrines of grace have much grace in them.

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

As for your statement "no time... interested in serving, worshiping, being sanctified and used by the Master," this is a false dichotomy (read: separation) between study and sanctification or worship. There is room enough in the boat of Christian living to carry on study without jettisoning practical devotion. In fact, your view seems to encourage going to sea with all sails and no anchor. It is enough to say that virtually all the men held in greatest esteem for their service to Christ, of various stripes and stains, are united against such misguided phobia of comprehensive learning, and so, if we must brandish our opinions, I will demure to balance yours with theirs.

I believe you misunderstood the purpose of my remarks. The Scriptures leave us with no lengthy theological treatises such as are standard fare from Calvinists. In fact, from reading the New Testament, one might almost think that the "ploughboy" could read and comprehend God's message. Calvinism contradicts this perspective.

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

Koheleth wrote,

"Calvinism is opposed to the lives and spirits of many of the greatest saints"

And belief in the sovereign grace of God was likewise the blessed boon of many others, which proves nothing. Please interact with the cited scriptures.

Fine enough and agreed. I will address this point at a later date.

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

Koheleth wrote,

"Christianity is not nearly so proprietary as to demand exacting definitions or the educational equivalent of what the scribes and Pharisees had to experience."

I have no formal education in any of these subjects, and have walked with Christ in truth for less than four years. Excluding the bible, I read an average of less than an hour a day. What some persons must be doing with their time, who are able to memorize thousands of other points of interest, and yet be incapable of learning a handful of doctrinal distinctions, is beyond me.

Christ and His Church are worth a little study.

The arrogant elitism of Calvinism is nowhere more apparent than to label those who do not agree with you as "incapable of learning a handful of doctrinal distinctions". The very fact that others disagree with you and are able to cite an array of Scriptures for their position demonstrates they have made many doctrinal distinctions. But again, if they are "incapable" of learning doctrinal distinctions, this means under Calvinism that God has not regenerated them, since all unregenerate

s are incapable, and so we see again that Calvinism ultimately damns those who disagree with its complicated theological system.

Do you know of anyone who thinks of Jesus as a theologian? Paul maybe, but he is not the ultimate example. The Lord is the example.

Re: - posted by Koheleth, on: 2009/8/19 23:51

This is an earlier post that I am responding to later. Sorry if this is confusing.

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

For almost six months I have avoided these discussions on SI, but it is truly a great sorrow on my soul to see such worldly wisdom being spouted forth to the shame of Christ's redemption. I have written the following with grief and love, and no striving spirit, for the hope that Christ might be glorified. Please receive it as such.

I wish your grief and love would have prevented you from saying that those who disagree with you are "spouting forth to the shame of Christ's redemption."

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

May I ask in all seriousness, does God have a free will? To what extent? Is God free to lie? Could He sin if He wanted to?

"But He will never want to!" you exclaim.

And why not? How are you so certain that God will never choose to deceive, lust, or in any other way to sin?

You know that God will never choose to sin because you have an almost innate understanding that all choices of the will flow out from the nature of a being. God's choices reflect His nature, and His nature is holy.

This is a very incomplete argument. How do you know that God's own moral limits are due to his nature and not his omnipotence? Or similarly his foreknowledge? Or another factor?

I will skip the next many paragraphs because they build on this premise of "nature", which has not yet been established.

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

Paul adds elsewhere, "The god of this world (the devil) has **blinded the minds of the unbelievers**, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God."

This is precisely why unregenerate men must first be given "new hearts."

That position does not make sense. Why would the devil have to blind the eyes of those who cannot see and are incapable of seeing?

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

"A **new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you**: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an **heart of flesh**. And I will put my Spirit within you, and **cause you to walk in my statutes**, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Note that until God gives a new heart, the person has a stony, rebellious one. While he is yet a dead cold stone, God makes him a new living creation and places an obedient spirit within him. God does not need to make man will anything - He needs only to change man's nature, and the will of the man begins to act according to the new system of judgement.

Do you know to whom this Scripture was spoken?

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

Note, it is salvation itself which is the gift, not merely the "offer" of salvation. It is being re-created which Paul is rejoicing in, and not the opportunity of re-creating ourselves through human volition.

Just because we do not follow Calvin does not mean that you should imply there is any general teaching of salvation or regeneration by human volition. God does all of the saving and sanctifying. We just disagree on why and how he does it. But he does it.

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

Again, it is not enough for bad trees to will to produce good fruit; they must become entirely different "good trees." "Bad trees **cannot** bear good fruit." Is there any better fruit than faith in Christ. Every man is naturally a bad tree, and cannot please God.

Seems like a tough position for a Calvinist to take! So Christians are good trees? Why do Calvinists, at least the ones I have met, say that a believer is going to sin and have sin in his or her life until the day they die? Don't they have a new nature according to your teaching? Or has God's regenerating work failed? If they are good trees now, they should only produce good fruit. There must be no fruit like what comes from bad trees. Is Calvinism able to explain this point?

Quote:

theopenlife wrote:

In the beginning God made man upright, capable either of obeying the Lord or choosing to sin. God covenanted with Adam in the garden, promising him life if he would obey the commands of God, and eternal death if he would not. The Lord was free to make this arrangement, even as He made similar arrangements with the angels.

Calvinism teaches that the fall of man was ordained from the foundation of the world, before Adam was created. So Adam did not have this free choice that you state.

You say "God covenanted with Adam". Where does it say this?

Can you show where God made similar arrangements with the angels. I hate to call out minor points, but am not sure why you are saying all of these things. It sounds like more of the theological system. Does it have much to do with Scripture?
?

Re: , on: 2009/8/21 0:15

tjservant i would like to say that your statement was a wonderful statement and the best i have heard. Thank you for posting that. I am not taking away from what anyone said but that was beautiful.

Re: , on: 2009/8/21 2:03

When God spoke to Cain, after the fall of Adam, he certainly spoke to him as if he had a free will:

“And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him” (Gen. 4:6-7)

Cain murdered his brother. It wasn't Satan who made him do it. It wasn't his nature that made him do it. It was his father Adam who made him do it. And it certainly wasn't God who made him do it. It was Cain's own fault because it was Cain's own free choice.

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2009/8/21 2:08

Koheleth, we seem to be talking past one another at this point. I would rather us not appear to strive in this setting. I have said what I originally intended to say and will refrain from going on (as we could both carry this for ten more pages). If you or anyone would like to continue this in PMs, that might be more appropriate. Thank you.