

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Calvinism - free will

Calvinism - free will, on: 2005/3/30 13:02

I did not write this article and do not know who did.

I am posting this for discussion and if you disagree with it do not kill me.

Calvinism's first point speaks to the total depravity of man. Arminianism counters: although we are born as sinners, mankind is given "a divine spark" that enables us to respond positively to God. The Bible clearly teaches that mankind is not basically good, but rather in bondage to sin (Romans 6:6-20) and therefore we are all wretched sinners who truly don't seek after God, making us worthy of death (Romans 3:10-12, 23 and Romans 6:23). There is no doubt that humans are fallen creatures, separated from God by our sin (Genesis 2:15-17, Genesis chapter 3, and Isaiah 59:2). But does this mean we are so depraved to the point of being unable to respond to God at all?

Calvin's definition of total depravity was in regard to mankind's relationship toward a Holy God and not to be considered the same on a human level. His view states that mankind is not totally evil, because we can temporarily do good on a human level, "that everything which is in man, from the intellect to the will, from the soul even to the flesh, is defiled and pervaded with this concupiscence; or, to express it more briefly, that the whole man is in himself nothing else than concupiscence" (Institutes of Christian Religion, Book 2, Chapter 1, Section 8). Concupiscence means a bent desire toward the forbidden, most specifically in the area of lust.

Calvin's definition was just another way of expressing "original sin" (Psalm 51:5 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). Although, we do not inherit anyone's sin (Ezekiel 18:20), we do sin after being tempted and then carried away, enticed by our own lusts (James 1:13-15). The unwillingness of the humanist in mankind to acknowledge his crime of sin and its destructive consequences is why people most readily blame God for bad things when they happen. Only the one who accepts their responsibility for their sin under the conviction of the Holy Spirit has the hope of repenting to receive God's gracious gift of forgiveness.

However, Calvin extended the Bible's definition of our corrupt nature beyond the context, to say we have no ability to respond at all to God of our own free will. Romans 1:18-32 is often used as the proof text for Calvin's claim of total depravity. Yet, neither this passage, nor any other passage in the Bible, ever actually defines a human inability to respond to God. Romans chapter one is speaking about human accountability through the knowledge of God through His creation, to point out that all humanity is without an excuse when God's judgment comes. The idea that humans have no ability to freely choose means that God would have to force Himself upon us, which would bring His righteousness seriously into question, as it would be selective and deny our true free will. Also, human accountability and judgment of sin for those condemned to an eternity in Hell would add to the case for questioning God's righteousness, if indeed we never really had a choice to decide our future, because we had been created without the ability to choose to respond.

The true fallen human condition of our not seeking after and being separated from God (Romans 3:10-12 and Isaiah 59:2) should not be confused with and our ability "to respond to God via free will choice", as if they were one and the same. This is where Calvin erred in his thinking and it is further dispelled when we look at other verses that point this out.

"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil" (Job 1:1). "Then the LORD said to Noah, 'Enter the ark, you and all your household; for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time'" - Genesis 7:1.

Able chose to bring the proper offering before God and Cain did not (Genesis 4:2). Joshua chose to serve God and called upon Israel to do the same (Joshua 24:15). Unlike his son King Solomon, King David was a man after God's own heart (1 Kings 11:4). Total depravity cannot be supported and is actually refuted by the whole of Scripture. This is why it is important to carefully study God's authoritative word, allowing it to speak for itself, and be extremely cautious about being influenced by human opinions that often use partial Scripture to "tell us about what God meant".

Calvin described the human response to "God's irresistible grace" as a mystery, because he planted his thinking incorrectly in the foundational idea that humans are unable to respond to God. Calvin thought that a human response would mean that we could take credit, or partial glory, for the act of receiving God's gift of grace. However, the following should dispel Calvinists' confusion about this and demonstrate that there is no mystery involved because God's word tells

us precisely how it all works.

Most assuredly, God will receive all the glory for those who are saved, but it will be on account of the fact that we never really deserved to be offered such amazing grace to be forgiven by such a Holy Being in the first place. Choosing to receive (or respond to) His gift of grace is our choice and privilege, but never something we could realistically take any credit for. It would be like a murderer on death row, about to be executed, taking credit for an undeserved, last minute pardon from the Governor; it's a logical absurdity. Just as the prisoner accepts the pardon, so do all the elect accept the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11), which is entirely to God's credit. For the elect are urged by the conviction of the Holy Spirit to ask for and receive Christ's pardon for their sin. God seeks us out and God does all the "work" (the transforming miracle) of saving (or birthing – John 3:3) the soul (John 1:12-13) from death into a new spiritual creature of life (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

Furthermore, it is to God's glory, because God wrote both His Law (Romans 2:15) and eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11) on the human heart, implanting within us the necessary understanding to respond to the Holy Spirit's conviction. In other words, deep down we know right from wrong and that we will live forever. This dual fact of God's implanted revelation makes all human beings fully accountable as well. Added understanding from God has been imparted as well,

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged (a choice) the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures..." (Roman 1:18-32).

To God be all the glory, indeed, but not on the basis of some unscriptural concept of "the 'total' depravity of mankind". Now, if this was what the Arminians meant by the vaguely defined term "a divine spark", then they would have been correct. So, God seeks out the human race and attempts to draw us to Himself through the conviction of His Spirit, at which point we choose to either respond to or reject His calling.

Apparently, Calvin had trouble fully understanding the wondrous character of God, and over-emphasized (or perhaps "over-protected") God's sovereignty to the point of missing the balancing influence of God's righteousness. How could God be righteous and just, to create humans totally depraved, with no hope at all (no real choice in the matter), and then select out only a small minority of them (Matthew 7:13-14) to be saved, while condemning the rest to an unspeakable eternal torment in Hell? Although the elect would be very grateful, there would always be the nagging questions of why me, why so few, how is it right for me to be in heaven and my mother to be in Hell, for example, if no real human choice was involved? But much worse than all this, it would make God out to be untrue, because it would directly contradict the statement by the Apostle Peter, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Any attempt to twist the actual meaning of "all" in this verse, to be only "a reference to the elect", fails because a sovereign God choosing for us would beg the question: then for whom does God need to be patient, if He is the only one making the decision? If it's God who sovereignly chooses who is saved for Heaven, and who is going to Hell, and we have no real choice in the matter, then God would become a twisted, psychotic liar by Peter's statement. Additionally, the very definition of repentance means to change one's mind and turn away from evil. Why are we called upon to repent if we truly have no power to choose in the first place? It's a logical contradiction that Calvinists have no scriptural answer to resolve. God does not arbitrarily consign some people to eternal damnation; it is their willful rejection of God's salvation makes them responsible, which explains why God actually is patient toward humans and truly doesn't wish for a ny to perish.

Re: Calvinism - free will - posted by dann (), on: 2005/3/30 13:39

Quote:
-----The idea that humans have no ability to freely choose means that God would have to force Himself upon us ... as it would ... deny our true free will

The Calvinist says that when God hardened Pharoah's heart, He did so without compromising Pharoah's free will - that is, that even though God hardened Pharoah's heart, God did not do so in a way that manipulated or otherwise interfered with Pharoah's will. Pharoah freely chose to harden his own heart (and therefore it is Pharoah's sin and not God's) - but did so in exact accordance with God's predetermined will.

Dan
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Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/3/30 17:11

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I don't think all Calvinists believe this the way you have said it, otherwise the debate would not have been so heated.

Re: Calvinism - free will - posted by Corneliu (), on: 2005/3/30 19:08

I do not endorse armenianism, but I like the article. It describes the problem about the Calvinistic model of thinking: humans have no responsibility prior to be saved, and that can lead to: no fault in humans.

I believe the Bible teaches responsibility:

- "do not harden your heart"
- "endure to the end"
- "examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith" (and if we do what can we do about? while a calvinist)
- "repent"
- "if you live according to the flesh, you shall die" (this is about the eternal life and death - and it does not look like once saved always saved from our perspective)

There are a lot more that could be said, but I see that the whole Bible points to responsibility and retribution, from the first pages (Adam and Eve) to the last (Rev 22:14 "Blessed are they that do His commandments... they may enter into the city" and v.19 "If anyone takes away from the Words... God will take away his part out of the Book of Life")

Re: Calvinism - free will - posted by kirindor (), on: 2005/3/30 23:42

Hi All,

I will admit that I am an un-reconstructed Calvinist, with strong Puritan overtones, so this question of Free Will is one that I have thought on at length.

I recommend, for anyone willing to do the hard work, Jonathan Edwards book "Freedom of the Will." I know that it is hard reading. Also, his book "Original Sin" is excellent, and I supposed that you could use it defend the "T" in "TULIP." Though, I have never really thought of it that way.

Jonathan Edwards arguments in "Freedom of the Will" are very powerful and difficult to overcome. I think that he proves his point quite effectively, and to my knowledge, I do not believe that any Arminian theologian has ever refuted his arguments.

In Christ,
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Re: Calvinism - free will - posted by Spitfire, on: 2005/3/31 6:31

Quote:
-----The idea that humans have no ability to freely choose means that God would have to force Himself upon us, which would bring His righteousness seriously into question, as it would be selective and deny our true free will. Also, human accountability and judgment of sin for those condemned to an eternity in Hell would add to the case for questioning God's righteousness, if indeed we never really had a choice to decide our future, because we had been created without the ability to choose to respond.

Since you posted this purely for discussion, I would like to say something, particularly on this segment here. I'm speaking from my own personal experience having been someone who so strongly believed in "free will" that I would become angry when somebody tried to convince me of "total depravity". This is my point: the idea that God, our creator, doesn't have to answer to us for having created us in whatever way he chose, nor does he "owe" us anything, could he not do with all of us whatever he chooses? And who are we to define righteous? Whatever God does is righteous. He defines righteousness. How can the thing created say to its creator, "you're not being fair"? I, personally, do believe in divine election, now. I know, since I've begun to submit to God in this way, it has completely changed my walk. God has become so enormous to me. I now have the fear of the Lord. Love, Dian.

Re: Giving proper credit - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/4/1 0:40

Quote:
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Dian,

Confess...you got this idea from Romans 9:14-24 didn't you? Don't you know that it's wrong to plagiarize without crediting the source?;-) I think it's only proper that all the credit for this crazy idea be given to its original author, Paul the Apostle.

Bless you,;-)

MC

Re: - posted by dann (), on: 2005/4/1 13:10

Quote:

philologos wrote:

Quote:
-----The Calvinist says that when God hardened Pharaoh's heart, He did so without compromising Pharaoh's free will - that is, that even though God hardened Pharaoh's heart, God did not do so in a way that manipulated or otherwise interfered with Pharaoh's will. Pharaoh freely chose to harden his own heart (and therefore it is Pharaoh's sin and not God's) - but did so in exact accordance with God's predetermined will.

I don't think all Calvinists believe this the way you have said it, otherwise the debate would not have been so heated.

I agree. Labels mean different things to different people.

I think people come to be "Calvinists" through two different routes - either they read the bible and come to the same conclusions as Calvin - such as I have, or they inherit Calvinism having learned it as a theological philosophy.

I would hazard to guess that the most disagreeable "Calvinists" are those who came to their persuasion through a study of theology rather than a study of scripture. It has been my sad experience to know a few. They rarely open the bible except to find proof texts for their pet theologies. We all know the sort.

I think it is that sort who have helped to give substance to that unfortunate caricature of the Calvinist as believing that God drags unwilling men into heaven while denying access to those who are honestly seeking God and trying to enter.

I for one, certainly believe that no one comes to the Father unless they are called.

One mistake that some make is to imagine that God looked into the future - saw who would believe - and then elected only those. Such a parody, makes God's decision subordinate to man's faith, which cannot rightly be called election.

Scripture teaches that faith itself is a gift, and that our salvation is all of grace. No one is interested in the things of God except that God quickens them.

John 6:63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.

I believe that - the flesh does not contribute to the salvation process. The flesh therefore certainly cannot instigate faith!

John explained it best:

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."

When I say I have free will I mean that I have the freedom to obey or deny my personal desires.

But I accept this reality - I do not have control over what my desires are going to be.

Every Christian understands this basic truth - that there is both the desire to obey God, and the desire to obey sin. We commit sin by obeying the sinful desires, we are obedient when we obey God's spiritual desires. But how many of us would dare to say that we pick and choose what our desires are going to be??

So, as a "Calvinist" I understand free will as being the freedom to respond or deny desires that I have no control over.

I cannot therefore generate a desire to follow God any more than I can make myself no longer covet. Yes, I can certainly -RESIST or SUPPRESS- the desire - but the desire remains because I have no control over picking and choosing what I am going to desire.

That, in my opinion is the heart of the matter. The Calvinist either reasons this out with scripture, or instinctively understands through experience that freedom of will does not mean picking and choosing what we will desire or not - but how we respond to those desires. So that it is elementary and trivially accepted that God, and only God gives the believer the initial desire to come to Him - that is, that God draws the unbeliever by giving the believer the ability and desire to follow after Him. Only the elect desire God.

Those who are not elect, do not come to God, not because they don't have the option - they do - but because they have no desire to do so, and will never have the desire to do so. The option is fully available, and failure to pursue that option makes one perfectly culpable - yet for all that, Like Judas, they will not choose correctly.

Dan

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Re: - posted by markitats (), on: 2005/4/1 14:05

As a Christian, I fully agree brother! Amen! Well put!

why and how God repented that He had made Saul king over Israel?, on: 2005/4/2 6:45

Please someone tell me why and how God repented that He had made Saul king over Israel?

If Saul was designed or made to rebel and lie like he did, God could NOT repent.

1 Sam 15:35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

Re: why and how God repented that He had made Saul king over Israel? - posted by dann (), on: 2005/4/4 16:54

Quote:

freecd wrote:

Please someone tell me why and how God repented that He had made Saul king over Israel?

If Saul was designed or made to rebel and lie like he did, God could NOT repent.

1 Sam 15:35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

John MacArthur does a fine job explaining this (<http://www.biblebb.com/files/macqa/70-12-4.htm>) here.

Likewise, (<http://www.biblebb.com/files/macqa/1301-T-9.htm>) this might shed some light.

Dan

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Re: Calvinism - free will - posted by AndrewBruce (), on: 2005/4/14 22:24

Calvinism and Free Will- what a great discussion!

I would like to preface my statement by saying that I have a lot of friends on both sides of "the fence" on this issue and I have no problem fellowshiping with either side regularly and hope that this friendly discussion on this website continues to be just that.

Maybe this explanation sounds a little too simple and maybe it is but here goes!:

We as Christians should base our every belief and doctrine on the Holy Word of God not on the opinions of men. I have greatly appreciated all of the verses provided by all of the previous posters (is that a word?) and think that it is pretty apparent that both sides can provide Scripture for their respective positions. So here is what I propose... God made time, God made scientific law. God is not bound by time and God is not bound by scientific law. If He wants to stop the sun from setting for a little while longer than usual He does. Period. What is physically impossible He does easily because He created the boundaries by which we live. What I'm saying is that God is BIGGER than time or scientific law because He created them. I believe the same is true of the free will of man. God made our free will. It is obvious from Scripture that man has a "say" in his salvation. God also made predestination. It is also obvious that we are the "elect" "chosen before the foundations of the earth" as I have heard some Calvinists say. God created free will and He created Predestination. Just because it doesn't humanly make sense for these two things to dwell in harmony doesn't mean that it isn't possible. God is BIGGER than "free will" and He is BIGGER than "predestination." God is not bound by things that we are bound by whether it be the physical, the scientific or the logical.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9 ESV

I hope this all makes sense to you and that it is helpful or at the very least not divisive.

Re: Calvinism - free will - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/4/15 4:07

Quote:
-----Calvinism's first point speaks to the total depravity of man. Arminianism counters: although we are born as sinners, mankind is given a "divine spark" that enables us to respond positively to God.

What would 'born as sinners' mean in Finney's theology? In "Lectures on Systematic Theology: Lec 24 Moral Depravity" he writes: "I object to the doctrine of constitutional sinfulness, that it makes all sin, original and actual, a mere calamity, and not a crime. For those who hold that sin is an essential part of our nature, to call it a crime, is to talk nonsense." In the piece you quote we read

Quote:
-----Calvin's definition was just another way of expressing "original sin" (Psalm 51:5 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). Although, we do not inherit anyone's sin (Ezekiel 18:20),

Understood properly, the teaching of Constitutional Sinfulness does not teach that we inherit 'anyone's sin'. This gets into the territory of 'transmission'. How we come to share Adam's condition (I am choosing my words very carefully here) is a continuing matter of discussion among Bible students but the fact of a shared condition with Adam is the 'orthodox' position of most evangelicals. The Germans refer to 'Inherited Sin' but this is a questionable title.

The Ezekiel reference has often come into these discussions so I think it is time to examine it. Eze 18:1-4 KJV The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, (2) What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? (3) As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. (4) Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. He may even have been quoting from Jeremiah! Ezekiel's prophetic ministry began at the point that Jeremiah's finished. Jeremiah was carried hostage by 'Jews' while Ezekiel, as a 'young man' was carried captive into Babylon. Consequently the historical background into which each of them ministered is the same. It was the 'end' of the faith as they knew it. The promises of a perpetual Davidic dynasty seemed to have been broken, as were those of Zion. Even the 'everlasting' rituals of the first Temple had all ceased. Israel's theology was in tatters. Isaiah had predicted this a century earlier, but Jeremiah and Ezekiel lived it. Against the background of this apparent failure God spoke through Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

The reason I said Ezekiel may have been quoting Jeremiah is that we know that the prophecies of Jeremiah made it to the exiles in Babylone, as the book of Daniel shows. (Daniel 9:2) Jeremiah had used this exact imagery of 'sour grapes' approximately 12 years before Ezekiel! Jer 31:27-31 KJV Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. (28) And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD. (29) In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. (30) But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. (31) Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: It is important to remember that Jeremiah's prophecy predates Ezekiel's and gives the context for this statement.

The context is the provision of a 'new covenant' which Jeremiah goes on to say will be...Jer 31:32 YLT Not like the covenant that I made with their fathers, In the day of My laying hold on their hand, To bring them out of the land of Egypt, In that they made void My covenant, And I ruled over them--an affirmation of Jehovah. This is a replacement covenant and is clearly described as such in Hebrews 10:9. According to Hebrews, this is because a new priesthood had come into being...Heb 7:11-12 YLT If indeed, then, perfection were through the Levitical priesthood--for the people under it had received law--what further need, according to the order of Melchisedek, for another priest to arise, and not to be called according to the order of Aaron? (12) for the priesthood being changed, of necessity also, of the law a change doth come, This is a key bible truth that 'law and priesthood' are inseparably joined, and a change in the priesthood there is as the KJV

says 'of necessity' a change also of the law.

Jeremiah in his prophetic vision is connecting the present with the future; a frequent event in the Biblical prophets. Israel's law had a corporate and hereditary element. Exo 20:5-6 KJV Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; (6) And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Amo 3:1-2 KJV Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, (2) You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. This was built into the law, but a covenant is announced in Jeremiah which will replace that covenant and change the law, and it is Jeremiah who first calls this a 'new covenant'.

According to Hebrews Heb 9:15-17 YLT And because of this, of a new covenant he is mediator, that, death having come, for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those called may receive the promise of the age-during inheritance, (16) for where a covenant is, the death of the covenant-victim to come in is necessary, (17) for a covenant over dead victims is steadfast, since it is no force at all when the covenant-victim liveth. This is a vital bible truth; a covenant is 'not in force' until the death of the covenant victim. The New Covenant predicted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel could not come 'into force' until the death of the covenant-victim; ie Calvary. The Old Covenant and the New Covenant each have a mediator and each had a earthly space/time beginning. Exo 24:8 KJV And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

Luk 22:20 YLT In like manner, also, the cup after the supping, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, that for you is being poured forth. The first Lord's Supper in the upper room looked forwards, since then each Lord's Supper has looked backwards. Those who are initiated into this New Covenant have a New Priest and a New Law. The penalties and consequences of the 'old' law are no longer 'in force' for them. Gal 3:23-25 NASB But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. (24) Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. (25) But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. The 'old' law with its corporate and hereditary consequences was no longer 'in force'.

This is what Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's prophecies look forward to, but until we are personally initiated into that New Covenant the old legislation obtains. This is uniquely true for those who were initiated into the Old Covenant but in many ways Israel was a visual aid for the whole race.

Consequently, and I'm sorry to have taken so long about it, 'constitutional sin' is a fact of life for every member of the human race until that individual is brought into a New Covenant.

Lastly, 'Constitutional Sin' does not teach that we inherited Adam's sin, but that we received (still choosing my words carefully) Adam's condition that he 'acquired' as a result of his transgression. Romans 5:12 teaches us very plainly that Sin (the Greek gives it a definite article, The Sin, thus personifying it) entered the human race 'as a result of' Adam's transgression. Constitutional Sin is not Adam's transgression, but The Sin which entered Adam as a result of his transgression. It is Sin-Personified that is the human condition not and inherited guilt from Adam's transgression.

Re: - posted by Svineklev, on: 2005/4/29 1:15

Dan (and Adam/Kirindor)--

I've always had a bit of a problem with Jonathan Edwards over this issue of desire. JE seems to say we are locked into whatever our strongest desire is. He comes across at times almost like a behaviorist/determinist.

Though I too am a Calvinist, I believe we have an actual ability to choose.

Dan, you said: "So, as a "Calvinist" I understand free will as being the freedom to respond or deny desires that I have no control over."

How is it that you are *not* saying: "So, I understand free will as being the freedom to *control* desires that I have no control over" ??

(Aren't "response" and "denial" aspects of control?)

Surely we have not created our desires (hungers, thirsts, emotions) nor the things we desire. God created both the objects of our desires and our response mechanisms to these stimuli. But surely (at least as regenerate individuals), we have a modicum of control over what desires we nurture or suppress. The fact that I desire a good thing today that I did not desire yesterday may have come about as a result of godly self-discipline. I actually chose to desire what God would have me desire. I lined up my will--I conformed it-- to his own.

Of course, what we *cannot* do is to desire God himself without the gift of faith. Once granted justification, we cannot NOT desire God...but we can help that desire to flourish.

Well, that's my two cents worth on "choice," for whatever it's worth.

--Eric

Re: - posted by dann (), on: 2005/4/29 15:08

Svineklev (Eric),

You asked,

Quote:
-----How is it that you are not saying: "So, I understand free will as being the freedom to control desires that I have no control over?"

Every morning I get dressed and freely make a decision about what I am going to wear. My choice is limited to only those garments that are readily available. I can choose to wear dirty clothes, borrowed clothes, etc - but in the act of getting dressed I have a perfect freedom to choose, but my choice is limited to whatever palette of options I have available.

No one would soberly suggest that I lack free will in getting dressed in the morning simply because my choices are limited.

Likewise, I have only so many desires to choose from in any given situation. For example, In finding my wife, I had a perfect freedom to pursue any sort of woman - but I was only attracted to some of them. Did I choose who I would be attracted to? Of course not! I could choose to resist the attraction - but I had no say in who I was attracted to.

That is the heart of it. I didn't pick and choose who I would be attracted to - and in the same way we have no choice about any of our attractions, be they physical, spiritual, intellectual or whatever - we have little say in the matter. We are free to suppress or indulge our attractions - but we do not determine what they are going to be.

Unless God makes Himself "attractive" to an individual - that individual is not going to pursue God. He has the option (just as I had the "option" to date morbidly obese women) - but men will not pursue God just because the option is available to them. Men pursue God when God makes Himself self attractive to them.

I hope that explains it. ;-)

Dan
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question? - posted by dohzman (), on: 2005/4/29 19:14

was Adam's sin then just a legal pronouncement that fell on all mankind or was it a moral change in the hearts of all men that followed Adam. Here's where I get confused.

Re: dan, on: 2005/4/30 9:12

Dan - you said

"Unless God makes Himself "attractive" to an individual - that individual is not going to pursue God."

Does this mean a sinner can stand before God and claim the reason he is a sinner is because God never made himself "attractive" to him?

I guess then this persons crime of rebellion is then Gods fault?

Re: question?, on: 2005/4/30 9:16

Do we inherit a sin nature from Adam or our parents?

No!! It is impossible for moral character to be passed from one generation to the next. Sin does not exist until one actually sins. Read Ezekiel chapter 18. This chapter teaches that sin cannot be inherited or transmitted from your parent or ancestors. Each person alone is responsible for his own free moral choices.

Re: - posted by Svineklev, on: 2005/4/30 13:51

Dan--

Though I agree we can have no desire for God unless granted the gift of faith, I don't really think that's the case with many other choices in life.

Take your example of women, for example.

I doubt you are saying that once you marry that attractive-to-you woman she must stay exactly as she is for life or your feelings for her will of necessity wane.

Surely you realize she may become pudgy or wrinkly or handicapped or whatnot. If you have absolutely no control over your desires, I guess you'll be relegated to a second-rate marriage...or else you'll divorce the hag and get you a pretty-young-thing that makes your heart go pitty-pat.

Though it is not easy, we can and we should discipline unruly desires and cultivate godly ones. If I am naturally attracted to racy, voluptuous, worldly chicks rather than wholesome, wise, and slightly plain ones, then it behooves me not merely to accept my desires as is (as something I cannot change because I have no control over them) but to willfully bring them in line with godly character.

Yes, two equally winsome women may strike our fancy differently and we have less control over that...but we still have control. Suppose one of them is already my wife. Even if I find the other woman more attractive, my desire needs to remain with my wife. And that certainly can be accomplished.

We *can* change our desires. It may be a long, difficult process, but we have real choice. We are not held captive by our current "attractions."

--Eric

Re: - posted by Svineklev, on: 2005/4/30 14:00

Freed--

You can hold God culpable only if you believe Christ is not sufficiently beautiful in some OBJECTIVE sense. Is *that* what you're saying?

The sinner has no excuse for rejecting objective beauty even if God never opens that sinner's eyes to see past his own flagrant rebellion.

--Eric

Svineklev, on: 2005/4/30 14:28

You misunderstand my post. I was replying to Dan. Please re-read his post and my response.

I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT GOD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY PERSONS SIN!!

HE IS NOT CULPABLE FOR ANY PERSONS REBELLION!!

Re: - posted by dohzman (), on: 2005/4/30 15:14

I understand that but when I look at the patriachs Abraham lied---Issac Lied---- Jacob really lied almost as if that one sin had come to its completeness. So in what sense is adams sinm passed on to us. It has to be more than a legal transacti on. What was effected in the spiritual death that we inherited?? I 've always heard and many preachers here state that b asically a sinner can do nothing but sin, in the sense that he cannot do God's will.??????

Can we obey God or not???????????? , on: 2005/4/30 16:07

Can we obey God or not????????????

If it is not possible for any person to obey God after Adam's sin them someone please tell tell me how these people obey ed!

1 Kings 15:11 And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father.

2 Chronicles 14:2 And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God:

2 Chronicles 24:2 And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.

Genesis 26:5 Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my l aws.

Joshua 22:2 And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obey ed my voice in all that I commanded you:

Haggai 1:12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God ha d sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.

Did Adam or his descendants lose the ability to obey God after Adam's sin?

No!! The Bible tells the story of many people, some who walked with God and did what was pleasing in His sight and oth ers who rebelled against God and did evil in His sight. It would be impossible to rebel or obey without the freedom to do so.

Joshua 24:15 "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the go ds which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dw ell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." KJV

Isaiah 1:19-20 "If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land: but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it." KJV

These passages prove that all of Adam's offspring still had the ability to obey or refuse God.

What about Enoch and others who really followed Gods commands? Again, it would not be possible to obey God if they did not have this ability.

Re: Svinelev - posted by Svinelev, on: 2005/4/30 16:12

Freedcd--

I did read his post and your reply.

You said, "I guess then this person's crime of rebellion is then God's fault?"

What did I misunderstand? As far as I can tell, you were saying that if what Dan said is true, then God is culpable for that person's rebellion. Isn't that the plain-English interpretation of your words? What am I missing?

I don't think YOU think God is culpable. I think you think that Dan is wrong.

I happen to think Dan is right. My post was to suggest that Dan is right and God is still not culpable.

If in any way I misrepresented you, I'm sorry.

--Eric

Re: Can we obey God or not???????????? - posted by Svinelev, on: 2005/4/30 16:25

Freedcd--

The *regenerate* have the ability to obey. 'Posse non peccare' (it is possible not to sin) is the Latin phrase historically used of the regenerate. Of the unregenerate, 'non posse non peccare' (it is not possible not to sin) is used. They cannot obey. We can...though not perfectly. Luther's phrase 'simul justus et peccator' (simultaneously justified and sinner) is used for this.

Sorry about all the Latin. I employ these phrases just to point out that there is nothing new under the sun. All these questions have been asked--and answered--before. We all need to study our history harder. We are surrounded by a vast cloud of witnesses. Let's not neglect them.

Yours,

--Eric

Re: - posted by dann (), on: 2005/4/30 19:45

Quote:

freedcd wrote:

Does this mean a sinner can stand before God and claim the reason he is a sinner is because God never made himself "attractive" to him?

Not at all.

God's call doesn't make one 'not a sinner.'

I hope that is obvious. No one will be able to stand before God and say they have not sinned. Men will ----NOT---- go to heaven because they have been called to be "without sin" - men will go to heaven because they, being sinners, have called on the name of Christ in faith, and are trusting that Christ's imputed righteousness will satisfy God's righteous requirements as promised.

Your characterization would run more like this:

Sinner: You cannot send me to heaven because it is your fault that I wasn't called.

God: You are not going to hell because you weren't called. You are going to hell because you are a treasonous sinner -

and your sins have earned you a just punishment.

Sinner: That is not just - you called only some people to salvation and not others!!

God: You are sadly mistaken. I am not evil because I have shown mercy to some.

Sinner: Yes you are! If you call one person, you have to call everyone or you are evil.

God: The reason you think that is because your heart is twisted. You think you rightfully deserve a gift just because someone else received one. Gifts are free, and I am not evil for giving them to some. You had a chance to obey, and you freely chose to disobey - you didn't want me in life - and so now you get your wish.

At this point the sinner would be cast into hell.

Quote:

freed wrote:

I guess then this persons crime of rebellion is then Gods fault?

No. Sin is the fault of the sinner.

Dan

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Re: - posted by dann (), on: 2005/4/30 19:58

Quote:

Svineklef wrote:

Dan--

Thanks for the thoughts!

I wouldn't extend the "attractive" example to a continuing marriage. My marriage is going on 14 years this summer, and while I am still attracted to my wife, our love and affection for one another and for Christ constitutes the glue that bonds us together in ever increasing love.

Physical attraction is just one of many involuntary desires we all possess - and I used it for that reason - because it was more obvious a choice than most. I didn't mean for the example to extend that far.

I would never deny the need to buffet the flesh, nor fail to endorse the practicality of fostering godly habits.

Dan

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Re: Can we obey God or not?????????? - posted by adonaisarmy, on: 2005/4/30 20:13

Yes many of these men obeyed God, but they obeyed God because, God had given them the grace to do so. They could not do it on their own.

In Romans, Paul explains, how all are doomed, outside of God's grace, and we all naturally hate God, and God's ways.

So all those people that did obey, God gave them the grace to do so.

Re: - posted by crossman4God, on: 2005/7/1 19:01

Amen to that! God has to work obedience in the heart BEFORE that heart can ever obey God. Read Phil 2:13, We can obey God, only because JESUS obeyed his Father and died for us to be able to obey God. Amen and Amen!

Crossman

Re: why and how God repented that He had made Saul king over Israel? - posted by letsgetbusy (), on: 2005/7/2 1:33

I may one day create my own theology, since I can find things I can agree and disagree on with just about everyone. I am more for soulwinning, but Calvinism vs freewill is still interesting.

The key for me to understanding why God repented of something is to understand what "repent" means.

If I repented of beating my wife, the result is, you will not see my doing it anymore. So repentance is not the act of doing something, but being sorry enough, that you don't want to do it again. Just being sorry isn't enough. I can smack my wife every day, and feel sorry each time. That is not repentance. Repentance is seen when I commit to not do it anymore.

Therefore God repenting means He was sorrowful enough not to do the same thing twice. So Saul obviously had a purpose. Maybe to prove to us that a leader that is head and shoulders above his people is not necessarily approved by God, as David was.

God repented that He had made man in Genesis 6:6, and of the evil He thought to do to His people in Exodus 32:14, and other times. So repentance is a necessary commitment to not do something that would result in a less godly outcome. Clear as mud?

Did Saul have freewill?, on: 2005/7/2 7:29

You may have missed the point of my question.

If Saul did not have free will then God could have not repented for Saul's actions. If God somehow caused Saul to sin or somehow caused mankind to sin He could never have repented for making mankind.

Re: Did Saul have freewill? - posted by letsgetbusy (), on: 2005/7/5 0:58

Saul did have freewill, as do we all. God repented of these things, meaning that He commits to do them no more. God would not anoint Saul to fight Goliath, but rather David.

It is a never ending debate. My opinion is that God does not force anyone to repent that doesn't want His grace, but He foreknows who will repent, and therefore intercedes for His chosen. Why would God choose someone that would refuse His grace?

Saul was chosen of God, but fell because of His pride. God was grieved at this, but used Saul to show us that the outside is not what God is looking at.

Re: Calvinism - free will - posted by HakkaMin (), on: 2005/7/5 2:45

You might find Steve Gregg's teaching series on Calvinism interesting. Go to <http://www.thenarrowpath.com/>, enter the "Tape Download" section, and find the nine-part series on "God's Sovereignty and Man's Salvation." Very thought-provoking.

Re: of God's repentance, on: 2005/7/5 8:24

Quote:

-----The key for me to understanding why God repented of something is to understand what "repent" means.

If I repented of beating my wife, the result is, you will not see my doing it anymore. So repentance is not the act of doing something, but being sorry enough, that you don't want to do it again. Just being sorry isn't enough. I can smack my wife every day, and feel sorry each time. That is not repentance. Repentance is seen when I commit to not do it anymore.

Therefore God repenting means He was sorrowful enough not to do the same thing twice...

...So repentance is a necessary committal to not do something that would result in a less godly outcome.

Methinks you are putting a number of additional qualities into 'repentance' which the Lord Himself did not include.

There are two very good reasons for resisting the temptation to do this.

The first is, it may make a repentance which is sufficient for God *unattainable* by some.

The second is, if it is not possible to repent in the terms of your definition, there is no release from the sin. This leaves guilt for the sin itself hanging in the air, additionally burdened by a sense *false* guilt for not having been able to repent according to the local proclaimed standard.

I suspect this is not what you have in mind at all. All you're saying is, when you repent from a sin, *try* to have a serious intention to not commit that sin again. Definitely! I agree! But the point of repentance, is that it gives us a place of contact with God, *WHEN* we *do sin*, through which we can be cleansed and set back into the righteousness of Christ. This is where we desire to dwell all the time, but, God *insists* the remedy be simple, accessible and effective - faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, His Son.

Luke 17:4

And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; **thou shalt forgive him.**

In hearing what Jesus had to say about repentance, we are also hearing something about God's zeal for forgiveness. *HE WILL* forgive. Thank you Lord!

Re: - posted by Nasher (), on: 2005/7/5 8:47

I don't know about "free will" but I do know that every person has choices.

A person can either choose Christ or not choose Him.

I believe (as the bible says) that no man can come to Christ without the Father first drawing (or dragging!) him, but once that person has been drawn to Christ he/she still has a choice of whether to crown Him as Lord or to not crown Him as Lord (i.e. to agree that His crucifixion was just).

In some cases in the bible where it says for instance God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 7) or when a person has blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, I believe that person still has the same choices as anyone else, it's just that their heart is so turned against God that they will never want to yield to him, and also that the Father will never "draw" them to Christ.

Re: - posted by letsgetbusy (), on: 2005/7/5 13:12

dorcas,

Yes. Basically that is what I am saying. Scriptures say to confess and forsake our sins. There are many who think that simply confessing is enough for God. Repent simply put is to "turn." So while you and I may know what you mean when you say "**try**" to have a serious intention to not commit that sin again," there are many who use "I'm trying" as an excuse.

Too often the layman says they are trying to stop doing evil deeds when in fact they are using our Lord's grace as an excuse to continue in sin, and trampling His blood under foot. They have never turned from sin at all.

I don't mean we should seek to go back in our minds and repent of everything we remember we did as a daily practice. I simply think there are many who think they are saved who are not, simply because they never turned their back on evil (I like I thought I was saved for years before I was converted).

Leonard Ravenhill said there was no Scripture that hit him quite the same as Matthew 7's:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

I'm just a firm believer that one who never told sin "depart from me," that Christ will tell him, "depart from me." So it's not a daily work that I mean, but a decision we made. Because if sin took our Saviour to the cross, we should want no part of it.

Re: Calvinism - free will, on: 2005/7/5 20:23

Hi letsgetbusy,

Quote:

-----there are many who use "I'm trying" as an excuse...

there are many who think they are saved who are not, simply because they never turned their back on evil...

I'm just a firm believer that one who never told sin "depart from me," that Christ will tell him, "depart from me." So **it's not a daily work that I mean, but a decision we made**. Because if sin took our Saviour to the cross, we should want no part of it.

Jesus said: And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt 7)

Points well made.

Charles Wesley used much scripture in his hymns. These helped me understand that help to stop sinning was going to come from God, not solely my effort, although my co-operation with Him would be necessary. This understanding was crucial to my life being turned around (slowly, as it seemed to me) in practice, because I could see the Old Testament promises of God's help to Israel and then in the New Testament, could believe the promises were spiritual fact first, waiting to become my experience.

You're right it's important to preach the whole truth. It is this which provokes both conviction and hope, that repentance and faith will make a palpable difference - which they do.

Re: - posted by letsgetbusy (), on: 2005/7/5 22:36

dorcas,

That's right, we can't do these things in the flesh. No man comes to the Son unless the Father draws him.

Charles Wesley is a great example of hymns that include solid Biblical doctrine. You could read some of these old hymns and get saved from the lyrics. Just as the message of "repent" is overlooked in today's average sermon, so it is with the songs of today.

"Come, all ye Magdalens, in lust,
Ye ruffians fell in murders old;
Repent, and live: despair and trust!
Jesus for you to death was sold;
Though hell protest, and earth repine,
He died for crimes like yours—
and mine."

-6th verse of Christ the Friend of Sinners, by Charles Wesley

Re: Calvinism - free will - posted by Globachio (), on: 2005/7/6 13:56

Having just read "Why I Am Not A Calvinist" (Wall & Dongell) and "Why I Am Not an Arminian" (Peterson & Williams), I find myself thanking God for Calvin.

Arminianism robs God of His sovereignty and gives His glory to man. Not saying they can't be elect and so saved, but the theology is skewed *away* from God and *toward* us.

And this from a Lutheran!!

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/7/7 4:03

Quote:

-----Luke 17:4

And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

In hearing what Jesus had to say about repentance, we are also hearing something about God's zeal for forgiveness. HE WILL forgive. Thank you Lord!

Fortunately we have a biblical definition for repentance. Christ said the men of Nineveh repented, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." (Matt. 12:41, KJVS) so all you need to do is read Jonah 3 to discover what Christ meant by repentance. You will discover that it most definitely includes turning away from sin. "For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." (Jonah 3:6-10, KJVS)