

FREE WILL and TOTAL DEPRAVITY

ARC

Preface

These chapters are intended for the student who has a sincere desire to “study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The subjects discussed are all based upon the conviction that the Old and New Testaments in the original writings were inspired by God and are without error, that Jesus Christ is God of very God, and that man, without Christ, is totally depraved.

The author is keenly aware of his limitations and intelligence and presents the material with the sincere prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this effort to aid some to understand more fully what Christ has done for them and the riches of His grace.

Free Will and Total Depravity

To suggest that man has a “free will” is to suggest nothing unless the terms are defined. Some of the typical definitions are:

- “Free will” means that a person is able to do what ever he wills to do. This, of course, is absurd. He may will to fly by flapping his arms, but he will not fly. It is obvious that in some way ability must be coupled with will.
- “Free will” means that a person is free to do anything. This is also absurd. He is not free to choose his sex, his parents. his nationality, his birth date, etc., etc.
- “Free will” means that a person is free to choose good or evil. This was the teaching of Arminias and may be the meaning most people attach to “free will” but it also is absurd. Even God Himself is not free to choose good or evil.

The definition of the word “will” is “desire” so to say that man has a “free will” is to say that he has “free desire.” It should be obvious to even the casual student of the Word that this is not true. All of man’s desires are conditioned by things outside his control. His background, his environment, his family, his tastes, etc., and most important Scripturally, sin and his fallen state.

To then say that a man is free to desire what he desires is only to state the obvious; however, his desire to do in no way implies his ability to do. How can that be called “free” that is limited by conditions outside its control and by its ability to perform?

It is also clear that this so-called freedom does not make it possible for the person to desire that which he does not desire. Fallen man, carnal man, has absolutely no desire to come to God or to please God and thus is not free to do so.

Fallen man is totally limited in his desire, his ability to do, or his desire to do, that which is good by God's standards. Theologically this is called "total depravity." Although depravity is not a Biblical word, it is Biblical truth. To deny the total depravity of man is to deny the Grace of God and to blaspheme the finished work of Christ.

One can not be that casual about words; to say that one believes in the grace of God but not in total depravity, predestination and election is a contradiction in fact. If man is not totally depraved and predestinated to eternal life then salvation is not by grace.

Consider what the Holy Spirit says:

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to enter the kingdom of God.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to come to Christ.

John 6:44 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.

The Greek word ἐλκυω (HELKUU), translated here "to draw," does not mean to invite, but rather to drag or impel. The same way that the draw-bar of a tractor does not invite the plow to follow. This can be seen by the way in which the Holy Spirit uses the word in all of the other references (**emphasis added**):

- John 18:10 Then Simon Peter having a sword **drew** it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.
- John 21:6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to **draw** it for the multitude of fishes.
- John 21:11 Simon Peter went up, and **drew** the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.
- Acts 16:19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and **drew** [them] into the marketplace unto the rulers,
- Acts 21:30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and **drew** him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

In none of these verses is the word used as "invite" but always as "drag" or "impel" the actual meaning of the word. Therefore the Lord said:

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. 64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. 65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can (has the ability to) come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to hear the Word of God.

John 8:43 Why do ye not understand my speech? [even] because ye cannot (have no ability to) hear my word. ... 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear [them] not, because ye are not of God.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to receive the Spirit of truth.

John 14:17 [Even] the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

The un-regenerate man minds the things of the flesh.

Romans 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

The things of the flesh are:

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are [these]; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told [you] in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The un-regenerate man is God's enemy.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to be subject to the law of God.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to please God.

Romans 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to receive the things of the Spirit.

I Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned.

The un-regenerate man cannot, has no ability to, does not desire to cease from sin.

II Peter 2:14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

The un-regenerate man is not righteous.

Romans 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13 Their throat [is] an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps [is] under their lips: 14 Whose mouth [is] full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet [are] swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery [are] in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Scripturally then, corrupt man is not free, has no desire, has no ability, to please God or to choose that which is good. The Holy Spirit made this clear when He said:

Matthew 7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither [can] a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Luke 6:43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Titus 1:15 Unto the pure all things [are] pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving [is] nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

Therefore it is necessary for something to happen which is not dependent on the will or desire of fallen man, that which has nothing to do with his will or desire, in order for him to come to God and to do that which is pleasing to God.

The Holy Spirit makes it very clear that this is the new birth by the will of God not by the will of man, thus it is grace and not reward:

Psalms 65:4 Blessed [is the man whom] thou choosest, and causest to approach [unto thee, that] he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, [even] of thy holy temple.

John 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, [they] are spirit, and [they] are life.

I Peter 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Thus being born by the will of God he becomes a new creation and is made righteous:

Romans 5:19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.

II Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Being then made righteous, the new man, not the old man, has new desires, believes God, does that which is pleasing to God, that which is righteous:

John 6:47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath (already has) everlasting life.

I John 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is (has been) born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

Titus 1:15 Unto the pure all things [are] pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving [is] nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

I John 2:29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

I John 3:7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

I John 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.