

WE have thoroughly covered the divine side of life

and explained how the human and divine sides are **compatible**

I now want to look at the human side exclusively

And speak more specifically on free will

You normally hear people from our view reject the term “free will”

I completely understand why...

The baggage that comes with that term is not biblically helpful at all

For clarity, the only use of the term in the Bible is OT offerings

But in my mind, rejecting this phrase causes more confusion than clarity

We all know at some level we are free and independent
and make choices with our own power

When you reject “free will”, people automatically
dismiss what you’re proposing

They immediately picture robots and think you are out of your mind

My goal this morning is:

First, to look at a sampling of what the Bible actually says
about man’s ability

Many people begin with what they consider “common sense”
rather than God’s Word

Then I will survey a few popular reasons people say “free will” exists

And we will look at how we might evaluate those reasons biblically

To begin our understanding of all these things,
we must first look at man's natural ability

What is man able to do?

Our sin nature constrains our ability to act with moral and spiritual freedom

Until we are free from sin's enslavement, we are never truly free

John 8:34

Ultimate human freedom entails acting in an unhindered way
in full adherence to God's revealed truth

A glimpse of this exists for believers
since we have been given new birth and a new heart

Until glorification,
we will not experience the freedom we will have for eternity

Remember last quarter when we studied the heart

Man's heart is the source of his life

Whatever state the heart is in, the man lives accordingly

In summary of last quarter, listen to Jerry Bridges: Heart in Scripture is used in various ways. Sometimes it means our **reason** or **understanding**, sometimes our **affections** and **emotion**, and sometimes our **will**. Generally it denotes the whole soul of man and all its faculties, not individually, but as they all work together in doing good or evil. The **mind** as it reasons, discerns, and judges; the **emotions** as they like or dislike; the **conscience** as it determines and warns; and the **will** as it chooses or refuses—**are all together called the heart.**

Its also important to remember where the debate is

Man obviously has a natural inability

We all agree that there are some things humans are naturally unable to do

You may really want to fly, jump over a building, teleport, but you are not able to do it

Or a prisoner may want to see his family at Christmas, but he is behind bars and unable to escape

A blind person may really want to see but be unable to

This is not the spiritual inability that our disagreement centers on

HOW BAD IS MAN'S PROBLEM?

- What It Is

- Positively: Only And Always Sinning
 - We must carefully define “good” in light of what God says
 - Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 91
 - Q. What are good works?
 - A. Only those which are done out of **true faith, conform to God's law,** and are **done for God's glory...**
 - Notice the three parts of what is considered “good”
 - Relatively good things only conform outwardly
 - God requires conformity in the what, why, and how of what we do
 - The non-Christian is neither able nor willing to do any good that is fundamentally pleasing to God
 - Outwardly conforming is not ALL God is after
 - Who were the “godliest” people in Jesus’s day? **PHARISEES**
 - (Matt. 6:1-18; Luke 18:9-14; Col. 2:20-23)
 - Son who washes car to go to game
- **Romans 14:23**

- Acting **in faith** is the only way to glorify God
 - (Rom. 14:23; 1 Cor. 10:31, 15:10; 1 Pet. 4:11; Gal. 2:20)
 - At what point in a NON-BELIEVER'S life are they exercising faith???
 - Then at no point are they ever doing anything out of faith...
- God also requires that everything be done **in love**
 - **1 Cor. 16:14**
 - Love is a fruit of the Spirit; impossible for unsaved man to produce
 - **Gal. 5:6**; 1 Tim. 1:5
 - You can't claim man is able to do this AND say it is only accomplished by the Spirit
- If man is unable to keep the Greatest commandment, and the second flows from it, how do we conclude he is free?
- IN REVIEW
 - At no point does a lost person do anything out of faith or in love
 - Our definition of "good" lets us know they are missing one or all three aspects of what makes something truly "good"
 - They are not acting out of faith
 - They are no acting for God's glory
 - They are not acting in obedience

- Negatively: Total Inability
 - Man Cannot **Do** Good:
 - Matthew 7:17-18 (good tree)
 - John 15:4-5 (apart from me you can do NOTHING)
 - He is enslaved to sin - **Rom. 8:7-8**
 - Literally “mind of the flesh”, and he is an unbeliever - Rom. 8:9
 - He is spiritually dead - **Eph. 2:1**
 - This death is true of all unsaved people at the moment of their conception
 - Ps. 51:5; 58:3 - Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me...The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.
 - All enter this world as children of wrath and with satan as their “father”

- Man Cannot **Understand** Good
 - He is blind to spiritual truths - **1 Cor. 1:18; 2:14**
 - His thinking is darkened - **Eph. 4:18**
- Man Cannot **Desire** Good:
 - It would be different if man wanted to do things that he was unable to
 - God makes it clear that he is BOTH unable and unwilling
- Paul used the illustration of re-creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), re-birth (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13), and resurrection.
- It is a modern myth that lost people are seeking after God
 - They only seek after the benefits of God, for God to get them out of a jam, or a god they have imagined
 - **John 3:20-21**
- What is “free” will
 - Whatever you do, you wanted to do
 - You only “want” according to your nature
 - Until your nature is changed, you are a slave to sin
 - You may “choose” what sins to do
 - But you CANNOT choose other than your sinful nature dictates
 - You cannot truly choose “good”

- Objections

- Prevenient Grace

Assessing Prevenient Grace

Classical Arminians say that they affirm total depravity and man's inability

They get around this doctrine by appealing to "prevenient grace"

This doctrine teaches that God restores libertarian free will to all unbelievers

Roger Olsen: This common (not universal) Arminian doctrine of universal prevenient grace means that because of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit no human being is actually in a state of absolute darkness and depravity. Because of original sin, helplessness to do good is the natural state of humanity, but because of the work of Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit universally no human being actually exists in that natural state.

Olsen goes on to say that men are deaf and blind but God gives them prevenient grace which serves as special hearing aids and glasses

The irony that is not recognized is that the ones receiving prevenient grace had it forced on them

Another irony is that those who affirm this must also affirm it would be possible for someone to only and always say to not sin

Why, then, do they need to be born again???

There is a helpful article on this if you are ever dealing with it

Google "Does Scripture Teach Prevenient Grace in the Wesleyan Sense?"
by Thomas R. Schreiner

- Promises vs. Ability

- Listen to week 3
- Most people do not understand how to read the Bible accurately in english
 - A promise should never be twisted as a statement of ability
 - John 3:16 is an example

- “God would not command man to do something that he is unable to do. That makes His call to faith meaningless at best, and disingenuous at worst.”

- Again, listen to week 3
- God does command us to do what we are unable to do so that His grace is highlighted
 - If He commanded you to do what you could do, you get some credit

- *Some say free will is the only helpful way to explain why evil exists*

- This is one of the hardest concepts to talk about
- If you want to listen to this, go back to week 4
- In sum, God is the One who decreed/ordained evil to exist and the purpose is so that He can reveal more of Himself
 - We know and learn more about God because evil exist
 - Evil is NEVER to be called good
 - But if it exists, it must be good that it exists or else it wouldn't
 - Rom. 9:20-23
 - God does want to reveal His wrath
 - It is not an reluctant revelation

- *People are judged for doing the wrong thing*

- We covered this in week as well in week 3...
- Week 3 was a big one you want to make sure you listen to again :)
- We are judged for what we do and why we do it
- We are not judged for what we **could** do

- *You can't have genuine love without free will*

- We dealt with this in week 2
- Basically the response is this is not biblical
- The Trinity has genuine and necessary love
 - The Father's love for the Son is necessary and impossible to not have

- *We must have free will if we are created in God's image*

- The implication here is God is able to do anything, and we are in His image
- This is not true
- God is not able to do anything
- He is able to do anything in accordance with His will and His nature
- It is also not a helpful point to make because God never has been and never will be a slave of sin
 - He is not in a process of sanctification
- Also, when we are glorified, we will be unable to sin
 - We will still be human...