

TRUE SALVATION

True Salvation, Is Totally Apart From Man's Free Will

True salvation, is totally apart from man's free will. I have been thinking about the subject of the free will of man in recent days. I grew up in an SBC church and have always been an Independent Baptist pastor. Therefore, I have heard many preachers proclaim the free will of man from the pulpit through the years. Today, within the church, it seems that many people are continuing to talk about the free will of man, preachers are preaching on it, evangelists are proclaiming it, and books are teaching it. After all, we are free, right?

The best way to define yourself and your own position on theological issues is to do so on the basis of the biblical evidence found in God's Word. Rather than listening to your favorite preacher or reading a website devoted to the subject, the issue should be properly defined according to the sufficient, inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of God. Therefore, what does the Bible teach us about the subject of man's free will?

The Proof of Free Will: When God created Adam and Eve, the first two created humans on planet earth, they possessed free will. They had never sinned and were not created as sinners. They were created in the image of God and without sin. The creation of God was good in His sight. The Word of God records two verses that help us see that they were free to choose right and wrong without any constraints upon them. Genesis 2:16-17 "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." The proof of Adam's free will is demonstrated in the fact that God warned of what would happen if he chose to disobey God.

The Loss of Free Will: I remember learning about dinosaurs in elementary school as a kid. They taught about big animals with great detail, but I had never seen one in my life! The teacher explained further that the dinosaurs were no longer in existence. They had all died, never mind what she said about how they died. As we think about the free will of man, we should consider it in much the same way as we do the dinosaurs. It once existed, but it doesn't exist any longer, in the same way as Adam and Eve experienced it. The paradise of God in the Garden of Eden was lost when Adam and Eve chose to exercise their free will and sin against God. They were not forced to sin. The choice they made was completely within the realm of their own free will. It was their choice and they disobeyed God. As a result they experienced the taste of sin and the consequences thereof. The Bible records the truth about their sin and consequences in Genesis 3. In Rom. 5:12, Paul writes, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" Not only did Adam and Eve receive the consequences of their sin, but so did the rest of humanity! All of humanity, being connected to Adam and Eve, are now born with the stain of sin upon their soul according to Romans 5:12. Paul said that death has now passed to all men

because all have sinned. That is also clear from Rom. 3:23 where Paul claims that all have sinned against God. However, a text of Scripture in the Old Testament allows us to see that we are all born as sinners. King David said, in Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Therefore, it is abundantly clear from Holy Scripture that when Adam and Eve lost their free will all of humanity lost their free will as well. What exactly does that mean? How has humanity lost their free will? It simply means that we, unlike Adam and Eve, have never experienced the privilege of life unshackled from the chains of sin with the ability to not sin. From birth, we have always had a fleshly bent toward sin.

The Bondage of the Will: Our free will has been lost in the sinful tsunami of Adam's transgression. We are born, as King David said, in the bondage of sin. Therefore, as soon as we can choose between right and wrong, we choose wrong! The Baptist Faith & Message, Article III on Man, reveals the bondage of man's will by stating:

By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherited a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. We actually choose to sin. The Scriptures demonstrate that in the third chapter of Romans. Notice the following evidence regarding the bondage of the human will to sin. Romans 3:10-11, "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." The biblical evidence points to the fact that man, if left on his own, will choose sin rather than the righteousness of God. Furthermore, if left alone in his choice of sin, man will not seek after God. Therefore, it should be plainly stated that no person on the planet experiences the complete fullness of free will like Adam and Eve experienced. A person can choose to pick up a fork rather than a spoon to eat meat at dinner. A person can pick the correct color combination of clothes to avoid being the daily joke at the office. However, if left alone, all of humanity is completely unable to choose God, desire God, or obey God. The will of man is in complete bondage to the chain of sin and loves it. Therefore, man does have a free will, but we must clarify and place that statement under the necessary conditions of Scripture. Man is free to do many things and make many decisions, most importantly, man is free to sin. However, man is not free to obey God.

True Salvation: True salvation occurs when God unlocks and releases us from the bondage of sin Eph. 2:5. What is obvious about the grace of God is that it's a gift, not something that comes about through cleverly constructed clichés at the end of a sermon. Grace is not of works! Grace is a work of God and does not require high pressure, slick presentations, or a story that causes tears at the end of a service just before the invitation. Grace occurs when God opens up the heart of lost sinners in order that they will change their sinful will and choose to obey God. That is exactly what happened in Philippi when Paul went there and preached the gospel of Christ! Acts 16:14-15, one who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller

of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. Verse 15 and after she was baptized.

What happens if God leaves man alone to choose and make his own decision? The Bible tells us he will perish! 2 Cor. 4:3-4 and Rom. 3:10-11 demonstrate that clearly. Therefore, the power of the gospel through the Holy Spirit must invade the decisions, choices, will, and corrupt humanity of each person before that person will submit to God and be saved. How does God get that message to the sinner? He does so by the preaching and teaching of the gospel Rom. 10:17. It is the plan of God to send the gospel, through His servants, to the ends of the world Matt. 28:18-20. Therefore, it is abundantly clear through the pages of Scripture that complete free will, libertarian free will, once existed but no longer does! No matter what any preacher, evangelist, apologist, or even whatever any system says, man is unable to make the right decision on his own. The Scriptures are clear! Salvation is of the Lord Jonah 2:9! Salvation is a miracle! Salvation should cause us to praise God not the persuasion of a preacher! Does man choose God upon repentance of sin? Yes! However, he did not act on his own free will in doing so based on 1 John 4:19; John 1:12-13; and John 6:44. When rightly understood, salvation is a rescue mission by God through His Son! God deserves all of the claps, not the repentant sinner and not the gospel preacher.

Charles Spurgeon once said: "And if God does require the sinner, dead in sin, that he should take the first step, then He requireth just that which renders salvation as impossible under the gospel as ever it was under the law, seeing man is as unable to believe as he is to obey, and is just as much without power to come to Christ as he is without power to go to heaven without Christ. The power must be given to him of the Spirit. He lieth dead in sin: the Spirit must quicken him. He is bound hand and foot, fettered by transgression; the Spirit must cut his bonds, and then he will leap to liberty. God must come and dash the iron bars out of their sockets, and then he can escape afterwards, but unless the first thing be done for him, he must perish as surely under the gospel as he would have done under the law."