

October 20, 1978

To: A New England I.F.C.A. Pastor

Dear N.E.P.

Acknowledging your letter of August 17, 1978, and appreciating your careful attention to my manuscript, I similarly have tried to take enough time to well consider your differing statements, before replying to you.

I think it may be easier to re-state those particular comments, and follow each with my rebuttal, etc.

Comment - Page 1, "I would rather not dispute this concept ("free will") at all."

Reply - If as I believe, it is a human concept, it must be disputed, as much as anything else in keeping the faith once delivered to the saints, etc. (disputing and persuading the things of God, Acts 19:8).

Comment - Page 1, "God in His wisdom did not include such terminology ("free will") in His word, etc."

Reply - Because there isn't any such thing? And there was no such issue in early church times, like certain other current problems that did not exist then. Because, the real truth had not yet been seriously deviated from.

Comment - Page 1, "I think we run into problems disputing something that isn't even a scriptural term".

Reply - What about neo-evangelicalism, charismatic movement, etc.? These are not scriptural terms either, yet you have been very actively engaged in disputing these things (because you are convinced that those things are wrong). I am similarly convicted that the idea of a "free will" is every bit as erroneous, and the fact that the term is not found in scripture logically gives support and credence to that position, does it not?

In other words, your belief in a free will does not have scriptural identity in terminology, and that gives it a specious nature, as a principle. Doesn't this at least suggest an extra-biblical concept?

Comment - Page 2, "If we say that man does not have a free will, this seems to imply that man is coerced or forced by God to choose as he does."

Reply - Being coerced or forced is not the same thing as being enabled to respond. By contrast, the natural mind or will would have to be forced, against principle (that is, because it is unable to discern anything spiritual; whereas, the impartation of a new will having a spiritual capacity is the only

thing that could cause man to understandingly respond to God). If I may say so, reverently, God and man have got to be on the same wave length for communication to take place. This is nothing less than the law that spirit and flesh are contrary the one to the other, and I would further say that there is no transitional, or neutral ground between the two dimensions; not even momentarily, for salvation's sake.

Therefore, I would say that man's will is only free in the natural realm (and that not unlimited) but never to make a spiritual choice or decision, which is what the exercise of faith is, even in its most basic act of accepting Christ as saviour.

To me, there is far greater mystery in the idea of faith in a natural free will context, than as the means given only to the elect, whereby they obtain, yes, even consciously confirm the new disposition of their heart. And what else can this quickening by the Holy Spirit be, but their new life, already begun? See summary of contrast between the two life principles of natural vs. spiritual in the following chart. It is not intended to be complete, but a rather quickly prepared presentation of some important distinguishing differences.

Contrasts between Spiritual and Natural Man

<u>1</u> Life Principle: Natural/non-believer*	<u>2</u> Life Principle: Spiritual/Believer
Before Adam fell: 1. Free will. 2. No sin. 3. Spiritual/or natural with spiritual capacity. *After Adam fell: 1. Sinner. 2. Free will lost. 3. No spiritual capacity. 4. No faith on this side, <u>ever</u> . 5. No access to God. 6. No prayers heard, or answered. 7. Nothing can be seen on the other side of the line from this side--not the Lord, Gospel truth, or salvation in any way, nor anything of the spiritual realm. Impossible to cross the line. The only way to get from the natural side to the spiritual is through an <u>automatic inward transformation</u> by the	1. Elect only (by decree of God; unaffected by any human, or other external element). 2. Spiritual capacity restored, by independent act of God. 3. Faith, as gift of God (<u>means</u> given, as well as the <u>end</u> -- which is salvation). 4. Free will restored. 5. Access to God. 6. Prayers heard, and answered. 7. <u>Nothing</u> on this side of the line can be <u>perceived</u> or <u>obtained</u> by man from the other side of the line. But everything on the other side of the line can be seen from this side. Neither is there any <u>neutral</u> , or <u>transitional</u> ground between the two sides which can cause, or affect appropriation of the <u>spiritual</u> , from the <u>natural</u> side.

Natural/Non-believer, cont'd

Spiritual/Believer, cont'd

operation of God upon the elect which makes a man 'spiritual, by the Holy Spirit and the word of God.

Comment - Page 2, "God who is grieved over his people when they refuse to come to him" (with scriptural references).

Reply - These are not just any unsaved, or the non-elect, and would be misusing Israel and church truth to apply it indiscriminately to the world in general. "His" people, is a personal reference to the elect of Israel and the church only--not an all-inclusive reference to total mankind. Also, Israel's earthly life (comparatively) is not the same as the church, or New Testament relationship to God.

Comment - Page 2, "problem with statement about Gen. 1:26--dominion over earth, etc.....if such a primary command, why never repeated in the New Testament?"

Reply - Must it be repeated? Where is it revoked, or even mitigated, except for special calls in spiritual service? Are there not other commands and conditions not repeated or revoked? For example, various parts of the Adamic covenant, Gen. 2, and the servile judgment placed upon Ham's descendants in the Noahic covenant, Gen. 9.

Your reference to Matt. 22:37-38 gives our greatest moral responsibility, per the 1st and 2nd commandments, but I meant our earthly responsibility and purposes (our life's duty) to be lords and stewards of the world.* The Gospel is a whole new responsibility to Gentile or Jew, and does not supplant the other, except for those specially called to Christian service. And please don't think that I am minimizing the spiritual compared to the temporal.

*Note added later to file copy:

A qualification should be made to recognize the limitations placed upon this role by God's judgment which until the earth's later redemption, etc., has allowed Satan to be the "god" of the earth, and condemned mankind's lives. But, though believers have to work under relative restrictions and hardships, we are still obligated to do everything we can to be "keepers", discoverers of secrets, etc., scientific and educational developers and provers of all important things knowable, affecting the race, the planet, even something of the universe.

Comment - Page 2, "if a person loves the Lord and is living for him, he will endeavor to be the best teacher, or lawyer, etc."

Reply - This does not guarantee the right understanding of our duties. Many Christians are sincere and otherwise faithful, but many times do not realize their basic purposes on this earth, or sometimes even the priorities of their Christian life.

Comment - Page 2, "The scripture clearly asserts that a person first believes, and then he is saved."

Reply - A reminder on the word "saved"--often refers more to future deliverance, heaven versus hell, than the sense of regeneration itself. But, even in answer to your comment as stated, what is it as in Romans 10:10 to believe with the heart--what is the heart? Or, in verse 9, what is it to believe (with the heart)? I submit that the heart is that new part of man that God makes able to believe--even unable not to believe--for it is intrinsically the new nature, born of God.

Therefore, when you asked if I was saying that a person can be spiritual and not be saved, I say absolutely not, ever! And then, "is my order: 1. Regeneration. 2. Faith. 3. Salvation," I would say technically yes, but the process is probably very integrated and close-timed. That is, these are each inter-related acts of the same thing--but there is a technical order of factors which is expressed in sequence (surely by God's intention), as in II Thess. 2:13, "because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation(3), through sanctification of the Spirit(1), and belief of the truth(2)". 1 + 2 = 3, or the order you gave in your question.

It all hinges upon human inability which is a complete lack of will or power to respond to Christ--which is the extent of total depravity. Listen to what Spurgeon said on human inability:

"Coming to Christ is the very first effect of regeneration (not the other way around--that regeneration is the first effect of coming to Christ). No sooner is the soul (1) quickened than it at once discovers its lost estate, is horrified thereat, looks out for a refuge, and (2) believing Christ to be a suitable one, flies to Him and (3) reposes in Him". Numbering, and underlining mine, to show answer corresponding to your question, in that order.

Also from Spurgeon, "but to come to Christ truly is not in your power until you are renewed by the Holy Ghost". As to the necessity of being drawn by Christ, he says, "How does the Holy Spirit draw him (a man), why by making him willing. It is true he does not use "moral suasion"; and then he says that "God goes to the secret fountain of the heart, and by a mysterious operation turns the will(permanently) in an opposite direction so that as Ralph Erskine said, 'the man is saved with full consent against his will', that is, against his old will. But yet, it is with full consent, for he is made willing (given a new, spiritual will) in the day of God's power." Again, underlinings and parenthetical items, mine. Quoting again from Spurgeon: "He enables the heart to believe, and to come to Christ".

This, then, is all part of the regenerative process, not preliminary to it.

Though I was caught in my Greek ignorance, in misstating the verb tense of John 1:29, is not the idea correct to say, that the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" is presently applying what he did in the past at the cross? The underlying truth is there. In other words, the sense if not the tense.

See, in these theologically beautiful words of Spurgeon, how the Father's plan of salvation is fulfilled by the Son, and the Spirit (noting just when and how): "The Father in planning, the Son in redemption, the Spirit in applying the redemption must be spoken of as the one God 'who hath saved us' (and that before he called us, per II Tim. 1:9). "So every man in Christ was saved in the second Adam when He finished His work (at the cross). But is a man saved before he is called by grace? Not in his own experience, not as far as the work of the Holy Spirit goes, but he is saved in God's purpose, in Christ's redemption, and in his relationship to his covenant Head; and he is saved, moreover, in this respect, that the work of his salvation is done, and he has only to receive it as a finished work (which, because of his election, he will)". Underlining, and notes in parentheses added.

I was at least a little disappointed that practically nothing I indicated about the Jew to Gentile development, contrast, etc. was agreed to by you. I would only comment now, or re-iterate to some extent that the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant extending beyond Israel to other seed as in Gen. 12:3, etc. is mainly what I was applying.

Your comment that Numbers 21 is the key to John 3:16, or makes it understandable, is subject to some questions, or limitations. First off, as you know Old Testament typology does not constitute, or establish New Testament doctrine. In fact, the serpent on the pole instance--while replete with typical spiritual meaning--has only limited comparison to the eternal salvation message of John 3:16. 'Looking' is not automatically seeing, especially in the sense of perceiving spiritual truth. Or, it may be said, who can look (more than soulishly) except the elect (who are enabled to see)?

As to God having general love for all men--I would rather call it general providence than specific personal love and care. God may be merciful whenever he will, yet He is the judge of all for their sin. We are not judges over men's lives and are to go about doing good and showing righteousness and mercy to all.

Comment - Page 3, as to Calvin not seeing the word "world" as inconsistent with unconditional election.

Reply - But it has to be! There is only conflict if both things are conditional. I think also that anyone at sometime may humanly speak in a way that does not typify their normal convictions. An emotional moment, etc. in the fervor of preaching can cause a statement to be made that isn't really

consistent with the usual position of the person quoted. Further reference to Calvin would surely identify him with a more qualified interpretation of the word "world" than you refer to by the one example given.

As for how I would present John 3:16 as a salvation message, I would do it as well as Noah could preach righteousness to a whole society, and have no one believe (and that by God's will and design). Moreover, our specific theology is to control general preaching, not replace it or make it technical.

For example, understanding that there is necessarily some limitation to the "world" (as the elect of the world), I would preach accordingly by heart and mind, without (1) giving false impressions on the one hand, or (2) unnecessary qualifications on the other. God will direct it to the elect--we are commissioned to preach and witness generally, though God will undoubtedly lead in most cases to prevail or concentrate on the elect, even though we are not ever able to know until they are converted.

Read the sermons of the Puritans, Bunyan, Edwards, Goodwin and later Whitfield, Gill, Spurgeon and many others. See how they preached freely to souls at large, and yet were regarded as staunch Calvinists--believing just what I have contended for, that God would apply it to souls in particular (the elect). In other words, Gods calls the elect through man's general preaching. "For many are called (by man), but few are chosen (by God)". Matt. 22:14. Last sentence added later for scriptural basis.

Surely Paul understood election, and how John 3:16 relates to it, yet in his humanity he could wish that he was accursed and his brethren of Israel saved.

Comment - Page 4, "Eph. 2:8 does not teach that faith is the gift of God."

Reply - The technicality of the Greek grammar notwithstanding; is not salvation a many-faceted gift, like a cut diamond, including faith and all the elements of the spiritual life received? All virtues are gifts of God; are they not? "Faith is salvation in the germ" (Spurgeon). If not, salvation is not all of God; not all of grace. And even grace is often misinterpreted by advocates of free will theology. Grace is not what God makes available, grace is how God works. Nor is it a resistible influence, but the self-acting power of God, by which he carries out the purposes of His sovereign, free will.

Comment - Page 4, "Faith is not the gift, but faith is the 'hand of the heart' by which a man receives the gift of God".

Reply - Since all men have not faith, as the word tells us, then neither is the hand already there, but God must give it. So in the end isn't it essentially the same thing as a gift? How else can you explain it, with theological basis?

Comment - Page 4, "you cannot say that grammar demands it (faith) to be understood as 'faith of Jesus Christ (versus faith in)".
Reply - In certain important instances, grammar may not demand it, but theology does. The source of faith is much more emphasized by of than in. (Jesus Christ the author and finisher of our faith).

Comment - Page 4, Reference I Tim. 2:4, "To make all men refer only to the elect seems quite unnatural".

Reply - Why can it not be the elect, among all men or nations? That is, the broadening of Abraham's seed to include the Gentiles?

Comment - same paragraph, "In the Old Testament didn't God desire Israel to turn to Him, even though most of them did not?"

Reply - Again, His people, in a more limited, earthly nature than the New Testament Gospel requirement.

Comment - Page 4 (P.S.), As to scripture "always presenting the doctrine of election and the sovereignty of God in a way which brings tremendous comfort and encouragement to believers".

Reply - True, this is the way it is supposed to be, but this is not the state of affairs in the church world today. So, how can they be comforted believing what so many do--which is contrary to the scriptural truth of the doctrine?

You further state that the doctrine "should not be presented in a way that causes alarm, misunderstanding, disputes, etc."

To which I must reply, partly in defense of what I seriously believe, and partly in wonder that you do not seem aware that there is any great issue, or controversy that exists over the subject. Error and controversy are problems to deal with, and settle - not usually representing a peaceful situation.

The road to trouble over the doctrine started with the serious departure from the true interpretation of it, centuries ago; hence, the unavoidable conflicts of trying to overcome the entrenched error.

And, again, would you do the same thing as you advise, about neo-evangelicalism, the charismatic movement, ecumenism, etc.? I tend to believe that anyone who is not a believer of the full-circle sovereignty of God (or a so-called 5-point Calvinist) is technically, essentially, an Arminian in salvation theology.

In other words, 4 points is still basically Arminian in final analysis and effect. Moderate Calvinism, as a modification (i.e., R. P. Lightner's book, "The Death that Christ Died"), serves the free will view more than complete grace (which cannot be modified).

May I close a lengthy letter (though I believe necessitated by your comments and questions, and the scope of the subject) with an encouraging remark from Spurgeon, which I anticipate the fulfillment of in many of our lives in time to come (even this side of glory).

"Men generally grow more Calvinistic as they advance in years. Is not that a sign that the doctrine is right? As they are growing riper for heaven, as they are getting nearer to the rest that remaineth for the people of God, the soul longs to feed on the finest of the wheat, and abhors chaff and husks."

If you have access to any of Spurgeon's sermons on the various elements of God's sovereignty in salvation, please read and study them. There is an excellent compilation of them in "Spurgeon's Sermons on Sovereignty" printed by the Baptist Examiner Book Shop, Ashland, Kentucky (regardless of whatever questions you may have of that particular establishment).

When, after an openminded perusal and consideration of such a one as Spurgeon's teaching on the subject, you or I, or anyone can still hold an opposite or disagreeing position, at least we have been to school under one of the best theologians on the subject. But if we are mainly only influenced by contemporary preaching, and teaching, we do not stand on very reliable ground.

I know I have given you a lot to go through again, but as time permits I would appreciate your reactions. Also I trust that you will not object to my giving copies of our correspondence to my pastors, and to Pastor R. S. who also received a copy of my manuscript and replied to it very thoughtfully and encouragingly. He holds to four of Calvin's points, but is not convinced that limited atonement is true. In fact, he is quite sure that it isn't. He has many good thoughts, and questions on the whole subject. He asked if I would give him copies of whatever develops with any others on the manuscript.

Trusting that you will accept this letter in the spirit of brotherly love, as I similarly have endeavored to write it; may everything be done to the praise of His glory, whom we serve.

Sincerely,

Everett N. Falvey