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researching & organizing evangelical tracts

Including Roman Catholic, Charismatic, Church of Christ,
Mormon, Islam, and more — with special emphasis on:
the Seventh-day Adventists & Jehovah's Witnesses

"...that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ" 1 Peter 4:11

"FREE-WILL" — A POPULAR MYTH!

Man loves to think of himself as free and independent; and he'll boast about it in any way he can. One of his favorite ways to express this is by bragging about his "free-will." He loves that term; it makes him feel good; it makes him feel big. But the truth is: the "free-will" of man is just *an illusion*. It's a myth. The popular belief is: (1) that *the will* is **the supreme factor** in making all decisions, (2) that **"a sinner"** is *totally free* to choose between good and evil, and (3) that **"a sinner"** can choose or reject Jesus Christ *at will*. That's the general notion, but it's as false as a three-dollar bill. Man's choices are based upon his disposition; they never spring from a *neutral* or *unbiased* "free" will.

The will of man is his faculty of choice, but it's not the *determining factor* in those choices. It's not a **sovereign** faculty that directs things. The will follows the dictates of the mind and heart. Man's intellect and affections preside over and control every choice that he makes. As long as a man is rational and not insane, this is the way he'll act. The problem with the idea of *free-will* is that it gives the impression that the will of man is a *separate compartment* within man, and that it can make choices *all on its own*. But these three faculties of the soul are *not independent* of each other: the mind, the heart, and the will; they are all intertwined and function together as one.

Talking about a "free" will is like talking about a "free" caboose on a freight train! The caboose is connected to and follows; the will is connected to and follows. The caboose doesn't make choices *on its own* (when and where it goes); nor does the will make choices *on its own*. Why are you reading this? because (1) you *thought* about reading it (the mind), (2) you *wanted* to read it (the heart), and (3) you *chose* to read it (the will). That's the way it works: 1, 2, 3. And 3 is always the caboose! There's a definite course the caboose takes; the engine determines it. And there's a definite course the will takes; the mind and heart determine it! You *thought* on it, you *desired* it, you *chose* it!

Now *spiritually*, the heart of the whole matter is cleared up when we find out what's the matter with the heart!—"The heart is **deceitful above all things**, and **desperately wicked**" (*Jer 17:9*), and what's the matter with the mind!—"The carnal mind is **enmity against God**" (*Rom 8:7*). It ought to be easy for us to see! **That man never will** come to Christ! not in **that** condition!—**desperately wicked, enmity against God**—something **supernatural** has to happen first! This is all we're saying when we preach "**sovereign grace**." God must step in! That man's will is totally **enslaved by his wicked heart and corrupt mind**! And unless God comes in saving power, he is **utterly bound** to follow his own wicked nature in rejecting Christ and choosing the love of this world!

Jesus *emphatically* stated this truth! "**No man can come to me**, except the Father which hath sent me *draw him*." And to make sure that no one missed it, he said it again! "**No man can come unto me**, except it were *given unto him* of my Father" (*John 6:44 & 65*). The word is **can**, which speaks of *ability*, not *may*. All men *may* come to Christ; the door is wide open! "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (*Mat 11:28*); "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (*Rev 22:17*). But while all men *may* come, Jesus says, "**No man can come!**" No man is *able* to **will** to come when his *heart and mind* are dead set against it! He **can not** come because he **will not** come. "Ye **will not** come to me, that ye might have life" (*John 5:40*). The caboose **can not go south** if the train is going *north*; it always *follows*! And an *evil* man **can not** choose *good*. He always *follows* what he is! "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do *good*, that are accustomed to do *evil*" (*Jer 13:23*). The prophet irrefutably states: this is an impossibility! It **can not** be done!

The *bondage of man's will* and his *depraved heart* are throughout the Bible: "A **corrupt tree** bringeth forth **evil fruit**" (*Mat 7:17*); "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is **only evil continually**" (*Gen 6:5*); "Men **love darkness** rather than light" (*John 3:19*). "Having the understanding **darkened**, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the **blindness of their heart**" (*Eph 4:18*). "There is **none** that **understandeth**, there is **none** that **seeketh after God**...there is **none** that **doeth good**, no, not one" (*Rom 3:11,12*).

By saying man's will is in *bondage*, I'm not saying that he is not **free** to choose what he *wants to choose*. On the contrary, he's **absolutely free** to choose *anything he wants*! By saying his will is in *bondage*, I'm saying that he **can not** do otherwise! He **can not not** choose what he *wants*! He will *always choose* exactly what he *wants*! And when a man "loves darkness," he will *always choose* exactly what he *wants*! **Darkness**! And what he finds *unattractive and repulsive*, he will *never choose*!—the **light** of the world: **Jesus**! "Every one that doeth **evil hateth the light**, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (*John 3:20*). If *carrots and raw meat* are placed before a hungry lion, you won't hear anyone say, "Well, because he has a **free** choice, we're not sure which one he'll go for!" No, his carnivorous nature makes his choice *certain*! And the choice of a *sinner*, while equally **free**, is also equally *certain*!

"IF THAT'S TRUE, WHY SHOULD WE PREACH?"

Those who argue against the **Doctrines of Grace** always wind up throwing these "IFs" at you: **IF** God is sovereign, and the elect are already chosen and redeemed, and these alone will be effectually called, and justified, and glorified—then why should we preach the gospel? **IF** God has his whole program already arranged, and it's sure to follow his plan right down the line, then he doesn't need us. **IF** God cannot fail, and he knows the end from the beginning because he has purposed what the end shall be, and predestinated those that shall be saved, then our preaching to the lost is pointless, and our praying for the unsaved of no use, because what God has purposed to be will be, and all that we do could never change that in the least!

The people who sound off this way are separating two things that Scripture has bound together. They think that God's program as stated above cannot coexist with man's program. But the Bible clearly presents both of these as intertwined together—God's purpose from all eternity perfectly fulfilled, and the free actions of men. But they see these as separate and divided: one *over here* and one *over there*; whereas they should be seeing the free actions of men **as a part of** God's whole program! A prime example of this was at Calvary:

...both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. —Acts 4:27,28

Do you not see the free actions of men here accomplishing God's purpose? These two things are not *incompatible* with each other. They coexist! One with the other, working together in *perfect harmony*. You have wicked men **freely** carrying out their evil purpose in crucifying Christ; and you can see that their actions are fulfilling precisely what God purposed to take place from all eternity! Now if God says these two are joined, that the free actions of men are bound up in his predetermined plan, then who can say that these two things are *inconsistent* with each other and *cannot* go together? This truth is presented all through the Bible; and it proclaims the *greatness and magnificence* of our God! His understanding **is infinite**! If your god is *not big enough* to match this, get rid of him! People *limit* God by their own *inability* to reconcile these truths. Because *they* can't see it, they believe *God can't see it*! But it's right there in the Scriptures.

Let's get back to our starting point: **IF** God's entire salvation program is lined out, why are we bothering to preach, when we know for certain that God is going to save every one of the elect? When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch at the close of their missionary journey, "when they had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that **God had done with them**" (*Acts 14:27*); and years later when Paul finally arrived in Jerusalem, he saluted the elders, "and he declared particularly what things **God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry**" (*Acts 21:19*). Notice that Paul doesn't have his preaching and God's purpose separate; in fact, he sees them so perfectly blended together that when he speaks of *his work*, it's *God's work*! what "**God had done with them**!" and "**what God had wrought by his ministry**!" This is exactly how we're to see our evangelism; **God is at work**! This is precisely how God from eternity planned to save his elect; and he raised us up for that very purpose! We are not something "tacked on" to what God is doing; **WE ARE what God is doing!**

Paul's work and God's work were not *distinct* one from the other; Paul knew that his labors were **bound up in** God's fulfilling of his eternal purposes. We should be equally aware and believe just as much as Paul that what God is doing through us is not some sort of afterthought, but he planned it all from eternity; and there we were then in the mind of God as he had us right in the middle of his plans from the outset as the very ones that would carry the gospel message to those whom he had chosen to save! It is through preaching that God has purposed to save his elect (*1 Cor 1:21*); this is the God-appointed **means**. And this is where so many people err:—when they hear of **predestination**, they only see **THE END** as foreordained by God; they fail to grasp **the whole truth** (which involves our evangelism)—that God has predestinated **not only the end, but ALL OF THE MEANS** working up to that end! You remember how confident Paul was in the midst of all his trials, "I endure all things **for the elect's sakes**, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (*2 Tim 2:10*). He knew that God was fulfilling his eternal purpose by *sovereignly* calling out his elect *through his ministry*!

Our command is to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (*Mark 16:15*). That comes from the *highest* authority! There's nothing futile or pointless about it! "**We are labourers together WITH GOD**." And Paul calls upon us to remember in this same context, that *we are nothing*, and that our confidence is to be only in "**GOD**"—"who giveth the increase" (*1 Cor 3:5-9*). We have no other hope of success in this work than what is found in the promise Jesus left his disciples: "**LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS**, even unto the end of the world....And they went forth, and preached everywhere, **the Lord working with them**" (*Mat 28:20; Mark 16:20*).

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