

Does The Bible Teach Free Will?

By: Pastor Clark Gallagher

Introduction

Does the Bible teach free will? The importance of asking this question lies in the fact that the doctrine of free will is so widely taught by Pastors and ascribed to by their congregations. Because of this fact we are bound by Scripture to test this teaching (1 Th 5:21; 1 Cor 4:6; 2 Cor 10:5) by Scripture. **We must not readily accept any teaching (regardless of who teaches it or what sense it makes to us), until it is demonstrated that it agrees with what the Bible teaches.**

Several times in the Pastoral Epistles the Apostle Paul makes mention of sound doctrine. The Greek word most commonly translated as *sound* in the Pastoral Epistles is *υγιανω* (hugiaino). Sound doctrine is teaching that is free from error and that produces spiritual health and godliness. Therefore, using the Bible as our sole authoritative guide on doctrinal and moral issues, any teaching which is found in conflict with the Scriptures is in error and will lead to spiritual sickness, ungodliness, and possibly even damnable heresy.

How we answer the question of whether or not the Bible teaches free will significantly affects our view of the inspiration of Scripture, our understanding of God, man, evangelism, and salvation. This issue is not a dry academic discussion which is important only to theologians and philosophers. Rather, it is instead a **vitaly relevant issue** which must be engaged by all who name the name of Christ. Those who neglect discussing and deciding the issue of free will (in the name that it is divisive or unspiritual), are anything but spiritual or mature, and need to get on track with what Scripture teaches.

Defining Our Terms

Much of the difficulty in examining and discussing free will lies in the fact that it is very rarely, if ever, defined by those who teach it. This leads to a great deal of confusion because if one does not have a meaning for free will, how can one ever examine it?

- 1 Clear definitions are necessary for profitable discussion and evaluation. In order for us to learn whether or not the Bible teaches a certain doctrine the meaning of the words used to describe it must be made plain.
- 2 Clear definitions help us to identify presuppositions. Presuppositions are the assumptions upon which we base our beliefs. When a person is made to clearly define their terms they also are made to clearly outline certain assumptions they have about the way things are which leads them to believe what they do. This point is **extremely important** as we shall see that most free will proponents automatically assume that whenever a person makes a decision or is given a choice between two alternatives this means they have a free will.
- 3 Clear definitions help us prevent or detect the fallacy of equivocation. The fallacy of equivocation occurs "when we confuse the several meanings of a

word or phrase, accidentally or deliberately, [then] we are using the word equivocally. If this is done in the context of an argument we commit the fallacy of equivocation.”¹ This point is related to point two in that many free will proponents confuse the meaning of choice and decision with their concept of free will.

So we see that because words can have varied meanings, depending upon the context in which they are used, we must from the outset establish exactly what it is we are discussing.

The Power of Contrary Choice

What most Bible teachers who teach free will mean by free will is the power of contrary choice. The power of contrary choice means, “the freedom of alternate choice which consists in the supposed ability of the agent to choose among the alternative possibilities of action.”² In simple terms, free will means that a person is not determined by God or anything else and is equally free to make a choice between two or more options presented to them. This is also called libertarian free will or human autonomy (self law).

Norman Geisler, who is a prolific free will defender, documents our definition of free will in his book, *When Skeptics Ask*:

Some have said that it (free will) refers to the ability to desire. But a better definition is that it is the ability to decide between alternatives..... As long as the choosing comes from the individual rather than an outside force the decision is made freely.³

Where the discussion of free will most frequently comes into play in churches today is in regard to a person’s ability to accept or reject the gospel. It is this area where we will focus our discussion.

¹ Introduction to Logic 10th Edition by Irving M. Copi & Carl Cohen; Prentice Hall Publishers. Pg. 191.

² Runes Dictionary of Philosophy, pg. 112.

³ When Skeptics Ask by Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks, pg. 63. Baker Books.

The Supposed Necessity of Free Will

Those who hold to the idea that man has a free will do so for a variety of reasons. The most common reasons are:

- 1 Man cannot be held responsible for his actions if he does not have the ability to do otherwise. This is frequently the line of reasoning given in most philosophy text books. The origin of this idea can be traced back to the Greek philosophers from before the time of Aristotle.
- 2 In order to create man in His image God had to make man with a free will as it is part of the image of God.
- 3 The necessity of man having a free will is given as an explanation to the so-called problem of evil. Since God had to make man (and Lucifer) with a free will, it is man (via his free will), that brought evil into the world, thus God is saved from the charge of being the author of evil.
- 4 Love demands a choice. God wanted creatures that would love him and love demands that we have a choice. Without a free will man could never love God.
- 5 Without free will we would all be robots.

What Do The Scriptures Teach?

The final rule for answering the question of whether or not the Bible teaches libertarian free will is the Bible itself, and not human reason, nor the Greek philosophers, nor the humanist theologians and apologists of our time. As the Apostle Peter commands us to set apart Christ as Lord in our hearts (1 Pet 3:15) so should the answering of the question of free will be an exercise in the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all things. The word of God, **not the finite sin corrupted reason of men, nor our own emotions**, is to be the judge of free will.

Does man have a will?

The Scriptures do not teach that man has a will that is some kind of separate entity in and of itself such as the arm is one part of our body and our leg is another. Rather the Bible teaches that we are the ones who make decisions and who desire things. Jesus Himself illustrates this point in the Gospel of John 21:22.

Jesus said unto him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

The Greek word John uses in this passage is $\theta\epsilon\lambda\omega$ (thelo) which simply means to desire something and is commonly used in the New Testament in a similar

manner.

Proverbs 27:19 - *As in water face reflects face, So the heart of man reflects man.*

Proverbs 23:7 - *For as he thinks within himself, so he is. He says to you, "Eat and drink!" But his heart is not with you.*

Matthew 15:19 - *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.*

These passages illustrate the use of the word *heart* to mean the inner person or in other words, who the "I" in "I am" really is. In the passage from Matthew's gospel the Greek word is καρδια (kardia). This is also the Greek word used in the Septuagint version of the Proverbs passages. The meaning of the word heart intended by the authors in these verses is the very core of who we are. The heart was viewed in this sense as the inner self or the seat of all we are. It is important to note that the Biblical authors did not view the heart as some separate entity, but rather as a metaphor for our immaterial self. Thus it is we who do the thinking and willing and not some separate part of us that we use as a tool.

This is also significant as many Christians make the distinction between the "head" and the "heart". The Biblical authors did not make this distinction but rather viewed the heart as synonymous with the mind and the intellect. Our thoughts, emotions, and desires spring forth from the very essence of our being. (Gen. 8:21, 17:17, 20:6; Ex. 4:21, 35:5; Deut. 4:9; 1 Sam. 2:1,35; 2 Sam. 7:3; Psalm 4:4, 7:10, 12:2; Isa. 6:10,10:7, 44:18-19; Mat. 5:8,28,6:21, 9:4; Acts 4:32, 5:3-4; Rom. 1:21,2:5,15; 1 Cor. 2:9,4:5,7:37) ⁴

⁴ **Note:** It is important to realize that the question of free will is not merely asking whether or not men make decisions (as the Scriptures obviously teach that we do) but whether or not the decisions we make are free from any controlling conditions within man or without.

Man's Bondage to Sin

The radical nature of man's bondage to sin is repeatedly mentioned throughout the Scriptures. The relevance of this to the question of free will is seen in that the issue of free will is directly related to the doctrine of man. If man is so in bondage to sin that there is no aspect of his nature that is unaffected, then how can he possibly be free to make choices that are not sin-based or influenced?

Genesis 6:5 *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Genesis 8:21 *And the LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.*

Psalms 14:1 *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.*

Psalms 51:5 *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.*

Ecclesiastes 7:20 *Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.*

Ecclesiastes 9:3 *The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives.*

Jeremiah 17:9 *"The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? (Note our previous definition of the word heart.)*

John 8:34 *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.*

Romans 6:17 *..... you were slaves of sin.*

Ephesians 2:1-3 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

We see from these passages that we are altogether evil by nature and in bondage to sin. We are born as sinners; therefore we sin as a function of who and what we are. If mankind has a free will in the libertarian sense (and therefore the ability to do the opposite of evil - which is good), then why is it that the Scriptures testify that all have sinned and are now continually falling short of the glory of God? Why has sin held a universal reign over all mankind save for Christ alone? One might think that it is at least plausible that someone could have come along and willed to do that which is good all their lives. But no, the authoritative, inspired, inerrant Word of God has testified to us that we, through the fall of Adam, are sinners through and through, and are the willful slaves of sin.

Romans 3:10-11 “.. as it is written, “*THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; "11" THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;*”

Romans 3:23 “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*”

The Effects of Sin

John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

In this passage Jesus is informing Nicodemus of mankind's serious need to be raised to spiritual life from their natural state of spiritual death. The word that is translated “see” in this verse is used not in the physical sense but in the sense of understanding or intellectual perception. Jesus is literally saying unless a person is born from above by the regenerating grace of God he simply does not have the ability to perceive or understand the kingdom of God. William Hendriksen's commentary on this verse is worth noting:

When Jesus speaks about entering the Kingdom of God, it is clear that the expression is equivalent to having everlasting life or being saved. The Kingdom of God is the realm in which his rule is recognized and obeyed and in which His grace prevails. Before one can see that kingdom, before one can have everlasting life in any sense, one must be born from above. It is very clear, therefore, that there is an act of God which precedes any act of man. In its initial stage **the process of changing a person into a child of God precedes conversion and faith.**⁵

John 6:44 “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*”

This verse explicitly denies that man has a free will ability to equally accept or reject the gospel. The Greek text of this passage denies, in no uncertain terms, any inherent ability to either chose Christ or reject Him. Because of our bondage to sin and natural tendency to suppress the truth in unrighteousness, we simply will not submit to the gospel. When unregenerate man hears the gospel he will always turn from it.

⁵ Hendriksen, William: New Testament Commentary on John, Pg. 133.

The Greek text says οὐδεις δυναται ἐλθειν προσ με (oudeis dunatai elthein pros me). This verse literally says that no one has the ability, in and of themselves, to cause themselves to believe in Christ. This one verse denies free will in the libertarian sense and is sufficient grounds for all to reject this idea.

The great reformer, John Calvin, had this to say about this verse:

He (Jesus) does not merely accuse them of wickedness, but likewise reminds them, that it is the peculiar gift of God to embrace the doctrine which is exhibited by Him; which He does, that their unbelief may not disturb weak minds. For any so foolish that, in the things of God, they depend on the opinions of men; in consequence which, they entertain suspicions about the Gospel, as soon as they see that it is not received by the world. Unbelievers, on the other hand, flattering themselves in their obstinacy, have the hardihood to condemn the Gospel because it does not please them. On the contrary, therefore, Christ declares that the doctrine of the Gospel, though it is preached to all without exception, cannot be embraced by all, but that a new understanding and a new perception are requisite; and, therefore, that faith does not depend upon the will of men, but that it is God who gives it.⁶

Romans 8:7-8 *Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for **it is not even able to do so**, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* (Emphasis added.)

The clear words of this passage are obvious in their meaning. However, because it is so often the case that our sinful minds would suppress God's truth, the interpretation of Kenneth Wuest is here added to further drive home their point:

The Greek has it, "For those who are habitually dominated by the flesh put their mind on the things of the flesh" The flesh here is the evil nature. "Dominated" is from *kata* (kata), "down." The present participle is used, the state being continuous. This is an unsaved person, habitually dominated by the indwelling sinful nature. "Mind" is *μφρνεο* (froneo), "to direct the mind to something, to seek or strive for." The word speaks of a deliberate setting of one's mind upon a certain thing. The unsaved person is dominated by the evil nature habitually, and habitually puts his mind on those things that the sinful nature has always welling up within itself, the things of sin.

The words "carnally minded" are *s sarkosuma tepto phrone* (to fronehmat h" sarko"), literally, "the mind of the flesh." "Flesh" here refers to the evil nature. It is the genitive of possession. The mind is possessed by, thus controlled or dominated by the evil nature, a description of the unsaved person. That person is dead in trespasses and sins, dead in the sense

⁶ Commentary on the Gospel of John by John Calvin, pg. 226. AGES Digital Library.

that he is separated from God and His life, for death is separation, and is on his way to a final and everlasting state of death in eternity. The words “spiritually minded” are *ma tou pneumatoupto phrone* (to *fronhma tou pneumato*), literally, “the mind possessed by the Spirit,” thus a mind controlled or dominated by the Holy Spirit. That person possesses the life that God is, and peace, the Greek word for peace in its verb form meaning “to bind together that which has been separated,” thus, the believing sinner, bound together with God and His life after having been separated by sin.

The reason why the mind dominated by the evil nature represents a state of death in the person so constituted, and results in final death, is that it is at enmity against God. “Subject” is *μhupotasso* (*uJpotassw*), a military term meaning “to arrange in order under” a commanding general, for instance. Such a mind is not marshalled under the command of God, but of Satan. Consequently, those who are within the sphere of the evil nature, are not able to please God. These are, of course, the unsaved. Denney explains: “The reason why the mind of the flesh terminates so fatally: it is hostility to God, the fountain of life. Alienation from Him is necessarily fatal. It is the flesh which does not (for indeed it cannot) submit itself to God; as the seat of indwelling sin it is in permanent revolt, and those who are in it (a stronger expression, yet substantially identical with those who are after it, verse 5), cannot please God.”

Translation. For those who are habitually dominated by the flesh, put their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are habitually dominated by the Spirit, put their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to have the mind dominated by the flesh, is death, but to have the mind dominated by the Spirit, is life and peace; because the mind dominated by the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not marshal itself under the command of the law of God, neither is it able to. Moreover, those who are in the sphere of the flesh are not able to please God.⁷

1 Corinthians 2:14 *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*

This verse is so clear it hardly seems needful to comment. However, the sinful and prideful mind being what it is, it may be necessary to spell out this verse’s meaning letter by letter so to speak.

The natural man in this passage refers to unregenerate, unbelieving people; in other words, man in his natural fallen state apart from the regenerating grace of God. Paul is saying in this passage that what God has revealed to His people is beyond the comprehension of unbelievers. They simply do not have the ability to grasp the truth of God’s plan of salvation. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit to

⁷ Wuest, K. S. 1997, c1984. Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader (Ro 8:5). Eerdmans: Grand Rapids

save, man will only see the gospel as foolishness. Gordon Clark's commentary on this verse states:

The sensual man....does not welcome truth as a guest in his home. That is, he does not accept divine truth as true. He does not believe them. This does not mean that he does not understand them. College students today, brainwashed by the socialistic public schools into believing in the dignity and essential goodness of every human being, understand the doctrine of total depravity fairly well, if it is explained by the Christian professor; but they consider it to be outrageously false. It is more ridiculous than believing the earth is flat, and so they do not know it as true. They know it well enough. The most accurate answer to a question on justification by faith was written in a college exam by the one student in the class who most vigorously rejected it. When the verse here says that that they do not know the doctrine, it means they do not know it as true; and the reason is immediately given: for it is spiritually evaluated. The sensual demonic student cannot properly evaluate what he explains so accurately on his quiz paper. Naturally, such persons cannot believe, for as Jesus said of the Pharisees, "Therefore they could not believe because Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them" (John 12:39-40).⁸

These few verses alone state that:

Men cannot of themselves believe in Christ.

Men cannot of themselves subject themselves to God's Law.

Man cannot of themselves accept the things of the Spirit as being true.

Because of man's bondage to sin, his natural hatred of God, and tendency to suppress the truth in unrighteousness, it is not possible for man to make decisions that are free from his enslavement to sin. Just as it is impossible for God to lie, because God by nature cannot lie, (Heb 6:18) so it is impossible for man to choose to do things which are contrary to his own sinful nature such as love God, obey God, or believe the gospel. Man's will simply is not free from sin but is instead a slave to it. Slaves (by definition) are not free.

Yeah But....Answering Common Objections

Earlier we listed some of the common reasons given for man having a free will. We will now attempt to answer them and further refute the unbiblical notion that human beings have a free will. (Objections shown in **bold**.)

1. The most common objection to man not having a free will is that without

⁸ Clark, Gordon H. Commentary on 1 Corinthians pages 42-43. Trinity Foundation.

it man cannot be held responsible for what he had no ability to do. We will again quote Norman Geisler who, yet once more, clearly describes the thinking behind this objection.

Not only are evil moral actions ones that could have been done otherwise, but they should have been otherwise.....Here too, **logic seems to insist**, that such moral obligations imply that we have self-determining moral free choice. For ought implies can. That is, what we ought to do implies that we can do it. Otherwise, we have to assume that the Moral Lawgiver is irrational, commanding that we do what is literally impossible for us to do. **Good reason appears to insist** that if God commands it, then we can do it. Moral obligation implies moral freedom.⁹

Notice that Dr. Geisler does not quote Scripture but appeals to “logic” and “reason” which seem, to him at least, to insist that what he is claiming is true. (We might ask, “who’s reason and who’s logic?”) This kind of language is common among writers who have no real proof of what they are stating but are merely sharing with us their basic presuppositions. Geisler (an avid Arminian) is merely assuming that what does not conform to his own notions of rationality is false.

The notion that “ought implies can” immediately runs into problems with the Bible. Throughout the Bible we are commanded by God to do what is holy and just and we are held accountable for doing so (Matt 5:48). Yet nowhere in the Scriptures are we ever given the idea that our moral responsibility to God is based upon an inherent ability within ourselves. To take this notion to its logical conclusion would mean that because we are commanded to be perfect, and will be held accountable to God’s standards, we must have the ability to do so. Such an idea is obviously ridiculous and contradicts the teaching of Scripture as we have demonstrated. John Calvin is again worth quoting:

“In the place they inquire, by what right is the lord angry with His creatures who had not provoked Him by any previous offence; for that to devote to destruction whom He pleases is more like the caprice of a tyrant than the lawful sentence of a judge; that men have reason, therefore, to expostulate with God, if they’re predestined to eternal death without any demerit of their own, merely by His sovereign will. If such thoughts ever enter into the minds of pious men, they will be sufficiently enabled to break their violence by this one consideration, how exceedingly presumptuous it is only to inquire into the causes of the Divine will; which is in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of everything that exists. For if it has any cause, then there must be something antecedent, on which it depends; which it is impious to suppose. For the will of God is the highest rule of justice; so that what He wills must be considered just, for this very reason, because He wills it. When it is inquired, therefore, why the Lord did so, the answer must be, because He would. But if you go further, and ask why He so determined, you are in search of something greater and higher than the

⁹ Chosen But Free, by Norman Geisler, pg. 30. Bethany House publishers.

will of God, which can never be found.”¹⁰

A thorough examination of the Biblical basis for responsibility can be found in Dr. R.K. McGregor Wright's book, *No Place for Sovereignty*. Wright explains that our responsibility is not based on some theory of free will but rather upon the fact that we are God's creatures. The potter has a right over the clay to call it into question for anything. **God is His own and our standard for morality** - and not some free will theory that God and man must adhere to.

The first chapter of Romans also informs us that responsibility is linked to knowledge rather than free will.

2. The idea that God had to create man with free will because it is a part of the image of God is also used as an objection to divine predestination. This idea is absurd. First of all, God does not have to do anything. There is no law higher than God Himself which He must adhere to. Secondly, God can do what He wants according to His own nature. He cannot ever choose to lie or to not be God; He simply is not “free” to do those things. Thirdly, God created Adam with the ability to sin or not to sin, if this is an inherent aspect of the image of God then God too must have this ability which clearly He does not. Lastly, when the last sinner is saved and all the saints are in glory with new immortal bodies they will be unable to sin (1 John 3:2). Will we suddenly stop being human and no longer reflect the image of God? Of course not, to assert such a thing would be sheer lunacy.

3. Another extremely common objection to man not having a free will is that without it God is the author of sin. Free will is seen as a necessity to deliver God from being the author of sin. Arminians (and those who deny being Arminians but in fact still are because of the beliefs they hold), cannot get past the idea that if God predetermines everything He is directly responsible for everything that happens.

Scripture is clear in asserting that God is not the author of sin and there is no darkness in Him at all (1 John 1:5). Scripture is also equally clear that God works all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph 1:11). Since all things would include evil, and given the fact that God does not Himself do evil, there must be a non-contradictory relationship between these two truths of Scripture because the Word of God can never contradict itself.

Those who hold this view need to remember the answers raised by point 2 which state that God is not obligated to do anything. They also need to come to grips with the fact that evil is a part of God's eternal plan as so many scriptures illustrate (Gen 50:20; Acts 4:28; Eph 1:11). Free will is not needed as an answer to deliver God from the charge of evil because evil is not a problem for God, but for man, and man is in no position to question God about its existence (Rom 9:20).

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Book III Pg. 439.

For the sake of argument let's suppose that the omniscient God of the Bible did give man libertarian free will as the Arminians teach. In that case, evil came about not as a part of the predetermined plan of God, but by the intrusion of man's sinful use of free will into the universe God created. However, the problem with that line of thinking is: because God is omniscient, He knew that evil would eventually come into existence - along with all the death, suffering, and destruction that followed. Therefore, if God had chosen not to create, then evil would never have existed. Thus we see that the Arminian answer is no answer at all, but rather a shallow shelving of the problem of evil. (For a thorough discussion of the relationship between the totally sovereign God and evil see chapter five of Gordon Clark's "Religion, Reason, and Revelation.")

Below are several points from Scripture that show God's relation to evil as being non-contradictory as well as revealing that while God is the ultimate cause of all things, He is in no way responsible for sin, or sinful for having determined evil's existence.

- ✓ God is the Creator of everything (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-3).
- ✓ God knows everything and has all power to do as He pleases (Jer. 32:17; Rev. 1:8; 1 John 3:20; Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 40:28).
- ✓ All that God does is righteous and just (Psalm 33:10-11; 111:7; Dan. 4:37; Rom. 11:36; Rev. 15:3).
- ✓ God works all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11; Heb. 1:3; Isaiah 8:9-10).
- ✓ God has ordained that evil would exist (Acts 4:27-28; Luke 22:22; Isaiah 45:7; Jude 4, 12-13; Prov. 16:4; Psalm 46:8; Rom. 9:17; John 12:39-40).
- ✓ Therefore it was righteous and just for God to ordain that evil, in all its forms, would exist.

4. Love demands a choice. This is yet another unproven assumption that free will defenders have come up with as an appeal to the emotions. It is often stated by men like Dave Hunt and Chuck Smith that love cannot be forced but rather it must be a free will decision in order to have any meaning. This "answer" fails to recognize man's bondage to sin. God must give life to a person through regeneration so that a person **becomes able to** love God and desire to follow Him (John 3:3-5). God does not ask those whom He regenerates for permission! Rather, He does it according to His sovereign will and grace. Thus He Himself (not a free will decision by man), sovereignly brings about the new life whereby believers are inclined to love and please God.

This objection is often couched in terms of a marital relationship. It is argued that a husband cannot demand that he be loved by his wife. However this analogy fails to adhere to Scripture. Love is a moral obligation and an explicit command of Scripture (Deut 6:5; John 15:12) not a free will choice. The value of love lies in the character of God. Love's inherent value and meaning are found in God who is holy, true, and righteous, and not in the idea that we could have done otherwise.

5. Without free will we would be robots. No, without free will we are lumps of

clay in the Potter's hands that are made either as vessels of wrath or honor. We exist to glorify God and therein lies our purpose. (Those who make such an objection should carefully study Romans 9.)

God's Sovereignty Over Human Decisions

The following is a list of passages that clearly illuminate the truth that God is Sovereign over human actions and that we are not free from His dominion:

"...also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will," Ephesians 1:11;

"The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes." Proverbs 21:1;

"And they observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had caused them to rejoice, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel." Ezra 6:22;

"He turned their heart to hate His people, To deal craftily with His servants." Psalm 105:25;

"For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, "28" to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur." Acts 4:27-28;

"A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." Acts 16:14,

and Isaiah 10:5-16; (which is too lengthy to efficiently show here.)

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