



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | [believerschapeldallas.org](http://believerschapeldallas.org)

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Basic Bible Doctrine, John 5:40, 6:44

"Effects of the Fall, Part III: Inability"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful for the word of God. We praise Thee that it is a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path. We thank Thee that it is sharper than any two-edged sword. That it pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and the marrow. That it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And we thank Thee, Lord that it is with this word that we have to do. We pray that as we consider again the Scriptures tonight that Thou will give us special understanding. Enable us to respond to the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

And then we pray, Lord, that Thou will give us guidance and direction and enablement in our Christian life. We pray that as we come to this very important subject tonight that Thou would give us understanding and enable us, Lord, to appreciate all that the Bible says concerning the will. Now we commit each one present to Thee. We pray that the spiritual blessings that our found in the Scriptures may be theirs. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the third in our series of studies on "The Effects of the Fall" and the subject tonight is, "Human Inability". And for Scripture reading, since in the message we'll be looking at a number of passages, I want to look at two in the Gospel of

John to which we shall refer later: John chapter 5 and verse 40 and then John chapter 6 and verse 44. John chapter 5 and verse 40 and the Lord Jesus says, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life". I want you to notice particularly the word "will". "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life". And then John chapter 6 and verse 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day". Again, notice particularly the expression, "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day".

In our studies of "The Effects of the Fall", we have noted that Adam's sin had three great effects upon men. First of all, Adam's sin's guilt was imputed to men. Romans chapter 5 and verse 12 has stated, "For this cause, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, because all sinned". So Adam's first sin's guilt was imputed to men. And then in our last study, we noticed that Adam's posterity inherited a corrupt nature from him. That is what we called original sin. That term "original sin" has been used of different things, but in these studies we will refer to the corrupt nature that we have inherited from Adam calling that original sin. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 3, a verse that we did not have time to look at says that you "were by nature the children of wrath". And that statement does support the idea that it is by virtue of our birth that we are children of wrath. That expression, incidentally, "by nature" is one that means by birth. So by the pervasive character of this sin men may be said to be totally depraved.

Now when we talked about totally depraved last week, we tried to make it very plain that total depravity does not mean that a man is as bad as he could be, but simply that all of his faculties have been touched by sin: his mind, his will, his emotions. Now his mind is not as blind as it might be. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit has given a great deal of illumination to all men. His mind is not what it might be. His emotions are not as corrupt as they might be. His will may not be as rebellious as it can be in individual

cases. To be totally depraved simply means that all of our faculties have been touched by sin.

It does not mean that man is not able to do something that is good in the eyes of men. There may be many very wonderful things and admirable things performed by individuals. But in the light of the teaching of the word of God, they are unacceptable to God in the sense that they do not arise out of faith and they do not have as their goal the glory of God. And thus, they fall under the category of bad works and not good works. Good works are works that arise out of faith and they are designed to glorify God. So Adam's posterity inherited a corrupt nature from him. That is why all men are sinners and not only sinners in act, but sinners in nature. And that explains why all men inevitably commit acts of sin. Their nature is depraved.

Now the sin of Adam had a further effect and that is that Adam's posterity have since been unable to perform spiritual good. This inability of man is what we study tonight in "The Inability of Man". This subject, "The Inability of Man" is a very critical one because it touches the question of the freedom of the will. It is the opinion of many who are not Calvinistic in their theology or Lutheran in their theology that a man does possess free will. Even Christians possess free will, it is said. I should say even unbelievers who have become Christians and this doctrine is a doctrine taught by those who are professing believers. So this question is a question over which believing men have been in disagreement.

It's not overemphasizing the matter, however, to say that this question affects the heart of the gospel. And I do not want to suggest by this that there are not people who believe in the freedom of the will who are Christians. There are many, who are genuine Christians, who believe in the freedom of the will. All I would like to say with reference to them is that they are confused in their theology. It's very possible for a man to believe in freewill and then to believe in sovereign grace according to his own language at the same time. But, when a person believes in free will, he really believes in something that

is contradictory to the doctrine of the grace of God. He may not understand it, but nevertheless, it is true, and one of the purposes of the class tonight is, if there should be someone like that in our audience that we will be able to show that it is contradictory of the grace of God to believe in the freedom of the human will.

There are only ultimately two systems of truth on earth. One is that salvation is the product of one's self movement toward God and the other, that salvation is of the Lord. Now those who attend Believers Chapel have heard us preach, I don't affirm that everybody who attends the Chapel believes these things because it's always surprising to discover how a person can sit in an audience for a lengthy period of time and not really be grasping what is being said, but what is being said in almost all of our classes that I know of, is that salvation is of the Lord and that salvation does not proceed out of an original self movement of man. And then to amplify this, one system of truth claims that the dogma of freewill is the heart of their system of theology. That is, that originally the decision that is made by man for the Lord God is one that has arisen out of his own free will.

Now what we mean by that simply is that a man has the power to choose either right or wrong and that, uninfluenced by the Holy Spirit when the gospel came, they of themselves responded by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now in that case, his salvation is traceable to the work of God in giving the Son to die on the cross for sins and also that act of the individual by which he chooses the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't deny the doctrine of the will. Everyone has a will. The issue is not, "Do we have a will?" The issue is, "Do we have a free will?" That is, does salvation really proceed from ourselves? Or does it proceed, first of all, from the Lord God who through the Holy Spirit and efficacious grace influences us, changing our rebellious will from opposition to God to reception of the gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation?

Martin Luther said, "If any man doth ascribe ought of salvation, even the very least, to the free will of man, he knoweth nothing of grace, and he hath not learnt Jesus Christ

aright". Now that is absolutely correct and when Luther wrote his great book, "*The Bondage of the Will*", in which he argued with Erasmus over this question, this was his position and he was absolutely right. That was probably his greatest theological work. He himself thought so and it's something incidentally that all Christians ought to read. It's repetitious, but it's well worth reading and I'm sure over in the book room, they'll be glad to order it for you if they don't have it there. But I recommend that you do read Martin Luther's "*The Bondage of the Will*". It will be, I think, a clarifying thing as far as this question of the free will is concerned.

Freewill doctrine has become so popular in evangelicalism that it is thought to be Orthodox. And when a person talks about the bondage of the will and insists on the fact that a man does not have free will in evangelicalism today, let me spell it out a little more carefully, in the great majority of the Bible churches today, he is regarded as teaching some new doctrine. But it is not some new doctrine, it is the doctrine of Calvin, it is the doctrine of Luther. The Calvinistic Reformation and the Lutheran Reformation united in their common opposition to the doctrine of freewill and evangelicalism, for a long period of time, believed this doctrine. It's only the result of the influence of the Arminians that the doctrine of the freedom of the will has become so popular in Bible churches.

George Whitefield said this, (I hope I have read this before to you and if you remember it, I want you to know it's not old age. I do know that I have read this before to you.) "I hope we shall catch fire from each other, and that there will be a holy emulation amongst us, who shall most debase man and exalt the Lord Jesus. Nothing but the doctrines of the Reformation can do this. All others leave freewill in man and make him, in part at least, a Saviour to himself. My soul, come not thou the secret of those who teach such things...I know Christ is all in all. Man is nothing: he hath a free will to go to hell, but none to go to heaven, till God worketh in him to will and to do of His good pleasure".

The basic difference between these two opposing religions can be summed up by asking another question, a question vitally related to ones that we've already referred to. Instead of asking how any man can perish, and usually they're told he would not do his part, which was simply to believe. You can ask, "Why are some men saved?" How is it that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit's work are able to succeed in some cases, but not in others? The religion of freewill will generally answer, "Man made it all possible by being willing to open his heart and give God a chance". It doesn't matter if we're speaking to those who perish or those who are saved, we always come back to that "if you will".

Actually, the gospel based on freewill can never be more than a gospel of mere possibility. It is a plan of redemption that can only redeem if man will do his part. But a plan that cannot succeed until it finds some men who make themselves willing. It's not a question of whether a man must or does become willing. Everyone believes that. That is, everyone among the Christians, but who and what power makes the sinner willing? Does man of himself choose to become willing or does God by his sovereign power make his elect willing? It seems both logical and judicially necessary to crown with glory the real person who made it actually work. And the freewiller does not hesitate to reach for the crown and place it on the head of the sovereign and free will of man. Because in the final analysis, if we believe in freewill, it is the movement from man's free will that determines our salvation plus what Christ did. So if we're going to reward or praise the person who has brought salvation to us, we should have to divide our praise, if we believe in free will. We praise the Lord for giving Jesus Christ, but we praise our free will because we have responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ of ourselves.

Now those who believe that the will is in bondage because of sin, praise the Lord God for what Christ has done, and they praise the Lord God again for the work of the Holy Spirit in so moving upon us by efficacious grace to make us who were unwilling, willing, so that our salvation is totally of the Lord.

Now, you see, this is something that affects the preaching of the gospel. If we really preach the doctrine of the freewill, we are not preaching the grace of God. Therefore, we cannot say that we are preaching grace. I know people do. They will say, "We have free will and we're saved by grace". Well, you can only say, "Well, I do believe what you're saying; you do believe you're saved by grace, that's what you say". You have to accept the person's word, but I just like to let you know that if you believe in freewill there is confusion within your head. As Dr. Gordon Clark used to say, "You have a Charlie horse between the ears". [Laughter] I wouldn't tell my friends that because they might not want to talk to me afterwards, but nevertheless that is the case. So let's turn for a few moments now to consider the inability of man. It's a very important question.

Pelegians have believed in the plenary ability of man to do everything that God requires. Therefore, Pelegians, followers of Pelegius, the 4th and 5th Century monk who came from Great Britain down to Rome, Pelegians believe, therefore, that it's not necessary to have grace in order to be saved. Semi-Pelegians were those who believed that man's powers have been weakened by the fall, but he was not entirely weak. That is, he had some power to turn to the Lord God. The Remonstrates or the Pure Arminians, who were the rationalistic Arminians, believed that the power of man to turn to the Lord God was never lost. But the Wesleyan Arminians, that tradition is represented by the Methodist Church, by the Pentecostal Church, by many of the charismatic movements of today, and the Church of Christ, the Christian Church, some of the other churches fall generally in that Arminian tradition or Wesleyan tradition. They believed that the capacity of men was lost in the fall, but now restored by prevenient grace.

John Wesley was a man who in many ways was a confused Calvinist. That is, he really did believe in salvation by the grace of God and he spoke about salvation by the grace of God. But, Mr. Wesley also believed that, and he believed that men were lost, incidentally. He believed that the fall was truly a fall, but that by virtue of what Jesus Christ did on the cross at Calvary; God had given to all men sufficient grace to believe.

Therefore, all men have sufficient grace to believe and having this sufficient grace to believe it is, therefore, necessary only for men to cooperate with this grace in order to be saved.

Now in cooperating with grace, we fall back again into the same error that we have when we have the doctrine of freewill because then it becomes necessary for man to do something in order to be saved. We must cooperate. So ultimately the Wesleyan doctrines, in spite of Mr. Wesley's orthodox teaching concerning the fall, as a result of his doctrine of sufficient grace and the necessity of cooperation, we have again a salvation that is both of man and of God.

The Augustinians, on the other hand, believed that man was unable to turn to God or to do anything good in his sight. That is one of the reasons, incidentally, why Luther and Calvin agreed because Luther was a student of Augustine. He was an Augustinian monk, as a matter of fact, and Calvin also was strongly influenced by the theology of Augustine.

Now when we talk about the inability of man, we want to affirm this, that a man may perform natural good, he may perform civil good, he may perform externally religious good. So we're not denying the fact that man may perform certain types of good. But we look now for a moment at the nature of this inability.

Man's inability arises from original sin. Original sin has corrupted his understanding. For example, Paul states in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 14, in a verse that everyone ought to memorize, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Now notice that in this statement, 1 Corinthians 2:14, it is stated that the natural man (the soulish man) does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him. He cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned. Therefore, every man born as a son of Adam is unable of himself to



understand divine truth. So his spiritual inability then arises out of original sin and it corrupts his understanding.

Now if you turn over to Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 18 and read that verse, you will see that original sin has also corrupted his emotions. We read in verse 18 of Ephesians 4,

"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (so that the fall has affected man in other ways as well).

In Romans chapter 8, verses 7 and 8, the apostle says much the same thing. This time stressing, I think, the will and its rebellion as a result of the fall. In Romans 8:7 and 8, Paul says, "Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be". Now notice that, "neither indeed can be". The mind of the flesh cannot be subject to the law of God. That is spiritual inability. We cannot believe. We cannot be subject to the law of God. Our emotions have been alienated and corrupted so that man is unable.

Now I want to stress that this is something that the Christian Church has historically believed in the main line of the Christian Church. In the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Episcopal Church, we read, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God". Notice in *The Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Anglican Church, the use of the term "he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith". In the *Book of Common Prayer*, which all Episcopalians know, "Oh, Almighty God (it says), who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men". Baptists and Presbyterians have agreed in the Westminster and London

Confessions, "Man, by his fall into sin hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation". I won't read the rest of it, but you can see that there too is taught the unfree will of man.

Now one of your friends in Dallas, and there are many in Dallas in evangelical churches here, not far away from here too, who affirm the freedom of the will. It's very generally taught; very generally taught in theological seminaries. If they should suggest to you that you are not teaching evangelical doctrine, know these things. These are things that the Christians in the main line of Christian affirmation since the days of the Reformation have believed and taught. It is part of our apostasy from truth that the doctrine of freewill has come to be thought to be orthodox and the doctrine of the bondage of the will thought to be unorthodox. Study the Bible and become convinced of the teaching of the word of God and then when your friends try to criticize you or to sneer a little bit at your doctrine, then you'll be able to let it roll off of you like water off of a duck's back.

The Reformed have said in the *Belgic Confession*, "Therefore we reject all that is taught repugnant to this, concerning the free will of man, since man is but a slave to sin; and can receive nothing except it had been given him from heaven. For who may presume to boast, that he of himself can do any good, since Christ says, 'No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him?'".

Now let's think about proof of this inability. We've cited these texts and that ought to be sufficient for us, but let me just suggest a few of the common arguments that have been given for the inability of man. Negatively, we can say this. The Bible never attributes to men the power to change their hearts. If you will search through the Scriptures, you will discover that the Bible always teaches that it is not within our power to change our hearts. There is a text that I just read this afternoon in the Book of Jeremiah. I was going to cite it in another place, but I think you can cite it here. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are

accustomed to do evil". The Bible never attributes to men the power to change their hearts.

Positively, the scriptural statements suggest that the Lord God is the only source of spiritual life. John 15, verses 4 and 5 contains the text that says, "Without me ye can do nothing". John 6:44, the passage that we read in our Scripture reading says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him". So it is impossible for a man to come to Jesus Christ of his own free will. That's the plain teaching of the Lord Jesus there. 1 Corinthians 2:14, we've already cited, there the fact and the ground of his inability is stated. And finally, the Bible lays great stress upon the necessity of the Spirit's work. He is the administrator of the work of salvation. The Bible says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit saith the Lord".

Now I'd just like to ask you a question, if I've got a few Arminians lurking around in the audience right here this afternoon, suppose I were to say to you, "Now I want to ask you a question, how many of you in this audience have come to Jesus Christ without the work of the Holy Spirit? Would you stand up, let us know how it all happened? How many of you in this audience came to Christ without the work of the Holy Spirit?" Well, now if you really believed in freewill, you could say that. You could say, "Of my own free will, I have turned to the Lord God". That's what freewill means. It means that you have of yourself the power to turn to the Lord God. You see, when it comes right down to it, most of us know deep down in our hearts that it was through the Holy Spirit that we came to the Lord God, that there is nothing in us that would enable us to do that. It's only when we talk that we talk about freewill.

If we really believed in freewill, we wouldn't even pray. We wouldn't have to pray. Mr. Spurgeon, you know, has the prayer of the man who believes in freewill and I think since I've kind of gotten off the point here just a little bit, I may just as well read this prayer right here because I love this prayer. This is the Arminian prayer. I think this is something, incidentally, Ms. Ray; we ought to put in the bulletin one of these days on

Sunday so everybody can have a copy of it. But this is the Arminian prayer. Mr. Spurgeon says, "You've heard a great many Arminian sermons, I dare say; but you never heard an Arminian prayer - for the saints and prayer appear as one in word, and deed and mind. An Arminian on his knees would pray desperately like a Calvinist. He cannot pray about freewill: there is no room for it. Fancy him praying,"

Now here is Mr. Spurgeon's prayer of the Arminian who believes in freewill, "Lord, I thank Thee I'm not like those poor presumptuous Calvinists. Lord, I was born with a glorious freewill; I was born with power by which I can turn to Thee of myself; I have improved my grace. If everybody had done the same with their grace that I have, they might all have been saved. Lord, I know that Thou dost not make us willing if we are not willing ourselves. Thou givest grace to everybody; some do not improve it, but I do. There are many that will go to hell as much bought with the blood of Christ as I was; they had as much of the Holy Ghost given to them; they had as good a chance, and were as much blessed as I am. It was not Thy grace that made us to differ; I know it did a great deal, still I turned the point; I made use of what was given me, and others did not. That's the difference between me and them".

Now Mr. Spurgeon goes on to say, "That's a prayer for the devil, for nobody else would offer such a prayer as that. Ah! When they are preaching and talking very slowly, there may be wrong doctrine; but when they come to pray, the true thing slips out; they cannot help it. If a man talks very slowly, he may speak in a fine manner; but when he comes to talk fast, the old brogue of his country, where he was born, slips out. I ask you again, did you ever meet a Christian man who said, 'I came to Christ without the power of the Spirit?' If you ever did meet such a man, you need to have no hesitation in saying, 'My dear sir, I quite believe it and I believe you went again without the power of the Spirit, too'". Now Mr. Spurgeon's a very frank man. I wouldn't want to be as frank as that, you know, but nevertheless that's where the truth lies.

Now let me just suggest a few answers to some of the objections that have been raised to this. The common objections that are raised, I know you're wondering why I had to use glasses. That was very fine print [Laughter], very fine print. Now some of the objections that have been raised against this doctrine are, "It's inconsistent with moral obligation. A man cannot be required to do what he has no ability to do". For example, a blind man cannot be required to see. A deaf man cannot be required to hear. But in the case of this inability of man, it is an inability that is self-imposed, not divinely imposed. It arises from the corruption of our nature. It is because we are the descendants of Adam. And Adam, our representative, has failed. So we are guilty because our inability is not divinely-imposed, it is self-imposed. It is something that arises out of our sin.

Others have said, "Well, if you believe that the will is in bondage to sin and that God must work, this weakens motives for exertion. Why use the means of grace? A sinner enlightened would see his inability and cease from effort". But, that's exactly what's necessary. Further, such reasoning would prevent a farmer from farming since the result is dependent on forces outside of himself. In the Bible, God has commanded that we use certain means and he's promised to bless these means. And so the fact that he has told us that we are unable does not mean that, therefore, we do not have any motive to believe because he also says in his word of God that we are saved by virtue of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. So there is no way in which this should weaken motives for exertion.

Some have said it even encourages delay in conversion; just the opposite. He might think he could say, "I'll just wait God's time. If everybody is in bondage to sin and a man cannot come to the Lord Jesus Christ except the Father draw him, then I'll just sit and wait". But God says also in the Bible that now is the day of salvation. Further, if a man knows that he's unable of himself to receive everlasting life then he is much more

likely to seek help outside of himself. If he thinks that he can of himself believe, he's much more likely to waste his time and not believe.

Now I think there was one beautiful illustration of this in one of Mr. Dabney's books. He described a man whose house was on fire and he had a lot of valuable things. And it so happened, his upstairs room was a room that had a fire escape. And so when the fire was discovered, he went up to his room to gather together his valuables. And he pictures the man going slowly around the room, gathering his valuables because he knows the fire escape is out there and, therefore, he can, at the last minute if necessary, go down the fire escape and escape from the fire. So he takes his time because he knows that he can just go any time he wants to.

Mr. Dabney's illustrating the fact that if you believed you can be saved any time you want to, apart from the time when the Holy Spirit works, contrary to what people think, you will be the one who will not exercise yourself toward the divine truth. He pictures the man going around real slowly in the room, but he happens to go over and look out and discovers that the fire escape is now on fire. And then he says, "What do you think he will do then? Well, he'll do this, he'll go over to the window and he'll throw up the window and he'll shout out, 'Help me; save me or I perish'". And he said, "That's exactly what a man does when he discovers that salvation's not of himself. He doesn't look within anymore, he looks outside of himself to the Lord God and realizes the desperate peril in which he is and then he cries out to the Lord God who has promised to save men who call out to him.

Now the bondage of man's will, Roman Two, I think maybe I can cover this fairly well in a few minutes. This is, as you can probably tell, a favorite subject of mine. I could only talk for a week on it, if I had a chance. Now there are different kinds of freedom and I think it will help us to understand the doctrine of the bondage of the will if we keep these in our minds separate. First of all, the myth of natural freedom; there are those who have believed that we have a form of natural freedom, but we do not have

natural freedom. It should not be surprising, therefore, that we do not have spiritual freedom, but rather are afflicted with spiritual inability.

For example, we cannot determine who our parents shall be. We don't have that freedom. We cannot determine what age we shall be born in. We do not have that freedom. We cannot determine where we shall be born. We do not have that freedom. We cannot escape the natural laws of God. We do not have the freedom to avoid or annul the laws of gravity, for example. So the idea that man must have freewill is not true in the realm of natural freedom. We are not able to jump out of a skyscraper, eighty stories high and at the fortieth story, will that we be back on top again. That is something that we do not have. We are subject to the laws of God. We do not have absolute natural freedom. Danny White may not fade back and throw a pass and just as he sees that his receiver has fallen down and it's going to go right into the hands of the defensive back, he cannot will that that pass come back into his arm. These are natural laws to which we are subject. So it is a myth to say that we have that kind of freedom, that's I call, natural freedom.

Now also, it is a myth to speak of ethical freedom. It's argued that a man's will is free to choose between good and evil. From what is it free? And what is it free to choose? Professor Berkhoff has said, "Man has by nature an irresistible bias for evil". Our choices arise out of our nature. Our choices do not guide our nature. Our nature guides our choices. Our will is free from outside force, but our will is not free from ourselves. The reason that we choose certain things is because we like certain things. Now philosophers and theologians have differed over the exact source of our willing. Some have said it's our appetency, what we like. Some have said it is our intelligence, what we conceive to be best. Others say it's simply, our disposition, as Professor Dabney said. That's immaterial. What we want to be sure to understand is that the will is a secondary agent. That is, it follows what our nature demands or likes. I go to a football game because I like football. You go to a soccer game because you like soccer or you do this

because you like it. The will is not a primary agent, it's a secondary agent and so it follows. It does not begin anything. When a man makes a decision of the will, it's because of some previous disposition or appetency or conviction concerning truth. As Jeremiah said, "The leopard does not change his spots or the Ethiopian his skin".

Now the myth of spiritual freedom, does the human will make the ultimate choice of life in Christ? Yes. The human will does act in receiving Christ, but the question is, "Who initiates the choice?" Now I'd like for you to turn to a couple of passages, the first one in John 1, verse 11 through verse 13. Here in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, the apostle writes concerning the Lord Jesus,

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them who believe on his name: (Now notice John 1:13) Who were born, not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God".

So that men, when they are born, are not born of man's will. They are born of God's will. In fact, James puts it that way, "of his own will begat he us by the word of truth". Now turn to Romans chapter 9 and verse 16, Romans chapter 9, verse 16. This chapter's a great chapter because it has to do with questions like predestination, reprobation, but it also has to do with the human will. Listen to what the apostle says in verse 16, "So then (After he said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.") So then (Romans 9:16) it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy". "So then it is not of him that willeth"; our salvation is not of our human free will. We make a decision of the will, but our will's decision is determined by the work of the Holy Spirit and also by whether we are good ground or not, to use another parable of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Well, what about one of the great guns of the Arminians in John chapter 5 and verse 40, where the Lord Jesus said, "Ye will not come unto me that you may have life"? Well now, that's not a great gun of the Arminians at all. That's a gun of the Calvinists. That's something that is true to Calvinistic doctrine because it says, first of all, that men are by nature dead. You will not come unto me that you may have life. Furthermore, that text says that in Christ is life, not in our free will. It also says that eternal life is for all who come. Well, that's exactly what a Calvinist believes, that eternal life is for all who come. Salvation is for believers. The universal invitation goes out that the Lord God receives believers. Every man who comes to Christ shall be saved. That's biblical doctrine. That's what we affirm. But, it also teaches that by nature, no man will come. You will not come to me that you may have life and the reason is the fall. Most preachers believe that Adam tripped and sprained his ankle, but all powers of man were shattered and debased by the fall and man is unable to see. He is rebellious and unable to come, as Paul puts it, as John puts it, as the Bible puts it. So one last word I want to say about the free agency of man.

It is perfectly all right for us to speak about man as a free agent. Well now, does that not seem to contradict what we've just been talking about? Free agency? No, we're not contradicting freewill when we speak about free agency. There's a great deal of confusion over what is meant by free agency and what is meant by freewill. The Bible does not teach that we have a free will. The Bible, so far as I can tell, does teach that men are free, responsible agents. But what we mean by free agency is the power to decide according to our character.

Now what we mean by that is simply this, that when a man makes a decision, he makes a decision in accord with his own character. He makes the decision that he wants to make. He does not feel any outside force, forcing him to make another decision. When he makes his decisions, he makes the decisions that he wants to make. There is no outside constraint felt by him. Those decisions are decisions in which he concurs. And

thus, he is responsible. He is a free agent, but he does not possess free will, for his will is, by virtue of the fall, biased toward evil.

Now when we talk about ability, we are talking about the power to change our character by a volition, by an act of the will. That is something the Bible says we cannot do as a result of the fall in the Garden of Eden. Now I say that this is a very important doctrine because it touches the preaching of the gospel. So that what we try to proclaim is the sovereign grace of God and the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. We affirm that when a man comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is by an act of the will, but it is by virtue of the fact that the Holy Spirit has wrought on his rebellious will and made this unwilling person willing by his grace. So that the salvation is the work of God the Father, in the giving of the Son, the work of God the Son in the shedding of his blood, the work of God the Holy Spirit in efficacious grace drawing us to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, salvation is of the Lord.

Now if we preach the doctrine of freewill, we are confusing grace with works and that is why it is so important that we stick to what the Scriptures say and affirm that man's will is in bondage to sin. He can only be saved from his spiritual inability by the great ability of our sovereign God who saves all of his elect bringing them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

One might ask the question, if I may just say this, "Well, now that we are Christians, do we not have a free will?" Well, Paul seems to speak to that point too. He says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Thus, there is the call for responsibility. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. That means to work out what God has worked in when you were converted. But he adds, "For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure". So that when a man does something that pleases the Lord God, he cannot even as a Christian say, "Well, that came from me and I can praise myself for it." For it is God that works in you to will and

to do of his good pleasure. Salvation is of the Lord. Sanctification also is of the Lord.

We surely have a great Savior. Let me close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these wonderful truths that magnify the sovereign grace of our triune God. Make us, Lord, thankful for what Thou hast done and give us the courage to follow the teaching of the word of God. We thank Thee that in following in the teaching of the word of God, we stand in the line of those who, through the centuries, have been used so magnificently for the proclamation of the truth of God. Deliver us from error. Give us compassion toward those who are within the family of God, but who are nevertheless, we think, confused concerning the grace of God. And help us to be bold in the proclamation of the truth, trusting the Holy Spirit to bring enlightenment, to the glory of our great God. Accept our thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen ...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**