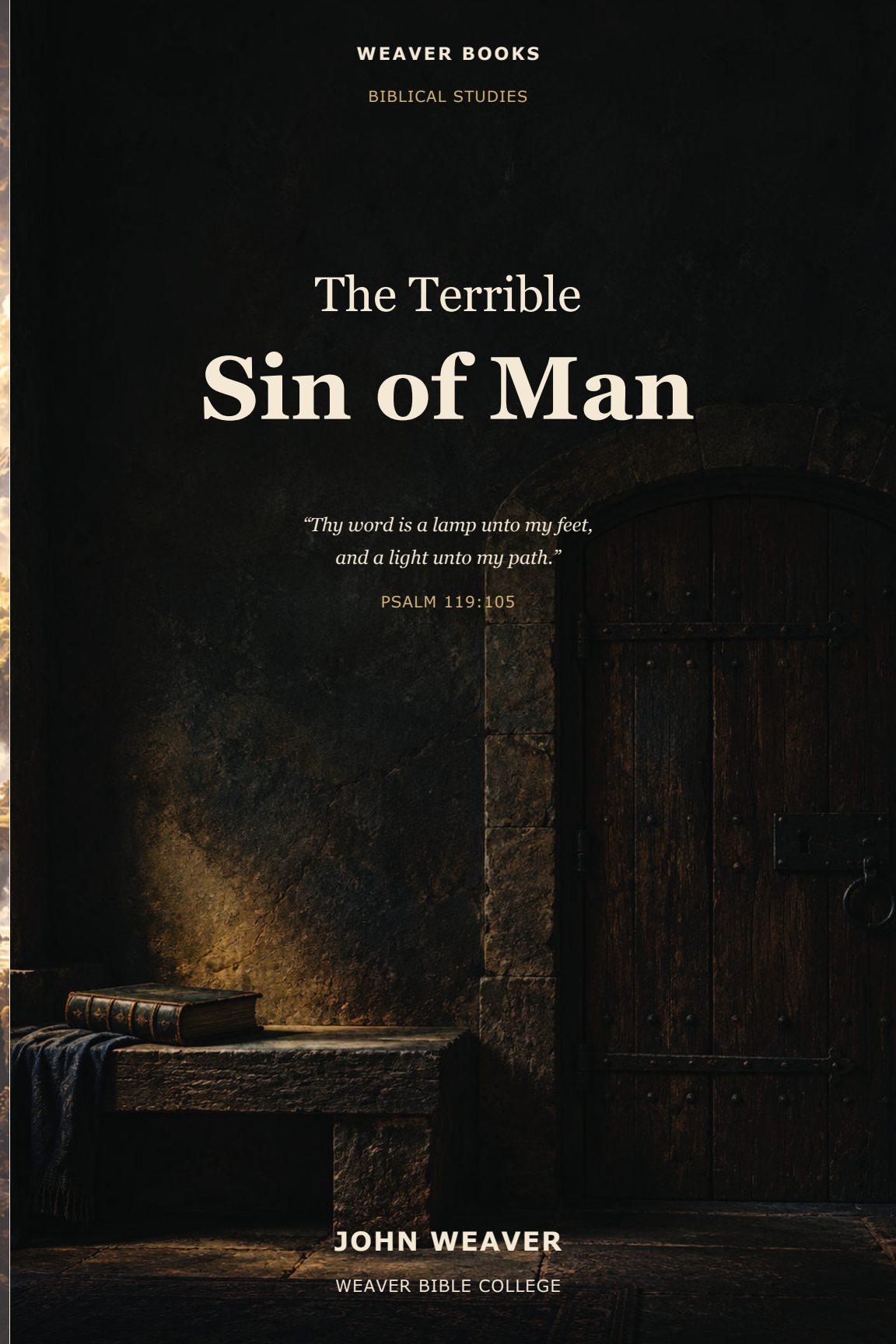
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The Terrible Sin of Man

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



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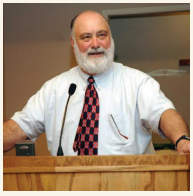
Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

JOHN 5:39

Through Christ's words in John 5, John Weaver considers the refusal to receive the testimony of God. These messages examine the will of man, unbelief, and the witnesses that direct attention to Christ. The series invites readers to consider why a profession of religious knowledge is not the same as a faithful response.

"Sinners cannot come, they do not want to come, and they do not will to come."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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The Terrible Sin of Man

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Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Contents

Chapter 1: The Terrible Sin of Man - Part One of Three 5

Introduction to the Series and Text 5

Defining Free Will and Its Implications 7

The Will Is Influenced, Not Autonomous 9

Salvation Not of Man's Will 10

Context of Witnesses in John 5 11

The Witness of the Scriptures 20

The Crisis of the Will 21

The Crisis of the Will in John 5:40 21

Applications and Conclusion 23

Chapter 2: The Terrible Sin of Man - Part Two of Three 25

Introduction and Review of John 5 Context 25

The Bondage of the Will: Cannot vs. Will Not 26

Calvin's Distinction Between Necessity and Coercion 27

The Charges Against Man’s Will 28

Three Charges and Their Effects on the Will 28

First Charge: Ignorance of God's Word 29

Second Charge: Absence of Love for God 31

Third Charge: Seeking Honor from Men 33

The Historical Roots of Free Will Doctrine 35

Testimony of Reformers and Conclusion 40

Chapter 3: The Terrible Sin of Man - Part Three of Three 43

Free Will and Freedom of the Will 43

Introduction and Review 43

Quotes on Free Will 45

Definition of Free Will 45

The Sovereignty of God vs. Free Will 45

Biblical Evidence Against Free Will 48

Four Philosophical Impossibilities of Free Will 50
The Fourfold State of Man 54
Free Agency vs. Free Will 56
God Works in the Will 58
Free Grace, Not Free Will 59
Topical Index 63
Scripture Index 65
Study Guide Link 69

CHAPTER 1

The Terrible Sin of Man

Part One of Three

SCRIPTURE READING - John 5:32-47 (KJV)

Introduction to the Series and Text

John 5:32-47:

"There is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesses of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth, but I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."

"And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures;

> for in them ye think that ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."
>
> "I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me. For he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"
>
> The main text that I am going to be ultimately dealing with is verse 40, where Jesus Christ said to these people, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." I have been asked to deal with the concept of free will. In reality, there is no such thing as free will.

The Bible does teach what some scholars call free agency, or freedom of will. There is a vast difference between this and free will. The will of man is not, in any sense of the word, free, and by the time I get to the third message, I think you are going to see why this cannot be the case.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached a message entitled "Free Will, a Slave." In his introduction he said: "This is one of the great guns of the Arminians, mounted upon the top of their walls and often discharged with terrible noise against the poor Christians called Calvinists."

"I intend to spike the gun this morning, or rather to turn it on the enemy, for it was never theirs. It was never cast at their foundry at all, but was intended to teach the very opposite doctrine to which they assert. Usually, when the text is taken"—he is talking about John 5:40—"the divisions are, first, that man has a will; secondly, that he is entirely free; thirdly, that men must make themselves willing to come to Christ, otherwise, they will not be saved. Now, we shall have no such divisions, but we will endeavor to take a more

calm look at the text. We will not, because it contains the words ‘will’ or ‘will not,’ conclude that it teaches free will. It has already been proved beyond all controversy that free will is nonsense.”

“Freedom cannot belong to the will any more than ponderability can belong to electricity. They are altogether different things. Free agency we may believe in, but free will is simply ridiculous. The will is directed by the understanding, moved by motives, guided by other parts of the soul, and is a secondary thing. Philosophy and religion both discard the very thought of free will. I will go as far as Martin Luther, who said, ‘If any man doth ascribe aught of salvation, even the very least, to the free will of man, he knoweth nothing of grace, and hath not learned Jesus Christ aright.’ It may seem a harsh sentiment, but he who believes that man does of his own free will turn to God cannot have been taught of God. That is one of the first principles taught us when God begins with us: we have neither the will nor”

power, but that He gives both; that He is the Alpha and the Omega in the salvation of men." And that is certainly true.

Defining Free Will and Its Implications

Now let me just make one statement so that you will understand what I am not saying. I am not saying that the will of man is not involved in salvation. It certainly is. And I will explain that before I finish this. But what the scripture does not teach is the term free will. Let me explain that, and I'm going to use the definition of the people who actually believe in free will just momentarily. But free will—the term free will used theologically refers to the concept that man of his own ability and upon his own power may turn to God or away from God. In other words, free will teaches it is man's right and power to choose to do whatever he decides. Now, you're going to hear me speak of a man by the name of Erasmus. Erasmus was a Roman Catholic theologian.

He was also a humanist, and he was also the antagonist of Martin Luther. So Erasmus wrote a diatribe against Luther on free will. Here is what Erasmus said, and he believed in free will. In chapter 2, section 13, he said, "By freedom of will we understand in this

connection the power of the human will whereby man can apply to or turn away from that which leads to eternal life."

That's it in a nutshell. He said free will means that man can turn to God on his own or turn away from God. He can choose that which leads to eternal salvation or he can turn from it. So then in relationship to soteriology—and soteriology is just the doctrine of salvation—so in relation to salvation, free will is that concept of the will whereby the will of man is regarded as autonomous, that is independent and undetermined and therefore capable of willing either good or bad apart from any conditioning by moral and religious character.

Now that definition is not mine. That definition belongs to those who believe in free will.

Now I want you to listen very carefully and I want you to think with me momentarily. In relationship to salvation, free will is that concept of the will whereby the will of man is regarded as independent and undetermined and therefore capable of willing either good or bad apart from any condition by moral and religious character. So as you think about that, first of all, I want you to know if one believes in such a statement, there is absolutely no need for Holy Spirit conviction. Because the definition says that free will then is able to choose either good or bad apart from any conditioning. So the convicting power of the Holy Spirit goes out the window.

What does our Lord say in John 15:5? “Without me ye can do” how much? “Nothing.” So if you believe this definition, which they advocate themselves, first of all, it does away with Holy Spirit conviction.

Secondly, this definition denies the doctrine of total depravity and inability. It denies that man is absolutely, totally depraved, unable, and dead in trespasses and sins, which the Scripture clearly teaches. I was talking to a preacher many years ago who was a Free Will Baptist preacher. I asked him, “Do you not believe in the doctrine of total depravity?” He responded, “Yes, I believe in total depravity. I believe that man is totally depraved except for his will.” My next question was, “What part of ‘total’ do you not understand?”

In other words, that brings me to this third assertion. For such a concept to be true, you have to view the will in abstraction from the total, or whole, person. You have to say that somehow the will is isolated and uninfluenced, which is not true. The mind, desires, lusts, habits, and a multitude of other things affect the will.

I could think to myself, "I just need to reach out and slap Robert right now." What if I simply willed to reach out and slap him? Before I do that, I have to think, "He is a little bigger than I am. He may be stronger than I am. He may be faster than I am. I think I am not going to will to slap him." What affected my will? My thoughts.

The Will Is Influenced, Not Autonomous

Also, here is a drunk man. You put a fifth of liquor in front of him. What is he going to do? He is going to reach out and take it, because his lust craves and desires it. His will is influenced by everything. So Martin Luther wrote a book entitled "The Bondage of the Will," answering the humanist and Roman Catholic theologian Erasmus and his diatribe, and thanked Erasmus for bringing up the subject of free will.

Martin Luther thanked Erasmus for bringing the essential issue into the open. He wrote, "You alone have attacked the real thing, that is the essential issue. You have not worried me with those extraneous issues about the papacy, purgatory, indulgences and such like trifles rather than issues, in respect of which almost all to date have sought my blood. You and you alone have seen the hinge on which all turns and aim for the vital spot. For that I heartily thank you, for it is more gratifying to me to deal with this issue." Luther was saying, "Thank you for bringing this up. You have given me the opportunity to deal with this issue."

What I want to show you, beginning today, is that salvation is not a product of man's will. It cannot be a product of man's will, for that would be contrary to Scripture. I have not said that man's will is not involved in salvation. It certainly is. But it is not the origination of salvation, nor is it the instigator of salvation. One simple passage of Scripture ought to prove this.

Salvation Not of Man's Will

In John chapter 1, beginning with verse 11, Scripture says: “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 sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Note what our Lord dogmatically asserts. After saying, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name,” He says that they were born “not of blood,” that is, ancestry; “nor of the will of the flesh,” that is, natural generation; “nor of the will of man.” Here are three negatives. Read the statement without them: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born of God.” The positive is this: if we have been born, we have been born of God. Our salvation is not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, nor by ancestry or any other means; it is simply by God.

James 1:18 tells us, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “We declare on scriptural authority that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will ever be constrained toward Christ.” Scripture demonstrates exactly what Spurgeon enunciated.

The reason men will not come to Christ is not insufficient evidence, as we shall see, but that their wills are locked in stubborn rebellion against Him. They hate Him; therefore they will not come to Him. In John 5:40, our Lord looked at these people and said, “And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.” The usual interpretation by preachers and Christians is, “Well, you can come if you will come.”

But herein lies the rub. Sinners cannot come, they do not want to come, and they do not will to come. John 5:40 usually is wrenched

from its context and taught to mean something entirely different from what our Lord said. So I want us to look at it in context.

First, consider the context of the witnesses. In verse 31 our Lord said, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true."

Context of Witnesses in John 5

We have to understand this statement in light of the analogy of faith. Certainly, whatever our Lord said would be true because He is God, and it is impossible for Him to lie. So what does He mean when He says, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true"? He is making that statement in light of the law. Literally, He is saying, If I offer no other testimony or bring forth no proof for my Messiahship other than my own word, then my testimony would be suspicious. Why? Because the law demanded two or three witnesses. Christ is not going to bear independent witness of Himself.

For instance, in Deuteronomy 19:15: "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." Again, our Lord said, "At the mouth of three witnesses shall every word be established." Our Lord is saying, "I'm not going to bear independent witness of myself." In this context, He offers more than two witnesses. In verse 32 He says, "There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true." Scholars are divided upon the identification of the witness in verse 32.

Some say that it is God the Father, who by His Spirit in the prophets describes the person, office, and miracles of the work of Christ. Others would say that it is the witness of John the Baptist. Certainly, John is spoken about in verses 33 through 36, and the Father is spoken about in verses 37 and 38. So how do we understand verse 32? Our Lord says, "There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true."

Personally, I believe the "another" spoken of in verse 32 is the Father. Christ is referring to the Father's witness, which He is going to address. Why do I believe that? First, because of the Greek word.

When He says, "There is another that beareth witness of me," the word "another" is allos, A-L-L-O-S.

Two Greek words are normally used for our English word "another." One is allos, meaning "another of the same kind." The other is heteros, meaning "another of a different kind." That is why we speak of a heterosexual marriage, a man and a woman: they are not alike, but different. When our Lord says, "There is another that beareth witness of me," He uses allos, meaning another of the same kind. The only other who would be exactly like Christ would have to be the Father or the Spirit.

Moreover, our Lord says in the latter part of verse 32, "I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true." The Father and the Spirit are the only ones who would always, at all times, speak truth. Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Hebrews 6:18 says that it is impossible for God to lie.

A godly man, even John the Baptist, could be deceived and speak falsely without knowing it. But God can never speak falsely, because He knows all things and does not lie. Therefore, I believe verse 32 speaks of the Father's witness. Now we begin with verse 33, where our Lord refers to the testimony of John the Baptist. Note that I use the word "refers."

He is not appealing to John the Baptist; He is referring to John the Baptist. In fact, our Lord did not need man's testimony, which He will say a little bit later. But in John 5:33, He says, "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved." He continues, "He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light."

Notice that He said, "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth." In John 1:19, we see where they sent unto him: "And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?" And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet?

And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

They actually sent and asked John who he really was. John was sent to bear witness of Christ. John 1:6 says, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." Talking about Christ, it says, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

John the Baptist also gave testimony to our Lord. John 1:29 says, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel,

“Therefore am I come baptizing with water.” And John bare record, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.” Our Lord said in John 5, “Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness to me.”

He said, “He was a burning and a shining light.” That is, he was burning inwardly, he was shining outwardly. That is certainly true. And he testified concerning Christ. Why? Because John the Baptist was the man who had been ordained by God to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ. The prophecy in Malachi identifies the one who would come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

Malachi 4:5-6 says, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” So what did our Lord say about Elijah? He is going to send

him before that great and dreadful day of the Lord. Well, who was this Elijah?

In Matthew 11, Jesus said concerning John, “What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” Our Lord specifically said that John was the one who came in the spirit and the power of Elijah. This is the identity of John the Baptist in relation to that prophecy.

Matthew 17:10 makes the matter plain: “And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.” Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist. John the Baptist, then, was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Elijah in Malachi chapter 4.

What are we reading here? God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord. Remember that John was exceedingly popular in his time. The people listened to him and believed that he was a prophet. For a time they were willing to rejoice in John's preaching and teaching. Our Lord used this truth to confound the Pharisees. When they asked Him, “By what authority doest thou these things?” He answered, “I'll tell you. I'll ask you one question. If you answer my question, I'll answer yours.” Then He asked, “The ministry of John the Baptist, was it from heaven or of men?”

He had them. They finally said, “We cannot say.” If they said, “Of men,” they feared the people, “For all men counted John as a prophet.” Since they refused to answer, our Lord refused to answer them.

As popular as John was, and although he was the forerunner of Jesus Christ who prepared His way, notice what our Lord said in John 5:34: “But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.” Christ was not appealing to John; He was referring to John for their benefit. If they were willing to listen to John the Baptist, they should have been willing to listen to Him.

Because he was the forerunner, he came to prepare the way before Me. If you were willing to rejoice in him, you should be willing to rejoice in Me. But He says, "I receive not testimony from man. I don't need testimony from man." Yet I do want you to see the witnesses that our Lord called forth.

Look in verse 36. Here is the witness of His works: "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." Over and over in Scripture, our Lord appealed to His works. In John 10:25, He said, "Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." In John 10:38, He said, "But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him."

In John 14:10-11, our Lord said, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." He was appealing to His works. In John 15:24, He said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father."

Do you remember what Nicodemus said to Christ in John 3:2? "We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." They knew the works. Our Lord's works bore unmistakable evidence to His deity, His mission, and the fact that He was the Messiah, sent from the Father.

Our Lord healed the sick, opened blinded eyes and deaf ears, raised the dead, walked on water, quieted raging storms, fed the

multitudes, turned water into wine, and cleansed the temple. All these things are great facts of history. They demand attention; they cannot be evaded or ignored. Yet there are unbelievers, although they profess to be theologians and sometimes pastors, who deny the works and miracles of Jesus Christ. They try to explain them away.

Let me give you one illustration. This is not in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament. When I first started preaching, 46 years ago, I wanted to buy books. I found a book about the Exodus and thought, “Here is a Bible book about the Exodus; I am going to buy it and read it.” I bought it and began reading. I did not have to read past the first chapter. I took the book and destroyed it. The author said that Moses knew when the tide would be out, and when it went out, he and the children of Israel walked across; but Pharaoh and his army did not know the tides, and when the tide came back in, they were all drowned.

That is not what the Bible says at all. The Bible says that God parted the way, and they walked across on dry ground. It is amazing that Moses, who had been in the desert for 40 years, came back and suddenly knew all the tide charts, while Pharaoh and his people, who lived there, did not. Come on, that is stupidity. Yet people confidently assert, after 2,000 years of history, that none of these things happened, or that they were merely natural occurrences.

The Pharisees hated Christ intensely. If they could have denied the reality of His works, they would have done so. They could not deny them; there were too many witnesses. In Acts 4:16, the Pharisees were concerned about a miracle done by Peter and John. Here is what they said: "Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it." In other words, they would deny it if they could, but they could not. Very obviously, if the Pharisees had been able to deny or disprove any of our Lord's miracles, they would have found a way to do it. Since they could not disprove or deny His miracles, their only attempt to discredit Him was to ascribe them to satanic agency.

In Matthew chapter 12, our Lord turned the tables on them. "And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils."

"And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house."

The only attempt they made to discredit our Lord was to say that He did these miracles by the work and power of Satan. They could not deny them. J. C. Ryle, who was a bishop in England, pointed out five things in connection with our Lord's miracles. First, he said, their number: there were a number of them, not just one or two.

There were a multiplicity of them. The second thing he pointed out was their greatness. They were not small and insignificant things, but mighty interferences with the ordinary course of life and nature. Our Lord walked on water and calmed the seas with a word. These are not ordinary acts. Neither is raising the dead or turning water into wine. So, not only their number, but their greatness.

Thirdly, he pointed out their publicity. These things were not done secretly or in a corner, but in front of thousands of people. Everyone could see, and they were even done in front of His enemies. Fourthly, their character: they were always works of love and compassion. They were always beneficial to man, and they were not raw demonstrations of power.

Fifthly, he pointed out their direct appeal to man's senses. Man could see them, hear them, touch and taste them. When He fed the five thousand, they could see, hear, taste, and touch. They were performed under careful scrutiny. Look around today at many people who claim to do miracles, and most of them are internal, where you can never see them. Our Lord's were external. You could see them.

You heard the story about the man who came forward at the healing crusade for prayer. The evangelist asked him, "So what's your need?" He said, "I want you to pray for my hearing." The evangelist slapped his hands over his ears and prayed mightily. When he took his hands away, he said, "How's your hearing now?" He said, "I don't know, sir. It's not till next Thursday." Our Lord did things where everybody could see and everybody knew.

A.W. Pink added two additional thoughts. He talked about their artlessness: they were not mechanically staged, but happened in the everyday course of life. Then, seventhly, he pointed out their efficacy: they were always powerful and always worked. Our Lord never, ever had a failure. Whatever He did, worked.

These mighty miracles and some of the works that the Father sent Him to do testified of Jesus Christ. Therefore, He said, “I do not need the testimony of man.” Why? He had His works.

Look at verse 37. Here is the testimony of the Father: “And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.”

Many people, when they read this, tend to think that the testimony of the Father refers to our Lord’s baptism and His transfiguration, because in those two instances there was an audible voice from heaven. However, I do not think this passage refers to His baptism or transfiguration. First, there were only three people at the transfiguration. There were more at the baptism, but plenty of people did not hear the voice, and probably the few who did hear it did not understand it.

Verse 38 clarifies that it could not refer to His baptism and transfiguration: “And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.” If it does not refer to those events, what does it refer to? The witness of the Father in verses 37 and 38 refers to the Father’s witness through the testimony of the Old Testament prophets. That is why He said, “Ye have not his word abiding in you.” In other words, that word was given hundreds of years before Christ.

Consider 2 Chronicles 36:15–16: “And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.” God sent His prophets. What did the people do? They despised them, refused to listen to them, stoned them, and killed them.

Nehemiah 9:30 says, “Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands.” So again they would not listen. Zechariah 7:12 says, “Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.” Very obviously, God spoke through the prophets, and the prophets wrote the books of the Bible. Therefore, in verse 38, our Lord said, “And ye have not his word abiding in you,” for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. He charged the Jews with this fact: the Father’s word, sent through the prophets, was not abiding in them. The evidence was that they did not believe on Christ, whom the Father had sent.

The Jews prided themselves that they had the oracles of God. They had them, but they did not believe them. Most of them truly did not even know the words of the Lord. Consider Luke chapter 24, where we see how ignorant even some believing Jews were concerning the Old Testament. These two believers were on the Emmaus road. They were discouraged because it was the third day after Christ had been crucified. Christ joined Himself to them, yet they were totally unaware of who He was.

They said, “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them

which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not."

Then He said unto them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, "he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Here were two believers on the Emmaus road who did not even know the Scriptures.

The Witness of the Scriptures

In Luke 24:44, Christ said, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Wow. It was all there. I like John 1:45. When Philip found Nathanael, he said, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." We found Him.

So all the Old Testament Scriptures spoke of Christ. Here is the witness of our Lord's works, and here is the witness of our Lord's Father.

Now look, if you would please, in verse 39. The third witness that He brings forth is the witness of the Scriptures. He says, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." Search the Scriptures. That is a command to search the Scriptures. However, you remember, the Jews were absolutely, totally ignorant of the Scriptures. Even when Herod wanted to kill our Lord as a child, he had to ask, "Where is he going to be born?" And then they told him.

But do you realize that most of the time, according to 2 Corinthians 3:14-15, when they look, they look with a blinded eye? The Bible says, "But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart."

Obviously, they did not know. Christ has made three appeals: He appeals to His own works, to the witness of the Father, and to the

Scriptures, which were written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus Christ appeals to Himself, His Father, and the Spirit of God. God only appeals to God.

Our Lord says, “You’re to search the Scriptures.” The word “search” does not mean simply to look at Scripture in a casual and occasional reading. If you search the Scriptures, you are given constant, minute, and diligent study.

There are three ways that Scripture speaks of Christ. First, it speaks of Christ generally, because the Scriptures are the voice of the uncreated Word, ever speaking to man in every part of him and declaring absolute truth. Secondly, the Scriptures speak to us in figures and symbols that we can understand. For instance, Jesus Christ was and is the Paschal Lamb. He was the brazen serpent: “Look and live.” Look at the brazen serpent that Moses lifted up, and our Lord said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” Look at all the ceremonies and sacrifices. The whole tabernacle and temple, all of it, pictured Christ. Scripture speaks to us about Christ in pictures, emblems, and symbols. Thirdly, Scripture speaks of Christ in direct prophecies. I do not have to go over Genesis 3:15, the Protoevangelium, Isaiah 53, or Isaiah 7:14. Our Lord is revealed in every passage of Scripture.

Why did our Lord say, “in them,” that is, in the Scriptures, “ye think that ye have eternal life”? Here is the answer: They testify of Me, and I am eternal life. Our Lord referred to John the Baptist, but He appealed only to His works, to the Father, and to the Spirit who wrote the Scriptures.

The Crisis of the Will

The Crisis of the Will in John 5:40

In light of the testimony of John the Baptist—in light of our Lord’s works, the Father’s witness, and the Scripture’s witness—what did our Lord say? “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” John the Baptist had been sent for their benefit; they had wanted to know who he was and what he had to say. Yet, in light of all the testimony, our Lord declared, “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”

In spite of the abundance of evidence, the multiplicity of witnesses, and the verity of those witnesses, the will of man is still locked in stubborn rebellion to God. The problem is not one of verity, insufficient witnesses, or lack of evidence. The problem is that the will of man is depraved and perverse, in bondage to his sin, and locked in rebellion to the Son of God.

Men ought to come to Christ. Men should come to Christ. Men are commanded to come to Christ. But herein lies the hatefulness and rebellion of fallen, sinful man: man will not come in spite of the evidence. The problem is not that the sinner needs to make use of his will; he is already making use of his will. He is not coming. He is not willing to come. He needs grace to use that will rightly. If God's grace does not enable him to use his will rightly, he will never come to Christ. Because, in light of all this evidence, "ye will not come, that ye might have life."

Stop and think of all the Bibles that exist in this country. The average home has three or four Bibles, and probably the average Christian home has more than that. Even the average unbeliever's home has one or two Bibles. Yet, in spite of all the testimony, men will not come.

Jim Hendricks said this: "If the natural man has a free will to believe the gospel, then why does he need grace? If his will is naturally free, then it would do away with the need for grace altogether. To teach that natural man has a free will overthrows the gospel. It is precisely because man is in bondage that he needs Christ to set him free." He says this: "The fact that no man can choose to live a sinless life is proof positive that he does not have a free will.

He is held captive under the yoke of sin and thus sins willingly and of necessity; he cannot do otherwise.

By way of application, when our Lord looked at these people in John 5:40 and said, "And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life," it should be obvious that He was not speaking of a physical, corporeal coming to Christ. These people were standing directly in front of Him. They had walked to where He was, and yet He said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Applications and Conclusion

Coming to Christ is not joining a church, walking down an aisle, raising your hand for prayer, or being baptized. Coming to Christ is a spiritual act involving repentance of sin, submission to His lordship, and faith in His person. Many people have joined churches, been baptized, walked down an aisle, and raised their hands for prayer, yet have never savingly come to Christ. Coming to Christ is not a physical act; it is a spiritual act.

Secondly, consider the inseparability of Christ and His doctrine. Verse 38 says, “And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.” Verse 39 says, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” Then, in verse 45, our Lord says, “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”

Christ is revealed in Scripture. You cannot come to Christ and deny the Bible, nor can you believe the Bible and deny Christ. There is an inseparability: the Bible is the written Word, and Christ is the living Word.

Thirdly, it takes a supernatural drawing to bring sinners to Christ. Our Lord said in John 6:44, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” Divinely considered, men cannot come to Christ. Humanly considered, men will not come to Christ.

It is not merely that we need to use our wills. Our wills must be released from their bondage to sin, Satan, lust, and wickedness, in order that we might embrace Christ as He is fully and freely offered in the Gospel.

Lord willing, next week I am going to continue in John 5, but I want to show you where much of this doctrine of free will originates. You may be surprised. Then, on the following Sunday, I want to demonstrate the distinction—the vast difference—between what I call freedom of will and free will. That is what the Bible teaches: we need the grace of God.

Without Him, folks, we can do nothing. We need grace to use our wills correctly. Even as Christians, we need grace to use our wills correctly. I have quoted many times the passage where David said, "I will love thee, O LORD, my strength." How should a Christian use his will to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and body? We need grace, even as Christians, to do that.

Father, help us, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. We are so thankful for Your love, grace, and mercy. We are thankful that Dr. Holmes and his mother are able to be here today. We pray healing upon Doc's leg. Touch him, encourage him, and help him. Lord, give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

The Terrible Sin of Man

Part Two of Three

SCRIPTURE READING - John 5:32-47 (KJV)

Introduction and Review of John 5 Context

There is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. You sent unto John, and he beareth witness unto the truth.

But I receive not testimony from man, but these things I say that you might be saved. He was a burning and shining light, and you were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John. For the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself who hath sent me hath borne witness of me.

You have neither heard his voice at any time nor seen his shape. You have not his word abiding in you, for whom he hath sent him you believe not. Search the scriptures, for in them you think that you have eternal life, and there they which testify of

> me. And you will not come to me that you might have life. I receive not honor from men, but I know you, that you have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name and you receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe which receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, and whom you trust. For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me, for he wrote of me. And if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?

When our Lord looked at these people and said, "And you will not come to me that you might have life," He referred to the testimony of John the Baptist for their benefit, because He said, "You were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." Then He said, "But these things I say unto you that you might be saved." He referred to John the Baptist, but He gave three appeals as testimonies for Himself. He appealed to His works, He appealed to the Father, and He appealed to the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit, of course, inspired the Scriptures. So God only appeals to Himself. The Son appealed to His works, the Father, and the Scriptures, which were indeed and are indeed the work of the Holy Spirit of God. In light of all that testimony and evidence, He said, "You will not come to me that you might have life."

In other words, the problem with man is not an insufficient amount of evidence, nor is it the verity or truthfulness of the evidence. The fact is that their wills are locked in stubborn rebellion against God. Our Lord clearly stated in verse 40 that man by nature will not come to Him.

The Bondage of the Will: Cannot vs. Will Not

I have heard preachers all my life say, "Well, sinners could come if they only will to come."

There are two problems with that statement. The first is John 6:44: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up in the last day." Preachers say, "You can come if you will come," but our Lord said, "No man can

come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Obviously, either preachers are lying or Christ is lying; and obviously it is not Jesus Christ, because He is God and speaks the truth. He says, "No man can come." Therefore, when you hear someone say, "Well, you can come if you will come," you need to think of John 6:44.

The second problem is that this statement views the will in abstraction from man. The truth is that no man can come to Christ apart from or without grace. Man's will is not free. It is bound in sin, wickedness, and rebellion, and is held captive to his lusts, thoughts, and desires.

John Calvin, in his "Bondage and Liberation of the Will," said this:

Calvin's Distinction Between Necessity and Coercion

"We allow that man has choice and that it is self-determined so that if he does anything evil it should be imputed to him and to his own voluntary choosing. We do away with coercion and force because this contradicts the nature of the will and cannot coexist with it. We deny that choice is free because through man's innate wickedness it is of necessity driven to what is evil and cannot seek anything but evil. And from this it is possible to deduce what a great difference there is between necessity and coercion. For we do not say that a man is dragged unwillingly into sinning, but that because his will is corrupt, he is held captive under the yoke of sin and therefore of necessity will in an evil way. For where there is bondage, there is also necessity. But it makes a great difference whether the bondage is voluntary or coerced. We locate the necessity to sin precisely in the corruption of the will from which follows that it is self-determined."

Certainly that is true. Let me give you an illustration to explain what Calvin said. Suppose that we have in front of us a drunk who has been a drunk man for years and years and years. You confront the drunk about his sin, his wickedness, and his rebellion. You tell him about heaven and hell. You tell him about the redemption that we have in Jesus Christ and that he can be redeemed and delivered from his sin of drunkenness through Jesus Christ. Then you place a Bible in front of him and a fifth of whiskey, and you look at the

drunk and say, "You choose whichever one you desire." Would you like to guess which one the drunk is going to choose? He is going to choose the fifth of whiskey. Why is he going to choose the fifth of whiskey?

Because his will is in bondage to his lust and his desires. His will is enslaved, and unless grace sets him free, he will always choose that which is evil. Man sins because he is a sinner. He not only sins because he is a sinner; he sins because he loves his sin. He enjoys his sin. He wants to sin. And he does that voluntarily. His will is not somewhere held in abstraction. No, his will is controlled by his mind, by his desires, by his lusts, and by a host of other things as well.

The Charges Against Man's Will

Three Charges and Their Effects on the Will

In John chapter 5, our Lord gives them the witness of His works, the witness of the Father, and the witness of the Scripture. Yet He still has to say to them, in John 5:40, "And you will not come to me that you might have life." This is not evidence of free will; it is evidence of the bondage of the will. In light of all that evidence, man will not come. Divinely speaking, man cannot come; humanly speaking, man will not come.

Let us look at the charges our Lord levels against these individuals and see how they are related to the will. Our Lord says, "And you will not come to me that you might have life." Everything here is related to that. There are three causes and three effects, or three causes and three results.

First, in verse 38, our Lord says, "And you have not His word abiding in you"; that is the cause. What is the effect? "For whom He has sent, Him you believe not." You can say, in verse 40, "And you will not come." They have not His word abiding in them, and they will not come.

Look in verse 42: "But I know you that you have not the love of God in you." That is the cause. Watch verse 43 for the result: "I come in my Father's name and you receive me not."

Look in verse 44. He asks, “How can you believe who receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?” Since they are not seeking the honor that comes from God only, what is the result? Verse 47 says, “But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?” In other words, they refuse to believe. These are the charges, one at a time. First, in verse 38: “And you have not His word abiding in you”; and, “For whom He hath sent him you believe not.”

First Charge: Ignorance of God's Word

Verse 39 verifies verse 38, for that is when He says, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” If you really had His Word abiding in you, says Christ, if you really knew the Scriptures, they are the ones that testify of Me. So, had they known the Word of God and had His Word abiding in them, they could not have helped but know Jesus Christ. Yet He says, “And ye have not his word abiding in you.” That is, you do not have His Word continuing in you.

Our Lord told these Jews in John 8:31, “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.” In other words, the proof that they were genuine, sincere, and real believers would be evidenced by the fact that the Word of God was continuing in them. When you go back and understand John 5:38, when He says, “And ye have not his word continuing in you,” what is our Lord saying?

You have no idea who I am. You have no idea of the truth. There cannot be trust in Christ when there is ignorance of Christ. There can be no coming to Christ wherever there is not a perception and an understanding of Christ. How in the world can people come to Christ when they are absolutely and totally ignorant of Him?

Toby has some friends in Pennsylvania. Let us invite the congregation to go to his friend. How can we go there? We do not even know the man. We do not know where he is or how to get to him. In the same way, how can people come to Christ when they are ignorant of Him? In John chapter 4, verse 10, our Lord is speaking to the woman at the well. He has already told her that He could give

her water of which she would never thirst again. And look what she said in John 10.

Jesus answered and said unto her, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked him, and he would have given thee living water.” But she did not know who Christ was, nor the gift He had. How could she come to Christ without knowing who He was? How could she come to Him if she was totally, absolutely ignorant of Him?

The Apostle Paul was preaching on Mars Hill. He told the Athenians, “As I pass by, I saw your altar to the unknown God. Him declare I unto you.” The God of the Bible is still an unknown God to most people. Most people have a god of their imagination, a god of their ancestors, or even a god of their denomination. They are totally, absolutely, completely ignorant of the God of the Bible. Men are just as blind and just as depraved today as the Athenians were in Paul's day and time.

Now let me show you what our Lord says in Ephesians chapter 4, beginning with verse 17: "This I say therefore and testify in the Lord."

He is writing these Ephesian believers, and he says, "This I say and testify in the Lord that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk." Don't walk, don't live like the unsaved. Note what characterizes the unsaved: "This I say therefore and testify in the Lord that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity," that is, the uselessness and worthlessness of their mind, "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."

"Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness." The unsaved man, natural man, has the understanding darkened. He is alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in him. He is totally ignorant of God because of the blindness of his heart. Since he is totally ignorant of God, what does he do? He gives himself over to lasciviousness, to whatever pleases his flesh. He is

absolutely, totally ignorant of God. You cannot come to Christ if you are ignorant of Christ. You cannot come to Christ if you do not know who He is.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 3 and 4, the Apostle Paul makes this statement: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, and whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." He says very plainly that their minds are blinded.

Now go back to John chapter 5. With this understanding in your mind, look at verse 38. Our Lord says, "...and you have not His Word abiding in you. For whom He hath sent, him you believe not." How could they believe if they were totally ignorant of who Christ was? That's why He said, "Search the Scriptures."

How can you come to Me? You do not even know who I am. This charge is that you do not have the Word of God abiding in you. Man cannot come, and by nature will not come, because he has no idea who Jesus Christ is. He is totally ignorant of the Word of God. The result of not having His Word abiding, or dwelling, in us is that man by nature does not believe in Christ, and he will not come to Christ.

Second Charge: Absence of Love for God

There is an application here even to Christians. The reason we get ourselves in so much trouble is because His Word is not abiding in us the way it should be. If His Word were dwelling in us, we would not do many of the things we normally do. You remember what David said? “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way, by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”

“With my whole heart have I sought thee, O let me not wander out of your way.” What is he going to do? “Let your word dwell in my heart that I might not sin against thee.” If His Word continues in us, it will affect our lives and change our lives. When that Word does not dwell in us, or when we become forgetful and unthinking, we will get ourselves in trouble because we act contrary to the Word of God and bring the curse and judgment of God upon us.

The Word of God must be abiding in us, not only for the unsaved but for Christians. That is why we must read the Word of God daily, meditate upon it, think upon it, and apply it. Watch the second charge, verse 42: “But I know you that you have not the love of God in you.” In verse 38, they did not have the Word of God in them; now He says they do not have the love of God in them. The word love here denotes strong, fervent, spiritual love. It is agape love. Over and over, we have been commanded to love the Lord with all our hearts. But remember this: true love is obedience.

That's why in Romans 13 and verse 10, the Bible says that love is the fulfilling of the law. Our Lord Himself said in John 14 and verse 15, "If you love me, keep my commandments." He also said, "I know that you have not the love of God in you." How did He know they did not have the love of God in them? First of all, He's God; He's omniscient, and He knows everything.

But secondly, all He had to do was observe their actions, because love is obedience. In John 14 verse 21, He said, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." And in John 14 verse 24 He said, "He that keepeth not my sayings, loveth me not. And the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father which hath sent me." The passage that climaxes everything is 1 John 5 and verse 3: "And this is the love of God that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not grievous."

All our Lord had to do was look at their lives, and He saw how rebellious, wicked, and ungodly they were. So He said, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you." In 1 John 2, verse 4, He said, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." First He said, "You don't have my word of God, you don't have the word of God abiding in you." Now He says, "You do not have the love of God in you." They were wicked, rebellious, and ungodly.

How can you come to someone of whom you're totally and completely ignorant? Why would you come to someone that you don't know and you don't love? How then can a sinner come to Christ? If he is ignorant of Christ, if there is no love of Christ or love of God in him, how can he come to Christ? How can he will to come

to Christ? Why would he, or why should he, even think of coming to Christ? He's ignorant of Him. The love of God is not in him.

How could you go to Him? I have an uncle—or I had an uncle; he is now dead. He was one of the most lovable, gentle, kind individuals that you would ever have met. Everybody loved him. He was just plain and simple. I could sit here and describe my uncle to you, and you would think, "Man, that's a great guy." Yes, he was. But if I were to sit here and tell you, "Love my uncle," you could not love him. Do you know why? You do not know him. It is impossible to love someone whom you do not know. Our Lord said, "My first charge is, you do not have His word abiding in you. Secondly, His love is not in you."

Look at verse 43. Here is the result of not having the love of God in you: "I am coming in my Father's name, and you receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive." I find this interesting. Men will believe anything and anyone but the Bible and Jesus Christ. He said, "I have come in my Father's name." What is the result? You will not receive Me. You will not have Me.

Third Charge: Seeking Honor from Men

I was waiting to get a haircut the other day, and I was looking at a National Geographic because it had a section on the King James Bible. They began talking about the Rastafarians. The originator, a man by the name of Rastafarian, said he was Christ. Of course, he was a black man. He was Christ. The Rastafarians deny Christ and say that this black man is the Messiah. They say Africa is the homeland, Africa is this, and Africa is that. Here are these men praying to Rastafarius.

My question is this: How can you believe some individual is Christ, and yet refuse to believe that Christ is Christ? When men are ignorant of Christ, and the love of God is not in them, they will not come to Christ; and the truth is, they cannot come to Christ, because they are totally, absolutely ignorant of who He is. Our Lord looked at these people in John 5 and verse 14 and said, "And you will not come to me that you might have life."

I hope you are beginning to see that your understanding, as well as your affections, influence and control your will. The will cannot be viewed in abstraction somewhere. No. It is controlled and influenced by our understanding, or our lack thereof, as well as by our lusts and desires. So our Lord said, "You have not His word dwelling in you. You have not the love of God in you."

Here is the third charge: "How can you believe who receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" Look at that very carefully. Our Lord asked this question: "How can you believe which receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" If I were to ask the catechetical question, What is the chief duty of man? Everyone knows the answer: to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Our chief duty is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. But the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Jews of our Lord's day were full of pride, and they wanted the recognition of man. Here is a statement I want you to listen to and absorb.

According to John 5 and verse 44, pride and the desire for vain glory makes faith impossible. Now think about that. Pride and the desire for vain glory makes faith impossible. Our Lord asks, "How can you believe?" indicating a total, absolute impossibility. "How can you believe which receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from God only." Our Lord is saying that pride and vain glory makes faith impossible. May I ask you, what natural unsaved man is filled with pride and vain glory?

Look in your Bibles at John 5, but turn back to Matthew 23. Let me show you a few verses relating to what our Lord is actually saying. "Then spake Jesus to the multitudes and to his disciples saying, 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.'" Let me paraphrase this for you. They wanted to be the head honcho. They wanted to be in control. They wanted to be looked up to. I the one watch they sit in Moses' seat.

He says, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe and that observe and do but do not ye after their works for they say and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be born and lay them on men's shoulders. But they themselves will not move them

with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men."

"They make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms in the feasts, and the chief seats of the synagogues, and greetings of the markets, and to be called Rabbi, Rabbi, but be ye not called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all are your brethren." But notice what He said: They love the uppermost rooms.

They prefer the praise and recognition and admiration of man. John 12:43 gives the indictment against not only these people but natural man. Our Lord says concerning the Pharisees, "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Why would man not seek the honor that comes from God alone? The answer is because they desire the praise and recognition of man more.

I have thought innumerable times about the controlling elite, not only in America, but throughout the world. They think they are in the hot seat now. Just wait. Can you imagine what it will be like when they face the Judge of all the earth, the sovereign God of heaven and earth? They thought that they were in control, and they loved their power, the praise, and the recognition of man far more. In fact, they do not even believe in God. They deny God.

The Historical Roots of Free Will Doctrine

I would rather be the humblest believer, penniless and a wanderer, walking this world over and seeking bread every day, than be a multibillionaire who ignored God, denied Christ, and trampled His Word under my feet. One day there will be a judgment, and we will find out that all this praise and recognition of man is worthless. Here is a question I often ask myself: What difference will it make a hundred years from now anyhow? Stop and think about that. We will all be dead. What if you gave me every medal and every recognition that you could give me? What would it matter a hundred years from now? I will be dead, and you will be dead. All of that recognition will be gone.

The reason men do not seek the honor that comes from God alone, listen carefully, is because they desire honor and recognition

from man instead of God. They do not put God first; they put themselves first. Man by nature is an idolater. He worships himself. Why would you come to Christ if you are your own god?

Was that not the temptation in Genesis 3: “And you shall be as gods, knowing or determining good and evil for yourselves”? You do not need God to give you His law. You can make up your law as you go along. That is what man wants to do. Our Lord says, “How can you believe? How can you?” Pride and vainglory make faith impossible.

Look in John chapter 5, at verses 45 and 47. Our Lord asks in verse 44, “How can you believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?” Then He says, “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you trust. For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?”

What is our Lord saying? You want the praise and recognition of man? You are not going to receive Me. You are not going to believe Me. You do not even believe the one whom you say you believe, Moses. Moses is standing there doing this: “That is the one, Lord. That is the one.” Our Lord says, “I do not have to accuse you. You are accused by the one that you trust in, because you really do not believe his words.”

For had you believed his words, you would believe in Me. The effect or result is ultimately that men do not believe in Christ. They will not believe the Word of God. They do not love God; therefore, they do not honor God. They care only for themselves. Consequently, their wills are in bondage to their fallen nature. Man is not free. He is bound in the chains of sin.

Now, if the Bible teaches that man’s will is in bondage to sin—and it does—let me ask you this question: From whence, then, is all the emphasis on this damnable and heretical doctrine of free will?

You will remember from the messages on true theology that I talked about Pelagius. Pelagius was in the fourth century and advocated free will. It was advocated also in Genesis chapter 3. Augustine, one of the early church fathers, debated him, proved his

theories absolutely false, and consequently so defeated Pelagius that nobody was going to follow his teachings. Then Cassian came along, took a little from Augustine and a little from Pelagius, and taught a modified Pelagianism. He still held to free will.

The greatest advocate of free will is the Roman Catholic Church. It surprises many Baptists to discover that, in reality, they are very good Roman Catholics. Baptists would abhor such a comparison, for most Baptists glory in the fact that they are not Protestants. They were never in the Roman Catholic Church; they were a separate entity that held true to the faith. Yet, in reality, most Baptists are good little Roman Catholics, and they do not even realize it.

How can I make such a claim? A preacher once challenged me, asking why I believed in the doctrine of election and predestination. He was a Baptist preacher, so I answered all his questions. Then I asked him, "Why is it that you, being a Baptist, hold Roman Catholic doctrine?" He said, "I don't believe Roman Catholic doctrine."

I said, "Sure you do. You believe in the free will of man." He said, "That's not Roman Catholic." I said, "Sure it is. 1563, the Council of Trent, which is an avowed standard of popery, said this." I am quoting their words: "If anyone shall affirm that man's free will moved and excited by God does not by consenting cooperate with God the mover and exciter so as to prepare and dispose itself for the attainment of justification. If, moreover, anyone shall say that the human will cannot refuse complying if it pleases, but that it is unactive or inactive and merely passive, let such an one be accursed. If anyone shall affirm that since the fall of Adam, man's free will is lost and extinguished, having title only a name without a thing, and a fiction introduced by Satan in the church, let such a one be accursed."

Here is the Council of Trent, Canon 5, from that same council: "If anyone says that since Adam sinned, the free will of man is lost and extinguished, or that it is a thing with only a name, yet name without a reality of figment and fine, introducing the church by Satan, let him be anathema." The word anathema means to be cursed and set aside for certain and sure destruction.

Here is the Roman Catholic Church saying in its official council that man's will is free, that man cooperates with God, and that man can prepare and dispose himself for the attainment of justification, or the attainment of salvation. If anyone says he cannot, let him be accursed. John Calvin, who had run-ins with the Roman Catholics, said, “The papist told that man through his own free will returns to God.”

On this point is our greatest contest with them at this day. What was the greatest contest between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic Church? It was free will. Martin Luther thanked Erasmus for bringing this up, saying, “You've put your finger on the vital spot, the hinge on which everything turns.”

Listen carefully to this quotation from the Sovereign Grace Union, publication number 173: “During the Arminian range of Archbishop Laud, the persecutor of the Puritans and the Covenanters, zealous Arminians were promoted to the best bishoprics. A famous letter written by a Jesuit to the rector of Brussels and endorsed by Archbishop Laud himself was found in the study at Lambeth. A copy of the letter was found among the papers of a society of priests and Jesuits at Clerkenwell in 1627.” It read: “Now we have planted the sovereign drug Arminianism and we hope will purge the Protestants from their heresy and it flourisheth and beareth fruit in due season. I'm at this time transported with joy to see how happily all instruments and means, as well as greater, smaller, cooperate with our purposes. But to return to the main fabric, our foundation is Arminianism.”

Interestingly, all of the historical confessions of faith have always taught that the will of man was in bondage to sin, and that only the grace of God could set that will free. First, let me give you a quote from the Westminster Confession of Faith. I am not going to read the Scriptures; there are Scriptures attached to all of these, but here is what the Westminster Confession of Faith says about man's will:

"Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation. So as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself or to prepare himself thereunto. When God converts a sinner and translates him into the

state of grace, He frees him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him to freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good. Yet so as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly nor only will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil."

I am going to explain this more next week, but all the Westminster Confession is saying is this: if man turns to God, it is because God has worked in his life, freed his will from its bondage, and allows him to come to Christ through grace.

The Westminster Confession of Faith was written from 1644 to 1648. I have a number of books on the confession, and I have preached many sermons based upon its truth. What many people do not know is that Baptists used that confession for a number of years. Finally, in 1689, they drew up what is known as the Old London Confession of Faith. The interesting thing is that the Old London Confession of Faith is a Baptist confession of faith. Yet if you read it, you are going to be amazed, because the Westminster Confession and the Old London Confession are almost word for word, except when it comes to baptism and ecclesiology. When it comes to the doctrine of the church and baptism, of course the Baptist is different.

The Old London Confession and the Westminster Confession are almost word for word on about every point. Historically, Baptists and Presbyterians have been alike in these matters. They disagreed on baptism and on the order of the church; that was it. In 1742, a hundred Baptist pastors met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and adopted the Old London Confession as their confession of faith. It then became known as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. If you take an Old London Confession of Faith and a Philadelphia Confession of Faith, you will find that they are word for word, because they are one and the same.

The London Confession of Faith, which was a Baptist confession, and the Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith say this concerning man's will:

“God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice that is neither forced nor by any necessity of nature determined to good or evil. Man in his state of

innocency had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good and well-pleasing to God," Adam in the garden, "yet was unstable or immutable so that he might fall from it. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to do any spiritual good accompanying salvation. So as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself or to prepare himself thereto."

The Westminster Confession, the Old London Confession, and the Philadelphia Confession go absolutely stark contrary to the Council of Trent, where the Roman Catholic Church said, "If any man deny this, let him be accursed." According to Roman Catholic doctrine, any Presbyterian, Baptist, or Reformed believer who believes that man's will is in bondage and that man does not cooperate with God is under the curse of God according to the Roman Catholics.

Testimony of Reformers and Conclusion

Augustus Toplady, author of "Rock of Ages," was not only a preacher and hymn writer; he was alive with George Whitefield and the Wesleys in the eighteenth century. He wrote: "Queen Mary and her Spanish husband well knew that Calvinism is the very life and soul of the Reformation and that popery will never flourish until the Calvinistic doctrines were eradicated. Her efforts to destroy by sword and by fire those who upheld the truth earned for her the unenviable appellation of Bloody Mary."

"The charge on which many of them were burnt at the stake was that they held to the doctrine of predestination and rejected the Arminian Popish doctrine of free will." Bloody Mary burned men at the stake because they did not believe in free will. John Owen, the Prince of Preachers, described free will as "this great deity," whose original being was not well known, but which had grown into "the vast giant-like hugeness" of an idol, "the issue of the people's brains." If John Owen were alive today, he would say it like this: those who believe in free will are touched in the head.

Charles Spurgeon said, "What is the heresy of Rome but the addition of something to the perfect merits of Jesus Christ, the beginning in and of the works of the flesh to assist in our justification? And what is the heresy of Arminianism but the

addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here."

The Word of God, which I will show you next week, Lord willing, teaches free grace and not free will. Free will has never taken one individual to heaven, but it has taken a multitude to hell. Our Lord rightly said to these people, "You will not come to me that you might have life." And lighted the overwhelming evidence—His works, the testimony of the Father, and the testimony of the Scriptures—they would not come. Why? They had not His Word abiding in Him.

They had not His love in Him, and they desired the honor of man more than the honor of God. Therefore, they would not come because they loved the praise of man more than the praise of God. So the question that has to be asked is this: Are you a believer in the Word of God? Are you a good little Roman Catholic who does not even read the Bible? They are taught that it is impossible for man to understand; the priest has to interpret it for them. What good is your Bible if you do not read it, study it, and apply it?

When men are ignorant of Christ, when they do not love Christ, and when they refuse to honor Christ, they cannot come and they will not come to Christ. In John 5:22–23, our Lord said, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Why has the Father committed all judgment to the Son? "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father who hath sent Him." If you do not come to Jesus Christ, you are dishonoring the Father. If you do not love Jesus Christ, you are dishonoring the Father. If you do not know Jesus Christ, you are dishonoring the Father. And if you dishonor the Father, you dishonor the Son. God shall judge you through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not need free will. We need the grace of God in our lives, not only in order to be saved, but after we are saved. Our Lord said, "Without me you can do nothing." Not one thing. How desperately we need the grace of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee, we thank You, we trust Thee, and we love Thee through the Lord Jesus Christ. We confess and acknowledge that He is God in the flesh, the Lord of

glory, the Savior, and the Redeemer. Without Him, Lord, no man will come unto Thee. Father, we ask for grace, even as Your children, to love Thee as we should, to abide in Thy Word, and to carry forth in obedience to Thee, in and through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

The Terrible Sin of Man

Part Three of Three

Free Will and Freedom of the Will

SCRIPTURE READING - John 5:32-47 (KJV)

Introduction and Review

We are talking about the terrible sin of man, which, of course, is the fact that he will not come to Christ. In this third part, I will show you the difference, Lord willing, between free will and what is known as freedom of the will, or free agency.

John chapter 5, beginning there in verse 32:

"There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me

> to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.
>
> Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

In John chapter 5, our Lord referred to the many witnesses He had. He referred to John for the benefit of those people, but He appealed only to His own works, to the Father, and to the Scripture—the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures. God only appeals to Himself.

The truth of the matter is that, in light of all the abundant evidence and all the truthful witnesses, man's will is still locked in rebellion against God. In light of all those witnesses, our Lord still looked at those people and said, "You will not come to me that ye might have life."

God brought three charges against these people: "Ye have not his word abiding in you." That was the first charge. "Ye have not his love abiding in you." They were seeking the honor of man. As a result of all these things, they refused to come to Christ. They refused to believe. Clearly, then, man's will is locked in stubborn rebellion against God.

Quotes on Free Will

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "Free will has carried many a soul to hell, but never a soul to heaven." Martin Luther said, "If any man doth ascribe of salvation even the very least, to the free will of man, he knoweth nothing of grace, and hath not learned Jesus Christ aright." John Calvin said, "The human will does not by liberty obtain grace, but by grace obtains liberty."

Definition of Free Will

The definition of free will is not my definition; it is the definition given by those who advocate that theory. The term free will, used theologically, refers to the concept that man, of his own ability and upon his own power, may turn to God or away from God. In other words, they advocate that it is in man's right and power to choose whichever he decides.

The concept of free will, especially in relation to salvation, is succinctly set forth by Erasmus in his dissertation, chapter 2, section 13: "By freedom of the will, we understand in this connection the power of the human will, whereby man can apply to or turn away from that which leads to eternal salvation." Their very definition says that man has the ability to apply himself to salvation or the power to turn away.

In relation to soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, free will is the concept whereby the will of man is regarded as autonomous—that is, independent and undetermined—and therefore capable of willing either good or bad apart from any conditioning by moral or religious character.

The Sovereignty of God vs. Free Will

I have heard preachers and Christians alike say that God cannot make anyone do anything. Those who hold that position believe it would be an unpardonable sin on God's part to work in or upon the will of man. According to their theory, man must be absolutely free. I wonder if they have ever thought through that concept. If God cannot make man do anything unless he wills to do it, how is God going to get poor sinners to judgment? I am sure sinners are not

willing to be judged by God. If God cannot work upon the will or have His way, how will He get sinners to judgment?

All I can say is, if you have such a concept of God, poor God, poor God. God then has to hope that some will allow Him to save them, and hope that the rest will allow Him to damn them.

Poor God. He is so helpless against His creatures. It appears from that standpoint that the creature has usurped and become more powerful than the Creator; the creature is now on the throne, and God is reduced to being a servant. Obviously, that is not what the Scripture teaches. I do not know whatever happened to the God of the Bible in Christendom's thinking, because the God of the Bible is totally different from the God of modern man.

In Daniel chapter 4, verses 34 and 35, Nebuchadnezzar said, "At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: ...and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

Isaiah 46:10 says, "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Revelation 4:11 says, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon rightfully said this: "Men will allow God to be everywhere except on his throne. They will allow him to be in his workshop to fashion worlds and to make stars. They will allow him to be in his armory to dispense his arms and to bestow his bounties. They will allow him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof or light the lamps of heaven or rule the waves of the ever moving ocean. But when God ascends his throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth, and when we proclaim and enthrone God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, and to dispose of His

creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter, then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us. For God on His throne is not the God that they love."

They love Him anywhere better than they do when He sits with His scepter in His hand and His crown upon His head. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon the throne whom we trust.

Certainly God is sovereign. A. W. Pink went farther when he said: "The God of this 21st century no more resembles the supreme sovereign of holy writ than does the dim flickering of a candle, the glory of the midday sun. The God who is now talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday school, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most so-called Bible conferences, is a figment of the human imagination, an invention of maudlin sentimentality."

"The heathen outside the pale of Christendom form gods out of wood and stone, while the millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a god out of their own carnal mind. In reality, they are but atheists, for there is no other possible alternative between an absolutely supreme God and no God at all. A God whose will is resisted, whose designs are frustrated, whose purpose is checkmated, possesses no title to deity, and so far from being a fit object of worship, merits nothing but contempt."

The God of the Bible is far different from the God of the masses and from the gods of the pagans. The sovereign God of heaven and earth is still on His throne. He has not abdicated His position, resigned His power, or subjected Himself to the whims and will of fallen man.

The sovereignty of God may be defined as the exercise of His supremacy. Being infinitely elevated above the highest creature, He is the Most High, the Lord of heaven and earth, subject to none, influenced by none, and absolutely independent. God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases. None can thwart Him or hinder Him. Divine sovereignty means that God is God in fact, as well as in name; that He is on the throne of this

universe, directing all things and working all things after the counsel of His own will.

According to the theory of free will, God has been dethroned, and man has been elevated to His position. Man has been made into a god. Much like the king of Babylon and Lucifer of old, he has said in Isaiah 14:13–14, "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

According to free will, it is man that holds his own destiny in his hand. It is man that holds the key in his hand. It is man that makes the decision, and his decision is ultimate and final. According to free will, man can save himself by his decisions and by the exercise of his will. According to the free will theory, he can make that decision whenever he pleases and whenever he chooses.

Biblical Evidence Against Free Will

Now naturally, all of this is contrary to the Word of God. Isaiah 55:6–7 states: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Notice verse 6. The admonition is to seek the Lord while He may be found, indicating there is a time when He cannot be found, and to call upon Him while He is near, indicating there is a time when He is not near. Obviously, if there is a time when God cannot be found, and a time when God is not near, then salvation is not in the hands of man. Man cannot find God, and man cannot force God even with his will.

This should demonstrate abundantly and clearly that man's will is not in control. There are plenty of passages in the Bible that indicate very clearly that man will call upon God and will not find Him. Proverbs 1:24–31 declares this truth.

God says, “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my

counsel, and would none of my reproof." Then He says, "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer."

"They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." What did God say? They will call upon Him, but He will not answer. They will seek Him, but they will not find Him.

Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." In Hosea 5:6, the Word of God says, "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him. He hath withdrawn himself from them." They shall seek Him. They will worship and sacrifice, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them.

In Micah 3:4, God says, "Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings." God says, "You are going to seek me, but you are not going to find me."

Clearly, man may endeavor to use his will during these times, but his will will prove absolutely useless. Man's will is not supreme. It is not sovereign, never has been, never will be. Man has never saved himself by his will. As Spurgeon correctly said, "Free will may take a man to hell, but it will not take a man to heaven." Spurgeon also said, "Free will I've often heard of, but I've never seen it."

"I've always met with will and plenty of it, but it's either been led captive by sin or held in the blessed bonds of grace." Augustus Toplady said, "A man's free will cannot even cure him of a toothache or a sore finger, and yet he madly thinks it is in his power to cure his soul."

Now stop and think about that. We pray for people who have cancer. Why do they not will themselves to be free from cancer? We pray for people. Why does not God just will Himself to have His leg

instantly healed? The will of man cannot do one thing but sin, which I am going to point out a little bit later.

First of all, I want to demonstrate the absolute foolishness of the theory of free will in relationship to salvation. And secondly today, I want to be able to distinguish for you the difference between the theory of free will and what the Bible teaches concerning freedom of will, or free agency. So first of all, I want to consider with you the impossibility of man's will being free.

Four Philosophical Impossibilities of Free Will

Now, philosophically, as well as biblically, for a man to have a free will, there must be four concepts that have to be absolutely substantiated. I am going to go over these four concepts very quickly and show you the absolute impossibility of it. First, for free will to exist, for it to be true, man must first of all have an awareness of the alternatives to be chosen.

Now stop and think about this. If my will is free, first of all I must have an awareness of the alternatives to be chosen.

Now someone is going to say, well, we can get around that very simply. Because all we have to do is tell fallen man, unsaved man, about heaven and hell. And then once we tell him about salvation in Christ, and we tell him about the just punishment and penalty of his sin, then he has awareness of the alternatives to be chosen. Well, my response to that is it is not quite that simple. Why?

Because there is a vast difference between intellectual knowledge and spiritual knowledge. I want you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. Look with me, please, at verse 14. Let me show you the difference between intellectual knowledge and spiritual knowledge. In 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 14, look particularly at what the Apostle Paul says concerning the natural man. When he uses the term natural man, he is referring to man by nature, that is, fallen man, unsaved man. Look what he says: “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 what did Paul just get out of his mouth? The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of

God. Then he says, “neither can he know them.” He does not have the ability to know them. Why? Because they are spiritually discerned.

There is a difference between being given facts, or even having Scriptures quoted, and understanding those Scriptures. Romans 8 shows the impossibility of a natural man even being aware of the alternatives to be chosen. The apostle writes, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Then he says, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

What did he just say about the mind of man? It is not in subjection to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Man by nature cannot understand spiritual things. Our Lord, in John 3 and verse 3, looked at Nicodemus and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

That is, he has no perception of it, no comprehension of it, and no understanding of it. If we take these three passages—John 3, Romans 8, and 1 Corinthians 2—then let us ask this question: How can one who cannot see the kingdom of God, who thinks spiritual things are foolishness, who does not have the ability to know spiritual truth, and whose mind is absolute, total hatred against God and God's law, have an awareness of the alternatives to be chosen? He cannot see; he cannot comprehend; he cannot understand. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2 and verse 14, "neither can he know them," because they are spiritually discerned. The natural man has no ability to discern spiritual things in and of himself.

So free will fails on this very first principle. Secondly, for free will to exist, there must not only be an awareness of the alternatives to be chosen; there must also be a reliable criterion upon which to base that choice. What will a depraved, fallen, sinful man use as his criterion for choosing? The fallen man must use some criterion to judge his alternatives.

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind," that is, the uselessness and worthlessness of their mind. "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." What did the Apostle Paul say about the mind of man? It is ignorant. It is blind. It is useless. It is worthless. He went on to say in verse 19, "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." What does fallen man want? He wants sin. He wants his flesh satisfied.

First Timothy chapter 6 and verse 5 says, "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness." Scripture speaks of men with corrupt minds who are destitute of the truth. They have no truth.

So here, in the second part, free will fails again. Man does not have the ability to perceive the alternatives to be chosen. Secondly, he does not have a reliable criterion by which even to be aware of those alternatives, because his criterion is his own corrupt, depraved mind. Thirdly, in order for the will to be free, it must have the will to seek and to choose the best alternatives. Not only must there be an awareness of the alternatives to be chosen; there must be a reliable criterion to base a choice upon, and there must be the will to seek and to choose the very best alternative.

Romans 7:18 says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Paul continues, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." What in the world is Paul saying? Paul is saying very clearly that he does not have the ability in and of himself to choose that which is good. Here is why. Romans 3:10-12 explains: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."

"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." What? No one does good of his own. No, not one. No one understands of his own. No one seeks after good on his own. No one is righteous on his own. No, not one. Fallen man does not have the will to seek and to choose the best. His will is to sin and to do that which pleases himself and satisfies himself. His will is in bondage to sin, and his will fails again.

Fourthly, for free will to exist and be true, one must not only have an awareness of the alternatives to be chosen, he must not only have a reliable criterion, he must not only have the will actually to seek and to choose the best alternative, but, fourthly, he must have the power to achieve that which was chosen.

Now, as you turn to John chapter 6, let me point this out. He must have the actual power to choose that which was chosen, or to achieve that which was chosen. Do you realize—I could will to be a wonderful musician and a very talented opera singer—but there is no power in my will to achieve musical ability, or especially to have a good voice. I could will myself to be a multi-millionaire. I am not. If I do not have the power to achieve what I will, my will is not free. My will is limited. It is tied. It is bound. You have to have power to achieve if that will is going to be free.

Now, let me make a scenario for you. Let us say that a sinner does hear of the alternatives. Let us say he does base his choice of the alternatives upon the Bible instead of his own corrupt mind. Let us say that he does choose the best alternative, that he really chooses to be saved and to come to Christ. Look in John 6 and verse 44 at what our Lord said: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Did you hear what our Lord said? "No man can come unto me." The sinner, even if he had the ability to do the other three, still does not have the ability to do the fourth. For our Lord says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." You have to remember that "can" is a term of ability. "May" is a term of permission. Are sinners invited to Christ?

Yes, they are. But an invitation does not imply ability. Remember what our Lord said in Mark 10 about the rich young ruler, who came running, knelt, and asked, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Our Lord told him several things, and finally said, “Go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, take up the cross, and follow me.” The young man went away extremely anguished and sorrowful. Why?

The rich man had great riches and was not willing to give them up. Then our Lord looked at His disciples and said, "Children, how hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God." The disciples asked Him, "Who then can be saved?" Our Lord responded in verse 27: "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."

Who then can be saved? Our Lord said that with men salvation is impossible. Man does not have the power to save himself or even to help save himself.

John 1, verses 11 through 13, says, "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 sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

If you leave those negatives out, you can read verse 12 this way: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born of God." But after telling you that it is not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, and not of the will of man, the positive declaration is that it is of God.

So free will fails again. If you consider these four principles, free will cannot possibly be free—not theologically, not philosophically, not in any way whatsoever.

The Fourfold State of Man

One of the easiest concepts to grasp, and to understand the problem, is to consider the fourfold state of man. Years ago, Thomas Boston, an old Puritan, wrote a book titled The Fourfold State of Man. I have it in my library. The book is not very large, but it is very scriptural. In that book, Thomas Boston tells of the different states of man. There are four states, and man is totally, absolutely, and completely different in each one.

First, consider man in the Garden of Eden, or, as some would say, in the state of innocency. God created man upright, and Adam was created with original righteousness, holiness, knowledge, and

dominion. If you really wanted to consider free will, Adam would have been the only individual who ever had it.

Adam did have the ability to please God. He walked with God. But unhappily, Adam was created mutable, that is, changeable. Adam could not only please God; he could also sin and displease God. And you know what Adam did: Adam sinned and rebelled against God, and God kicked him out of the garden.

If you are going to talk about free will, think about this for a moment. Adam, the only man who ever had free will, in a perfect environment, with no sin and no peer pressure, used his free will to sin against God. God drove Adam out of the garden. That is the second stage of man: the fallen state, the state of nature, or man by nature. What Adam was in the garden, he is no more. Adam lost his ability to please God. Adam died—spiritually first, and then physically later.

That is why Romans 5 says, "as in Adam," and 1 Corinthians 15 says, "as in Adam all die." There was no death until Adam sinned against God. Adam was cursed of God and lost his ability to please Him. His entire being, including his will, is now in bondage and captivity to sin. What can man in a state of nature do? He can sin. He freely chooses to sin; he wills to sin; he wants to sin. But he cannot freely choose to be saved, holy, or obedient. Why? "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." There is no ability in us to please God, because the carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, "neither indeed can be." Adam in the state of nature is not the same as he was in the state of innocence in the garden.

Thirdly, there is man in the state of grace, where God in His grace and mercy saves. Most of us here are probably Christians, saved by the grace of God. God has now given us a renewed ability to please Him. We have been commanded to walk pleasing unto the Lord. We who have been saved by grace can now please God. But there is one problem: we can also still displease Him.

Here we are in a state of grace, struggling like the Apostle Paul. When we will to do that which is good, that is what we want to do; but unhappily, it is not what we do all the time.

Here you have three states of man: man in the garden, with a free will, using that will to sin; man in the state of nature, whose will is in bondage to his sin; and man in the state of grace, whose will has been released from its bondage and who now has the ability to please God, though he can also displease Him. Fourthly, there is the state of glory, where our wills will be fixed and we will never sin again.

The great deception arising from this fact is that philosophers, theologians, and many Christians try to make man in the state of nature exactly like man in the state of innocency. These are two totally different states, just as the state of nature and the state of grace are totally different, and as the state of grace and the state of glory are totally different. Man is not the same as when he was in the Garden of Eden. It is impossible, because man fell, sinned, and became totally depraved. Man is different in each of these four states. Since the fall of man, man does not have free will. Man's will is not free, and it cannot be free.

Free Agency vs. Free Will

The Bible does teach what is known as freedom of will, or free agency. The concept of freedom of will is vastly different from the concept of free will. Free will teaches that man, in his own power, ability, and will, can choose to be saved or turn away from God; it is all his choice and all up to him. Simply stated, that concept says man has the power to initiate salvation on his own, which is contrary to the Word of God.

What, then, does free agency, or freedom of will, mean? It means that every creature is free to act out its own nature.

When I say that freedom of will, or free agency, all it means is that every creature is free to act out its own nature. A bird is free to fly in the air. A bird can fly anywhere he wants to in the air. That is the nature of a bird, to fly. But a bird is not free to fly underwater, nor is he free to fly under dirt. If you do not believe that, catch a bird, dig a hole, pile dirt on him, and he will not fly. He will die. A bird is only free to fly in the air.

A fish is free to swim in the water. He is not free to swim in the air, nor is he free to swim under dirt. Catch a fish, dig a hole, and pile

dirt on him. He will not swim. He will die, because his freedom is only in the water, just as a bird's freedom is only in the air.

Does man have freedom of will by nature? The answer is absolutely sure: yes. He is free to act out his own nature. What is his nature? It is a sinful nature. What will he do? He will sin. He will do it willingly, gladly, readily, and voluntarily. I do not care what sin he chooses. It could be drunkenness, fornication, religiosity, pride, theft, or whatever; he is free to act out his will and his nature. His nature is that of a sinner, and that is exactly what he is going to do.

Why do men sin? The answer is because they are sinners, and you cannot stop them from sinning. They are simply acting out their nature.

Let me try to draw you a picture of how free a fallen man is. Envision in your mind a 4 by 4 cell with metal walls. Attached to one of those walls are three-foot chains. If you take the sinner and shackle his hands and feet with those chains, he is free. He is free to move as far as those chains and those walls will allow him to move, but no further. He is free to move within that 4 by 4 cell, but only as far as the chains and walls allow him to go.

A sinner is exactly like that, but his chains are spiritual. You cannot see them. Sinners are bound in exactly the same way. The only difference is that their chains and walls are spiritual. We may not see them, but they are there. A sinner is free to sin, and he does so heartily.

His mind, heart, will, energy, everything in him encourages him to sin and indulge his lusts and desires, and he does so with his whole heart. He wants it. He wills it. He loves it. What is he doing? He is simply acting out his nature. That is all. It is the nature of a sinner to sin.

Suppose you looked out the door and saw something. You called, “Pastor, Pastor, get over here quickly and look at this.” I replied as I walked slowly, “What is it?” You said, “It is water. It is running downhill.” I would smile and say, “I do not have to hurry. I have seen water run downhill plenty of times. It is the nature of water. Water takes the course of least resistance. I do not even have to see it.”

But suppose you called again and said, “Pastor, get over here quickly. Water is running uphill, and there is no pump, mechanical device, or anything pushing it. It is running uphill on its own.” I would run to the door because I would want to see that. It would be contrary to nature. It would have to be an act of God; the power of God would have to be involved. Water does not naturally run uphill by itself. It runs downhill.

Now suppose you said, “Look at this. It is that old drunk we have seen for the last five years, stumbling down the road. He is drunk as a skunk, disheveled, unclean, and stinking.” I would say, “I do not have to look at that drunk. I have seen plenty in my time. It is his nature to be drunk. He is a drunk.”

But suppose you said, “You know that old drunk who used to walk by here every day? He is now sober. He has on a suit. He is clean, singing and whistling, and telling other people about Jesus Christ.”

It is against nature. Something has happened: there has been a direct intervention of God in his life that changed the course of his conduct and the course of his nature. Only God can do that. It is the nature of sinners to sin. But when a sinner repents, turns from his sins, bows to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and follows Him in obedience, something miraculous has happened: God has intervened in his life. By nature, sinners do not want God; they hate God. By nature, they do not want to obey God; they want to obey their own lusts. Understand that God does not work against man's will, but in it and through man's will. God does not take a man.

God Works in the Will

Someone may say, “You’re going to heaven whether you like it or not.” The man kicks and screams, “But I want to sin, I want to go to hell.” It does not work like that. God does not take a man and throw him by the seat of his pants into hell while he screams, “But I want to be holy, I want to be godly, I want to trust…” God does not work against the will; He works in the will and through the will. A man is not saved against his will, but is made willing by a mighty operation of the Holy Spirit of God. That is why the Bible says in Psalm 110 and verse 3, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”

Who is it that makes us willing to come to Christ? It is God. Philippians 2 and verse 13 says, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” When you see that old drunk who is now sober and cleaned up, God has worked in his heart. God works in us and through our wills. If God did not do that, none of us would be saved. It is God and God alone that enables us to desire Christ and His salvation.

He shows us our sins, wickedness, depravity, and the just penalty of our sins—that we are doomed and damned without Him. Then, in His grace and mercy, He opens our eyes to the beautifulness of Jesus Christ, the answer to all our problems, and to His full and free salvation.

He enables us, by giving us repentance, to turn from our sins, and by giving us faith, to believe. He releases our wills from bondage to sin so that we may desire and want to come to Christ. It is not free will that we need; it is free grace. Grace makes us willing.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “I feel persuaded that false doctrine, inasmuch as it touches God’s sovereignty, is always an object of divine jealousy. Let me indicate especially the doctrines of free will. I know there are some good men who hold and preach them, but I am persuaded that the Lord must be grieved with their doctrine, though He forgives their sin of ignorance. Free will doctrine? What does it?”

Free Grace, Not Free Will

It magnifies man into God. It declares God's purposes a nullity, since they cannot be carried out unless men are willing. It makes God's will a waiting servant to the will of man, and the whole covenant of grace dependent upon human action. Denying election on the ground of injustice, it holds God to be a debtor to sinners, so that if He gives grace to one, He is bound to give it to all. It teaches that the blood of Christ was shed equally for all men, since some are lost. This doctrine ascribes the difference to man's own will, making the atonement powerless unless the will of man gives it efficacy. Such sentiments dilute the scriptural descriptions of man's depravity by imputing strength to fallen humanity, and rob the Spirit of His glory and effectual grace. This theory says, in effect, that it is of him that

willeth, and of him that runneth, and not of God that showeth mercy. Any doctrine which opposes the truth, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,” provokes God's jealousy.

I often tremble in this pulpit, lest I should utter anything which opposes the sovereignty of my God. Yet I am not ashamed to preach the responsibility of man to God. If God be sovereign, man must be bound to obey Him. On the other hand, I am equally bold to preach that God has a right to do what He wills with His own, that He gives no account of His matters, and that none may stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest thou? I believe that this freewill heresy assails the sovereignty of God and mars the glory of His dominion.

And all faithfulness mingled with sorrow, I persuade you who have been deluded by it to see well to your ways and receive the truth which God sets on high and lays the creature in the dust. As for me and my house, I choose to believe in the free grace of God and recognize that He is all in all. I choose to give Him the glory, the praise, and the honor for everything He has done. He chose me. He called me. He justified me. He saved me.

And in His time, He will glorify me. And I will ascribe every ounce of my salvation to His grace and His mercy, to give Him glory and honor. For He's worthy of all honor and all glory. Free will or free grace? Give us grace.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We ask for Your grace and Your mercy in our lives. And Father, we do ascribe the whole of our salvation unto Thee. Thou art the author and the finisher of our faith. Thou art the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and everything in between. And we give Thee glory today. Thank You. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

Thou art the author and the finisher of our faith. Thou art the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and everything in between. We give Thee glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

Source Notes

Chapter 1: The Terrible Sin of Man Part 1 of 3
JW01312 | YouTube

Chapter 2: The Terrible Sin of Man Part 2 of 3
JW01313 | YouTube

Chapter 3: The Terrible Sin of Man Part 3 of 3
JW01333 | YouTube

Topical Index

Chapter titles and section headings are listed with the pages on which they begin.

A

Applications and Conclusion p. 23

B

Biblical Evidence Against Free Will p. 48

C

Calvin's Distinction Between Necessity and Coercion p. 27

Context of Witnesses in John 5 p. 11

D

Defining Free Will and Its Implications p. 7

Definition of Free Will p. 45

F

First Charge: Ignorance of God's Word p. 29

Four Philosophical Impossibilities of Free Will p. 50

Free Agency vs. Free Will p. 56

Free Grace, Not Free Will p. 59

Free Will and Freedom of the Will p. 43

G

God Works in the Will p. 58

I

Introduction and Review p. 43

Introduction and Review of John 5 Context p. 25

Introduction to the Series and Text p. 5

Q

Quotes on Free Will p. 45

S

Salvation Not of Man's Will p. 10

Second Charge: Absence of Love for God p. 31

T

Testimony of Reformers and Conclusion p. 40
The Bondage of the Will: Cannot vs. Will Not p. 26
The Charges Against Man's Will p. 28
The Crisis of the Will p. 21
The Crisis of the Will in John 5:40 p. 21
The Fourfold State of Man p. 54
The Historical Roots of Free Will Doctrine p. 35
The Sovereignty of God vs. Free Will p. 45
The Terrible Sin of Man p. 5
The Terrible Sin of Man Part 1 of 3 p. 5
The Terrible Sin of Man Part 2 of 3 p. 25
The Terrible Sin of Man Part 3 of 3 p. 43
The Will Is Influenced, Not Autonomous p. 9
The Witness of the Scriptures p. 20
Third Charge: Seeking Honor from Men p. 33
Three Charges and Their Effects on the Will p. 28

Scripture Index

Scripture references identified in chapter readings, headings, and manuscript text are listed with their page locations.

Genesis

Genesis 3 p. 36

Genesis 3:15 p. 21

Numbers

Numbers 23:19 p. 12

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 19:15 p. 11

2 Chronicles

2 Chronicles 36:15-16 p. 19

Nehemiah

Nehemiah 9:30 p. 19

Psalm

Psalm 110 p. 58

Proverbs

Proverbs 1:24-31 p. 48

Isaiah

Isaiah 7:14 p. 21

Isaiah 14:13-14 p. 48

Isaiah 46:10 p. 46

Isaiah 53 p. 21

Isaiah 55:6-7 p. 48

Isaiah 59:2 p. 49

Hosea

Hosea 5:6 p. 49

Micah

Micah 3:4 p. 49

Zechariah

Zechariah 7:12 p. 19

Malachi

Malachi 4:5-6 p. 13, p. 14

Matthew

Matthew 11 p. 14

Matthew 17:10 p. 14

Matthew 23 p. 34

Mark

Mark 10 p. 53

Luke

Luke 24:44 p. 20

John

John 1 p. 54

John 1:19 p. 12, p. 13

John 1:29 p. 13

John 1:45 p. 20

John 1:6 p. 13

John 3 p. 51

John 3:2 p. 15

John 5 p. 11, p. 13, p. 23, p. 25, p. 33, p. 34

John 5:22-23 p. 41

John 5:32-47 p. 5, p. 25, p. 43

John 5:33 p. 12

John 5:34 p. 15

John 5:38 p. 29

John 5:40 p. 6, p. 7, p. 10, p. 11, p. 21, p. 22, p. 28

John 6 p. 53

John 6:44 p. 23, p. 26, p. 27

John 8:31 p. 29

John 10 p. 29, p. 30

John 10:25 p. 15

John 10:38 p. 15
John 12:43 p. 35
John 14 p. 32
John 14:10-11 p. 15
John 15:24 p. 15
John 15:5 p. 8

Acts

Acts 4:16 p. 16

Romans

Romans 3:10-12 p. 52
Romans 5 p. 55
Romans 7:18 p. 52
Romans 8 p. 51
Romans 13 p. 32

1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 2 p. 51
1 Corinthians 15 p. 55

2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 3:14-15 p. 20

Philippians

Philippians 2 p. 59

Hebrews

Hebrews 6:18 p. 12

James

James 1:18 p. 10

1 John

1 John 2 p. 32
1 John 5 p. 32

Revelation

Revelation 4:11 p. 46

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