

About free will, if you'd like....#1 of 4. - 20201114

Hi all,

This series is not about predestination, but about what free will is, why it is, and how it benefits us - which will explain a lot of the troubles we have in this life. But predestination is an issue for some, so let me address that before getting into our subject.

Predestination is the belief that a person has free will in this life to sin or not sin, but they do not have free will to choose heaven or hell. They believe God has 'predestined' them to either heaven or hell.

The error of predestination was started by John Calvin, a French reformer around the year 1530, and beyond that narrow line of thought you won't find it in Judaism nor 2000 years of Christianity.

There are 2 main verses predestination stands on. The main one is Romans 8:29: "For whom He foreknew, He predestined them to be conformed to the image of His son..."

This verse says is that God knew from the beginning who would and would not be saved, and with that knowledge provided salvation for those who would want it. There is nothing here about being locked into either heaven or hell; it just states God knows all and provided salvation for those He knew would want it. That means free will is intact.

Don't we make decisions at the start of our day to provide us options during the day? In my elementary school education my mom foreknew that my school day included a lunch hour, so based on her knowledge she made my school lunch, but also made sure I had money in my pocket. She foreknew there were times I would rather have the school lunch so she predestined me to have money to buy lunch if I wanted. Her foreknowledge and predestination (determination before it happened) was used to provide me a choice in lunches, which left my free will intact.

Don't we based on foreknowledge make decisions before we leave for work in the morning, predetermine if we should take an umbrella in case it rains as forecast? Don't we take our lunch to work to eat there or put in the break room refrigerator if someone invites us to lunch instead? We have a basic foreknowledge of our day so predetermine a course of action based on that foreknowledge. That's all God did with salvation, for those who He knew would believe given the chance, He predetermined to provide salvation for us.

Another verse often used to justify their doom is Romans 9:13 in the King James Version: "As it is written, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.'" Paul here paraphrases Malachi 1:2-3.

In Malachi, and in Romans, God is talking about His choice of Jacob to be renamed 'Israel', and the word 'hate' as many Rabbi's and Christian commentators point out, is not in context the active personally directed word 'hate', but rather that He made a distinction between Jacob (Israel) and Esau.

In other words, God is not talking about the predestination of blessing for one brother and predestination of hell for the other; He is merely talking to Malachi (the last book in the OT) about the history of Israel, contrasting the histories of the two peoples they represent. Esau was called 'Edom' and the Edomites hated Israel and refused to let Israel pass through their land after they came out of Egypt, as did his other descendants, the Amalekites, who fought against Israel in Exodus 17, and God swore He would destroy them off the earth for doing so.

A small number of people still believe in predestination, which serves to feed their fear and emotional turmoil, remove hope and faith from their lives, and is used to justify their unbelief. Like anyone who wants to follow God, once such a person sees the balance of the Word and allows Him to reach down inside them, they respond to His love. But some struggle for years in the error thinking God has rejected them and there is no hope for them.

Free will - you are a sovereign being

When the Lord God made the first man and woman and put them in the garden, He pointed out that they had free will to choose life or death, blessing or cursing, spiritual separation from God or walking with Him.

He strongly advised them to choose life, and strongly urged them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as He said in Genesis 2:17: "...for in dying, you will die." Meaning, in dying spiritually, you will die physically. Paul restated this in Romans 5:12: "For by one man sin entered into the world, and death entered by sin, so that death has passed to all mankind..."

I should state that 'spiritual death' is not a ceasing of existence nor of one being dormant spiritually, rather a statement of the nature of the life that is in the human spirit. The human spirit is eternal, the only question being of what kingdom is that person a citizen? A person who is not born again can still function in the spirit realm which is how those involved in the occult function, and certainly before we were born again we felt God's tug on our hearts in our spirit to respond to His invitation. A person who is not born again has a spirit that is alive in the eternal sense, but does not have God's Life in their spirit.

The Lord God set both trees before Adam and Eve and stated the consequences of making the wrong choice. Centuries later He did the same thing with Israel in Deuteronomy 30:19: "....I have set before you this day life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life that both you and your children will live and love the Lord your God..."

Your will is stronger than God or the devil

We are sovereign beings, with neither God nor the devil able to make us do anything. The Lord God set the trees in the garden and gave instructions, but He couldn't make them eat of one or the other. The devil had to tempt Adam and Eve to get them to sin, but he couldn't exercise their free will for them. Free will means we are sovereign beings.

Even in our New Testament times we are told we should cast demons out of our lives, and those whose lives with demons we cross paths with who want free, but we cannot take authority over the human spirit. We are sovereign.

The trouble with most Christians is timidity from having no backbone

Once you realize your will is absolutely sovereign, you can be unstoppable for righteousness. The devil is out there, and we are not ignorant of his devices, but we have no fear for he cannot make us do anything, and if he so much as crosses our path we can rise up and command him away. It's that simple.

We try to influence the unsaved to walk with God, but if they choose not to, there is a kingdom called hell they may go to with others who don't want God, provided out of God's good grace for those who reject Him. He gives them what they want - a place without God - for He cannot force anyone to walk with Him. It is completely our choice.

Millions of non-believers conquer sin in their lives simply by exercising their free will. They determine to stop an addiction, discipline their food, exercise, destructive habits, thoughts, and emotions from their lives, all to break free from all these things by exercising their will - without God's help. They get free by exercising their free will. And their personal demons back off because they find no place for them to exercise their will over that person, so they wander about looking for other victims to influence under their will.

Yet how many Christians are in torment thinking they are powerless against demonic attack in dreams or through a person, or in their thoughts and emotions? How many Christians have been wrongly taught they are weak without Christ and are subject to the devil playing with them like a cat plays with a mouse before devouring its prey?

Grow up Christian! Exert your will and stand firm! Your free will can only be influenced by God or the devil, but neither can make you do or think or feel anything. You are a sovereign being. The additional fact we have Christ in us makes us the most powerful people on the planet. We not only have a free and sovereign will, but we have chosen to exercise that free will to walk with God and are therefore empowered by Him with tools to help keep us free and help others be free in Him.

Period. Paragraph. Over and out - grow a back bone! Your free will is stronger than the devil!
I'll pick it up there next week, until then, blessings,

John Fenn

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About free will if you like, or not. 2 of 4...knowing what we have. - 20201121

Hi all,

Having established that we are sovereign beings and neither God nor the devil can make us do anything, we find that means we are 100% accountable for our actions. We are sovereign, yet we are created, not self-existent, which means we are first and foremost accountable to our Creator, then secondly to each other.

We are 100% accountable for our actions

We are responsible for what we think, what we feel, what we do. No matter if we live in a palace or a prison, we are responsible right now, today, where we live, for our thoughts, emotions, and actions. And there is provision to walk with Him in each of these areas, if only we will.

In the Christian marketplace are all sorts of 'ministries' that are built around the idea someone else is responsible for our current condition. The common theme of each is that someone else is keeping me from being all I can be in Christ. For some it may be a great-great grandmother 2 centuries ago who let some spirit into the family and now that generational spirit is keeping me from being all I can be in Christ.

It may be that something happened to me when I was a child and so damaged me emotionally I am doing thus and so in my life and therefore cannot feel, sense, or be close to God.

It may be God allowed some person in my life that did thus and so to me, making it hard now to trust the Lord.

It may be a man or woman of God I trusted fell from grace so that is why I stopped believing in God.

There are all sorts of reasons which are at their core, nothing but excuses for not being 100% responsible for where you are right now in your thoughts, your emotions, your actions. Of course others do things that effect us, but we are to be as Paul stated in Philippians 4:12-13: "I know how to abound, I know how to be humbled, I know how to have abundance, I know how to have lack. I have entered a new dimension and can be independent of my circumstances, for I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Don't shout me down now just because I'm preaching real good

New Testament truth says all things start anew once our spirit man is recreated in Christ. Stop trying to find the 1 spiritual key that will unlock heaven's vault of riches and provision for you. If we are ailing from an emotional or physical condition handed down through the family, the reason isn't important because what IS important is 'by His stripes you were healed' - that statement of I Peter 2:24 does not come with an asterisk stating 'except in cases of generational curses or involvement in the occult by family members in the past, or what someone did to you when you were a child.'

There are certainly more mysteries in life than there are answers, but I am not charged with finding out each mystery about past generations in my family, but rather charged with walking with the Father and the Lord Jesus today, right now, where I am in life. There are many things we won't know this side of heaven. Rest in that and let it go.

Remember the Ephesians who burned their books on the occult in Acts 19? Where in his letter to the Ephesians do you see Paul talking to them of their past, or their family history that opened the door to the occult or what past ancestor caused them to be in this or that condition, or their childhood to explain their condition in body or mind?

There are none. He says simply to put on Christ and walk in Him - that is New Testament truth. Be responsible for you, and if there is a mystery as to why you aren't healed, or why you have such emotional difficulties, then seek Him for the answers, draw close to the Father and Lord directly for they live in you, and don't seek some formula or some 'spiritual specialist' to solve your issue. Consult others yes, but keep at the core your walk with Him.

When we stand before the Lord to give account, it is not a heaven or hell judgement, but an accounting of what we have done since knowing Him. Paul told the Corinthians in I Corinthians 3:1-15 that some are mere babies in Christ eating the milk of spiritual things when they should be eating the meat of things. But because they refuse to grow out of envy, strife, divisions, and if they carry those things in them to death, they will be as wood, hay, and stubble burned away when they stand before Him. Paul urged them to lay those carnal things aside and grow up in character in Christ, forming spiritual gold, silver, and precious stones to adorn their lives.

No matter what has happened to you in life, right now, right at this day, lay that aside to worship the Lord and from this day forward take responsibility for your thoughts, your feelings, your actions. Come up to His higher ways and thoughts as we are told in Isaiah 55, forsaking your ways and thoughts.

In short, we walk with God because He is God, not for what He will do for us. Purify your motives, we are 100% accountable for ourselves.

Free will allows us to make mistakes

The fact we are allowed to make mistakes also means God is in the process. As I've said before; "Very often God isn't in an event, He is in the response to an event."

That means a person can meet Him on the path they took to avoid Him.

It means He enjoys the process. In a quantum physics way we could say God is a Spirit with a Spiritual body and heaven is more real than the physical for the unseen created the seen. But it also means He has no way to experience the physical world except through human beings. In Himself in that Spirit-realm He is not limited to time and space, but by recreating us in our spirit man and living in us, He gets to live in and experience the limitations of time and space.

He enjoys this process, this experience we call life. He isn't just walking with us through life, He is living in us walking through this life, knowing and feeling in Himself our thoughts, feelings, every emotional high and low and physical frailty. Mistakes come with being a human being and He is not freaked out we sinned yet again, or think this or that weird or ungodly thought. When He looked through the corridors of time and decided to give us Jesus on the cross, He did so knowing full and well the mistakes we would make even after knowing Jesus.

"He gave us resurrection life and drew us to Himself by His holy calling on our lives. And it wasn't because of any good we have done, but by His divine pleasure and marvelous grace that confirmed our union with the anointed Jesus, *even before time began." II Timothy 1:9, Passion Translation *Greek: 'Before times eternal'.

You are allowed to be human

Free will coupled with this grace will do one of two things for a person: Either they will know the grace and step up to be empowered and all they can be in that grace, or they will abuse the grace, taking every advantage of freedom for personal gain. Christ has made us free not to sin, but some take that freedom as a license for sin, as Jude wrote in v4 when he urged us, 'Do not to turn the grace of God into a license for sin.'

We are allowed to be human, for in giving us free will He then by that action, had to make provision for the mistakes that come with giving free will to such finite and ignorant beings. That provision is Christ, salvation, forgiveness. But we are allowed to be human.

I said that to a person in a store - they came rushing down the aisle pushing their cart (buggy, for those who speak the King's English, or live in the US south) and nearly ran into me and apologized profusely. I said, "It's OK, you're allowed to be human." They looked at me with a funny look of relief, saying, 'Thank you for that'. As they slowly walked down the other aisle I realized they needed that grace and that realization that day, that it is okay to be human.

Free will means we are sovereign, but accountable to our Creator. It means there will be mistakes, but God can be found in the mistakes, in the process. It means when He gave free will to such imperfect beings, He also did provide for such frailty through Jesus on the cross and resurrection. He provided the solution in the sacrifice of the cross, and the power to live above natural human frailties in the power of the resurrection.

Free will allows us to have emotions, and we will never know what we have unless we learn to exercise our free will...and we'll pick it up there next week. Until then, blessings,

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About free will if you like 3 of 4, finding purpose - 20201128

Hi all,

In my teen years after my dad left our family, I worked several different jobs. They included farm work baling hay and painting fence posts, de-tasseling corn, cutting weeds around an old factory, making pizzas at a restaurant, delivering furniture, and even working as a camp counselor.

But I had a friend who grew up wealthy and only worked 'soft' jobs if at all, knowing he would grow up to inherit the family business. He didn't know what he had, or what it was like to suffer lack.

Free will allows us to know all we have and what we don't have

In my work I learned my physical abilities. I learned to control my emotions and how far I could push my body. I learned to budget money and know the value of a paycheck. I learned many life-lessons by using my free will to work and earn money. Exercising free will gave me that experience.

When Paul wrote to Timothy in II Timothy 2, and told him to work like a soldier to please Him who enlisted him. In that day the Roman Empire drafted men who had the toughest lives. They wanted farmers and ranchers and shepherds, construction workers and laborers. They wanted young men who knew the rough life for they knew they could endure the hardship that goes with being a soldier.

In our day a Christian may look at their rough life, their horrible upbringing, the mistakes they have made or injury inflicted upon them, and think that disqualifies them in the Lord. Some even doubt that He would want them. They mistakenly think because they struggle with their past God does too. They are wrong.

He doesn't struggle with your past, He values it because He knows that is what makes you a great soldier in Him. Jesus died and was resurrected so you could know the power of overcoming your past. You know the devil, you know your own weaknesses, you know the grace of Christ. You are exactly who He is looking for!

By your free will you have discovered the heights and depths the world has to offer, and have found Christ! The exercising of your free will is the means by which you have discovered what you have in Him. If you merely coasted through life you would never know what He has given you, and that there is a hell to lose and a heaven to gain.

Free will gives purpose and meaning to life

Purpose is the belief that something has a use or reason for being. Meaning is the value we assign to that. It means having free will given by our Creator proves we have a purpose, a reason for being. Additionally, knowing we are in Christ gives us meaning - we are children of the Father, nobility in His kingdom. We have purpose and meaning.

Many Christians come to the Lord searching for purpose and meaning for their life. We come 'as we are', meaning very often we come to Jesus valuing our lives based on our life experience, looking over our shoulders at our past. But we must exercise that same free will that led us to Christ by doing what Paul had to do: "I don't count myself as having attained...but what I do is this...forgetting those things that are behind; I press toward the mark for the high calling (invitation) of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

He is waiting on you

Because we are 100% responsible for our lives, we can move in any direction we wish. Some people come to a standstill in life waiting for God to tell them what to do. Most often though, He responds to our decision. When I was a teenager after my dad had left our family, I was looking for what I wanted to do with my life. I took art lessons, SCUBA lessons, flying lessons, and dropped out of them all because I was looking for that one thing that would fulfill me.

When I met the Lord I went straight to the Father and found total fulfillment and purpose. Though at the time I doubted that Jesus and the Father would even want my offer to be in their service, at least I knew I would end up in heaven. But He was simply waiting for me to work through my thoughts and my emotions, eliminating the possibilities of what I'd do with my life, until I found Him.

I could have followed through my high school plans and studied to become a Marine Biologist, and I would have been a great Marine Biologist who was a Christian. He would have been fine with that. I could have followed up on my college major, which was Recreation and Parks Management with a minor in Wildlife Management. I could have been a Park Ranger guiding people to the natural wonders of nature, and He would have been fine with that. But He let me work through the mechanism of free will as I eliminated what I really wanted in life, to walk with Him and help others know Him as well.

It was free will that caused me to search for that purpose in life. That means exploring for the purpose, why we were put on the planet, is healthy, even godly, for in that process we discover what He has put inside us, and what He has not.

Free will forces us to make choices

Adam and Eve were created and purposely placed in a garden that made them use their free will to choose Life or death. Israel was purposely brought out of Egypt to receive God's Word, and then told 'I have set before you this day life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life...' God was forcing them to make a choice.

In John 6:1-13 a group of 5,000 men plus women and children came to Jesus, and He wanted to feed them. "He said to Philip; 'Where are we going to buy food so we can give them something to eat?' This He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He was going to do."

God does not test us with evil; He tests us with choices. He sets before us choices and then watches us to see what we choose. And because we choose either wisely or unwisely, either the path of life and blessing or the path of death, we are 100% responsible and cannot blame Him for anything. He will always do what He can for us, based on what we choose.

Free will allows us to know what we have, and what we don't have. Free will gives purpose and meaning to life. Free will forces us to make choices, forces us to be responsible for our actions, and in all these things we grow as human beings, and grow as human beings in Christ. Free will also means we have emotions, for robots have no emotions...and we'll pick it up there next week to close out the series. Until then, blessings,

John Fenn

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About free will if you like, 4 of 4 - 20201205

Hi all,

The single biggest issue I receive email about involves emotions and thoughts. We live in a culture of short bursts of video and sound designed to stir emotions, preying on fears and suspicion, rarely appealing to the higher and noble emotions and thoughts of man.

We are also self-centered by fallen human nature, living in a damaged and fallen world. Life experience causes some to grow up never having learned to control their emotions and thoughts - they live by what is called 'emotional reasoning', which I've covered in previous 'Thoughts'. Free will allows us to find balance.

Free will gives us the ability to have emotions, and to learn how to control them

Because we are not robots but sovereign beings, it means we are in charge of what we think, what we feel, and how we act. Emotions urge us to act and influence our decisions. Emotions create a value to our world, but they are like rivers, each going in a direction and carrying specific volumes of water and content. Emotions allow us to explore the heights and depths of the human experience, and are given that we may balance reason with emotion, for life requires that balance to make wise decisions.

Recognizing the conflict between the part of our thoughts and emotions that want to walk with the Lord and that part which doesn't, Paul wrote in II Corinthians 10:4-6 that we are to "throw down our imaginations which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

We may feel like staying home some cold and rainy morning, but we override our emotions and get up and ready for work or school. Some Christians never take that every day discipline into their thoughts and feelings about their salvation. They live conflicted: Able to override emotions to get out of bed and go to work but unable to control emotions and fears that tell them maybe they offended God one too many times and He kicked them out of the kingdom.

Emotions in proper balance and obedience to Christ allow us to reason properly. If those thoughts and feelings are out of balance, they make us so that even though we see chapter and verse, we override what we read in favor of choosing (free will) other verses that agree with how we feel - afraid for our salvation, afraid we have committed the unpardonable sin. We don't know God by our emotions, we know

Him by His Spirit in our spirit and by the Word. He can affect our emotions most certainly, but we don't know Him by emotions.

Free will allows us to live by morals - a moral being the distinction between right and wrong

A human choosing between an apple or orange is no different than a monkey choosing between an apple and orange - we are not truly exercising free will. Free will involves moral decisions - sacrifices because it is right. Doing the right thing when no one is looking.

We have the ability to take command over an impulse to do something else. Your dog can destroy a room but has no moral compass guiding it. People have the ability to look at a situation and assess it, and override emotions in order to do the right thing. That is our decision. Not God's. Not the devil. Free will forces us to make moral decisions.

People who refuse to take responsibility for their lives want to be like that monkey choosing an orange. They want to live as if their actions have no consequences, attach no moral value. They can steal from a family member and express no outward signs of remorse. But they aren't a monkey. Their life is larger than merely choosing which food to eat, it involves make moral choices involving others they have hurt, or help. Taking responsibility for our actions is what free will gives us. Jude wrote in v4, 'Don't use the grace of God as a license for sin.' Free will allows us to do just that - justify sin because we are in grace. Or, we can understand the grace of free will empowers us to live godly lives as we grow as human beings and grow up in Christ.

Have you noticed in the New Testament letters precious little is blamed on the devil? Have you noticed all the authors teach taking personal responsibility, walking with God, walk in the new creation in Christ, and growing in Christian character and thoughts and emotions? The devil is barely mentioned. They put the responsibility on the individual. Look what Jesus did for you, step up and grow up and respond as you should for One who paid such a price for your soul! That's what they were all about.

Free will allows us to have hope

When God appeared to Abraham and began a relationship with him, it not only made all religious formula irrelevant, but it brought hope to mankind. In Abraham's day everyone was involved in religious rituals to please the gods. They lived in fear that if they did something wrong, offended the god or goddess in some way, disaster would strike them. When God invited Abraham to know Him, and offered that to all mankind, it brought hope. Man could continued with religious ritual if they wanted, but they had the free will to know God Almighty, to have a relationship with Him. Free will allows us to have hope, to know the Father, to know the worst thing that could ever happen to us is that we go to heaven. That is solid hope and confidence - an assurance of the soul acting as an anchor through the storms of life.

Free will means failure is never the end

When I was in the 6th grade I had a wonderful teacher who always challenged us. One day he posed this question to us as he stood some distance from the wall. As he walked half way to the wall with each move he asked: How many times of going half way to the wall would it take before I reached the wall? There were many guesses, but his answer stunned us: Never.

In theory, going half way to the wall with each step means a person will always have half way to go. You will never reach that wall. That was probably my first lesson in quantum physics, lol. But his point is related to free will, which is that you always have a choice in this life. Failure is never the end, there is always something else.

Even death is not the end. The Bible speaks of an age to come when Jesus will rule and reign as King over all nations. It speaks of us ruling with Him. Then 'ages to come' are mentioned. Death is not the end, it is merely the opening of a new door to the next age in life. An eternal God who created eternal beings in Him means there is no such thing as ultimate failure. There is always an option, always a provision He has made for any situation.

In our faith we talk of God opening a door or shutting one. The expression 'when God closes a door He opens a window' is also heard. There is always another 'half way' move to something else. You cannot not ultimately fail.

Absolute free will is God's domain alone - He willed the universe into existence, He willed the earth into existence.

He willed man into existence. Man is created in His image and likeness, therefore we also are given free will, but being created beings our free will is exercised within the bounds of His creation, with those limitations. But also, within those freedoms. We would never know what we have in Him if we didn't have free will.

Ephesians 2:8-10 tells us we are God's 'workmanship', having been saved by grace through faith. The Greek word 'workmanship' is 'poiema' which translates to English as 'poems'. Paul wrote, "For we are God's poems created for good things, which God (Father) has prepared for us ahead of time to walk in."

We are God's poems, empowered with free will to walk in the things He prepared before the world began - let us exercise with confidence our free will in Him. New subject next week, until then, blessings,
John Fenn

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