

The Mystery of Free Will

Introduction

- A. As a person, created by God in His image, means that we are basically spirit. Our greatest potential, ability, and deepest needs are all found in this area of our life.
- B. Being a person also means that we have a will – we have the ability of self-determination. To a very large degree – the quality of life is under our personal control. We can make powerful and far-reaching decisions.
- C. These two characteristics of personhood are profoundly important. To live without understanding who we are is to make failure inevitable and to invite the worst kind of disaster.

I. The Issue of Free Will in Creation.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. Male and female created he them. Gen. 1:26,27

Comment:

1. These verses, and the following account, indicates how God created us in His image – as a person, basically spiritual, with profound and powerful abilities related to the mind, emotions, will, and body.
2. When God made us with free will it meant He gave to us the ability to choose not only for Him but also against Him!
3. When God decreed that we would be created a person with free will it meant that He would have to abide by our decisions. He could not reverse our decision directly, nor could He keep us from the terrible effects of our wrong choices. This important truth is often overlooked.
4. We must understand and practice these principles if we are to live in harmony with God and His will. If we fail to do so we will find ourselves blaming God – denying His goodness – abrogating our responsibility – and living a passive, bitter, and unproductive life.

II. The Issue of Free Will in the Fall.

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. John 5:40

No man can come to me, except the Father ... draw him. John 6:44

There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
Romans 3:11

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins..
Ephesians 2:1

Comment: Because of the fall the non-Christian is dead to God and has lost the ability to respond by faith – without divine grace – he can only respond in unbelief. His will is still "free" but can only act in harmony with his fallen nature. He rejects God because he wants to.

III. The Issue of Free Will in Salvation.

For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8,9

Comment: Since the sinner is dead to God – salvation can only be a gift. We do not know why God does not give salvation to everyone – the Christian knows it is not because of our merit. We must be thankful.

IV. The Issue of Free Will in the Daily Life.

Wherefore, ye beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12,13

Comment:

1. In salvation the person is made alive to God – a new creature – and given the gift of faith – the ability to respond correctly to God.
2. We are exhorted in the Bible to respond to God in love – by surrender, trust, and obedience. If we do not God must abide by our wrong choices and allow us to live with the terrible effects.
3. While we must recognize the way the past, people, emotions, desires, truth, error, circumstances, events and our own character influence our choices – we must admit that – the quality of our spiritual life is largely under our control. We can choose our response!

V. The Issue of Free Will in the Church.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. I Thessalonians 2:14

Comment:

1. That which determines the spiritual level and growth of the church is found in the choices of its leaders and particularly its members.
2. When a group of believers choose to unite together (Biblically) to serve God – nothing can keep them from Biblical success. We can choose by faith to honor God – and He will honor our faith – and His power will accompany not only our decisions but our actions.
3. One of our most serious sins is to choose to be passive.