

Blueprints for Belief

Laying the Theological Foundations for Constructing Your Faith

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1. God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil.
 - God gave us freedom of will in the sense that we're not forced to do good or evil. Nature has not already determined whether we'll do good or evil.
 - Deuteronomy 30:19 – "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live."
2. Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it.
 - When mankind was still innocent, before Adam and Eve's fall into sin, we were free and able to do good things that pleased God. But this had the potential to change. We were allowed to fall from innocence.
 - Ecclesiastes 7:29 – "See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes."
3. 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.
 - And we did fall – from innocence into sin. By the fall we lost the ability to choose any spiritual good that would help save us. So as fallen humans, we really don't like doing good. We're dead in sin, and by our own strength we're not able to convert ourselves, or even prepare ourselves to be converted.
 - Romans 8:7-8 – "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God... those who are in the flesh cannot please God."
 - 1 Corinthians 2:14 – "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them..."
4. When God converts a sinner and translates Him into the state of grace, He freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and, by His grace alone, enables him 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.
 - When God converts us and gives us His grace, He frees us from being slaves of sin. By God's grace alone we're enabled to want to do spiritual good and to freely do it. But we still have some rottenness remaining in us, so we don't always want to do good. We sometimes want to do evil. And even when we want to do good, we don't do it perfectly.
 - Ezekiel 36:26-27 – God promises: "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you... and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

- Galatians 5:17 – “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”
5. The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to good alone, in the state of glory only.
- We’ll only have a truly free will when we’re “raised in glory” at the resurrection. Our wills will then be perfect and free to only do good – they won’t even have the potential to turn bad again.
 - Hebrews 12:23 – believers will join “the spirits of the righteous made perfect.”
 - Jude 24 – God is able “to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.”

Objections

“If someone is unable to choose God, then how can God hold them responsible?”

- We freely choose NOT to obey God because of our sinful nature.
- Why do bats only come out at night? Not because they can’t, but because they prefer it by nature. John 3:19–20 – Men “loved the darkness rather than the light.”

“It sounds like the confession is denying free will altogether.”

- No, the confession clearly teaches that humans have free will, but that we are inclined to use that freedom in rebellion to God. We are not puppets. Instead, we are in bondage to the sinful nature we inherited.

Discussion Questions

1. If our choices are real and not forced, how does that deepen your sense of responsibility before God?
2. If the natural man is unable to choose God, how does that shape the way we pray for and witness to unbelievers?
3. As a Christian, you are free from sin’s dominion but not from its presence. Where do you feel this inner conflict most sharply?