

WCF Chapter 9 Of Free Will

I Introduction:

Will- The mind choosing (Jonathan Edwards)

Import- how does God's sovereignty and man's "free will" co-exist?

Options for Exercise of Will

1. Controlled by External Force(s)
2. Exclude Personal Preferences (vacuum)
3. Reveal Personal Preferences

II Place of Will in the Confession

Ch. 6 Fall of Adam; effect on the Will

Ch. 7 Making of Second Covenant

Ch. 8 Mediating work of "last Adam"

Ch. 9 How does fallen mankind "freely" receive the gospel?

1. God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good, or evil.

A. Exercise of will is pervasive and defining of who we are: (Mat. 12:45-6)

Various examples-

B. Exercise of will cannot operate in vacuum.

Example of Paul in Romans 7- "But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produces in me all kinds of covetousness. (7:7)

C. Robots?

- Refutation of Jesus- “...out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. (Mat. 15:19)
- Refutation of James- “...each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (James 1:14)

2. Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom, and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but yet, mutably, so that he might fall from it.

Freedom verses Ability- Freedom of the will means always acting according to one's will. If we cannot act according to what we will (no matter how dire the circumstance may be in which we have to choose), then our wills are not free. If there is no circumstance under which we would ever freely make a certain choice, then we do not have the ability to make that choice.

Stage 1 (Adam and Eve, original state)

Posse Peccare et Posse Non-Peccare

- Certainty of the Fall does not preclude the free will of Adam and Eve. One command, two trees, means real options (Gen. 2:16,17).

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.

Stage 2 (Fallen Man) *Non-posse Non-Peccare*

- Not possible for fallen man not to sin because all acts preclude faith:
 - “...in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. Gal. 5:6
 - “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. (Paul quoting David Rom. 3:10, Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3)

- Preaching to stiff-
 - And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, -Col. 2:13

- Preclusion of preparation for conversion-
 - John 6:39 “You search the Scriptures...yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life
 - 6: 63 “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all....”
 - 6:65 “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

 - “...the will is determined by the soul of the man. It cannot escape the moral character out of which it comes. If the soul is entirely corrupt so that its knowledge and desire are defective and rotten, it follows that it can will to do only that which is evil.” -G. I. Williamson

- Is it fair that fallen man does not have the same “deal” as Adam and Eve?
 1. The Divine prerogative to claim Sovereign rule (Rom. 9:21ff)-
 - Example of Incarnate Christ (Luke 2:52)-
 - Assyrian Invasion (Is.10:5ff)-
 - Pharaoh (Ex. 4:21)-

 2. Better “deal” through Christ (1 Cor. 15:45)-

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, 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.

Stage 3 (Regenerate Man) Posse Non-Peccare

Effect of Conversion on the Will-

- A. Made neither by external coercion, nor in internal vacuum-

For God, who said “Let Light shine in the darkness” is the One who has shown in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Christ. -2 Cor. 4:6

Application: The Holy Spirit alone converts through the faithful proclamation of the gospel. (Mat. 28:19ff)

- B. No moral perfection, but conversion made of the entire being-

Application: Faith in Christ, not faith in will.

5. The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory only.

Stage 4 (Glorified Man) Non-Posse Peccare

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. – 1 Cor. 13:12

God cannot be seen without being loved. – Francis Turretin