

Doctrine of Bondage of the Will

Voluntary Slavery

1. Like Luther, John Calvin devoted his studies to St. Augustine. There is nothing in Calvin's view of predestination and election that was not first articulated by Augustine and Luther.
2. Surprising, Luther wrote more on the subject of election than Calvin did, reflected in Luther's work on the Bondage of the Will.
3. Calvin is credited more than any other individual because of his name being associated with the acrostic TULIP, standing for Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints.
4. The first concept, Total Depravity, states that because of the Fall, the will of man has become enslaved to a principle of sin, which places him in such bondage that he is no longer free to save himself of his own will but is in need of a Savior to set him free. The heart of the natural man cannot change a person to make them something they are not.
 - *Jeremiah 13:23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.*
5. Being enslaved to sin was a voluntary enslavement by Adam, the Federal Representative of humanity. It is a confirmed voluntary enslavement by the descendants of Adam, who chose not to seek God of their own will.
 - *Romans 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*
6. There are several reasons why individuals do not voluntarily seek after God.
 - They are dead in trespasses and sin. *Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*
 - They love darkness rather than light because so many deeds are evil. *John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*
 - They know they cannot please God, if He exists, and so they do not even try. There is a rational atheist, and there is the practical atheist. The rational atheist boldly declares that God does not exist. The practical atheist lives life as if there is no God. *Romans 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

7. The doctrine of Total Depravity confirms man in his helpless state of sin. This doctrine does not teach that man is as bad as he can be, but it does argue that man is as bad off as he can be.
8. Utter depravity is not in view. What is in view is the bondage of the total man to sin in his will, emotions, and intellect.

- The will of man is such that he cannot save himself, for he wills not to save himself. The Bible says that individuals are born, not of the will of man, “but of God. *John 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*
- The emotions of man are enslaved to sin so that he fulfils the passions of his heart. *Genesis 6:5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

A worldwide flood which destroyed all of humanity with the exception of eight souls, did nothing to change man’s enslavement to his perverted passions. *Genesis 8:21 And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done.*

- The intelligence of man is such that it is darkened in its understanding. Knowing that God exists, and knowing that God is just, the intellect of man refuses to acknowledge the truth. *Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*
9. The fallenness of humanity affects the whole person. The individual is left in a state of moral inability.
 10. Fallen man still has a free will, and can make moral choices. Individuals can achieve civic virtue. An unregenerate person can be chaste, brave, honest, and industrious in horizontal living. They can be altruistic on an earthly level.
 11. But what does fallen man want vertically in his relation to God? What will the soul freely choose? The biblical answer is that the natural person will freely, and consistently, choose to sin against God, and reject God, apart from redeeming grace.

12. If a person is to be saved, then it must be based on “unconditional election”. When God elects a person to salvation, He does not do it on the basis of His prior knowledge on those individuals meeting certain conditions.
13. Election is not based on God looking down the corridors of time to see who will believe in Him, and on that basis “elect” them to salvation. But that is not an “election”, or a “selection”, it is a confirmation of a self-determining, and self-saving decision.
14. Such a view is a “conditional election”, meaning that God elects individuals on the condition that He knows the individuals will give a proper response.
15. Calvin argued for unconditional election, meaning that election was not based on foreseen faith.

Special Note.

If God looks through the corridors of time to see who would believe, the only thing He would see would be individuals who would not respond to the gospel, for, being dead in trespasses and sin, they would have no appetite to be anything more than what they were, and they would have no ability to effectively change their own heart, or nature.

16. Regeneration is a necessary requirement for a person to be liberated from the bondage to sin (John Calvin). Since the flesh will not incline itself to God and regeneration, the Holy Spirit must move, like the wind, to regenerate whom He will.
 - *John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*
17. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. There is no profit to the works of the flesh. The flesh is utterly incapable of moving itself toward God.
 - *John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*
18. Because man is unable to free himself from spiritual bondage by his will, the soul remains alienated from God. The will of the natural man moves only to the affections of sin. The reprobate mind is at enemy with God. So, the will of man inclines only to self and not to God. The word for reprobate is “adokimos (ad-ok’-ee-mos), and means unapproved, i.e. rejected; by implication, worthless (literally or morally).
 - *Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*
 - *2 Timothy 3:8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.*
 - *Titus 1:16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

19. The natural man does not know, cannot know, and does not what to know the things of God.

- *Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

20. The issue concerning the will of man is not that he has a will, but of the soundness of the will. That is the problem. The will of man is not sound in spiritual matters. It has been corrupted by the Fall and so consistently wills to work against God, and all that is good, holy, and spiritual.

21. The will, having been deprived of liberty by the Fall, is dragged by evil impulses, which the Bible calls the works of the flesh. Jesus said out of the heart man does what he does, willfully.

- *Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*
- *Matthew 15:19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.*

22. In the Fall, the natural man is not deprived of his will, but of his liberty. Free will is intact, but liberty is lost. The natural man has free will to be a saint, and never to sin, but he is not at liberty to not sin, because his nature is enslaved to the principle of sin. Because of sin, Jesus said that no one can come to Him unless he be drawn (helkuo, to drag).

- *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.*

Special Note.

For an Arminian, the idea of being “drawn” to Christ has the idea of inviting, alluring, enticing, offering, attracting, and persuading. But God does more than externally excites a person, He works internally, in the heart, to change the nature of the person. When God draws a person to Himself, that person becomes willing as Saul of Tarsus was drawn to Christ in a compelling moment on the road to Damascus.

23. To come to Christ, a person must be drawn to Christ, by having their understanding enlightened, and their will changed. No one of themselves will ever be able to come to Christ, nor, do they want to.

24. “No man” is a universal category. No one is excluded. No man has the power, no man has the ability to savingly come to Christ unless that power, or ability, is provided by the Father.

25. The ability to come to Christ must be given to a person.

- *John 3:27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*