

Doctrine of Bondage of the Will

1. In 1523, the leading Catholic scholar and Dutch Renaissance humanist, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, (27 Oct 1466 – 12 July 1536) published his work, *De Libero Arbitrio diatribe sive collatio*, meaning, *On Free Will*.
2. Responding to Erasmus, in 1525, Martin Luther responded with his book, *On the Bondage of the Will*.
3. The concept of *sola fide* which means “*by faith alone*” was at the heart of the matter.
4. Luther believed that the doctrine of *sola gratia*, meaning, “*by grace alone*”, produces *sola fide*.
5. Because of this the strength of the human will comes into the discussion.
6. For Erasmus, the question of the freedom of the will was not something that the average person should be concerned about.
7. Luther disagreed and argued that the bondage of the will, or its freedom, was the key point in understanding the gospel.
8. The question of what part God plays in salvation, and what part man plays in salvation, has everything to do with worship of God, dependence on God, and the grace of God.
9. Luther wanted the principle of *solus deo gloria* to prevail that men might know that salvation is of the Lord.
10. Erasmus was concerned about the practical repercussions if the sovereignty of God was exalted over the behavior of man. He thought it would be the end of preaching, evangelism, and individuals seeking salvation. A floodgate of iniquity would be opened.
11. Luther believed that the elect would embrace the love of God and grace and be saved while the rest would reject God’s love and grace and live in sin, a place where they live no matter what is taught, or not taught. Men do not want God in their lives.
 - *Romans 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*
12. The question that arises is this: “What is there in the will of person at the point of gospel hearing that will make a person want to change from being evil to doing good?” Beyond that, “What power is there in the human will to effect a change?”

Special Note.

If a person makes a “wise choice” there would be room for boasting. A person could then say, “I am more righteous than the person who does not believe?” “is a person more intelligent?”

13. For Erasmus, necessity means coercion. Luther disagreed and said that necessity or certainty does not mean coercion. Luther made a distinction between the necessity of the consequence and the certainty of the consequent.