

Bible Study

Feb. 23, 2022

Free Will Is Not Free!

- I. Almost every day, I wake up thanking God, thanking God over and over that I was born in this time and place, that, by the grace of God, I can own eternal life and house the Holy Spirit, the presence of God in my body. The depth of my gratitude is so immense that, as I go through my day, I probably thank Him each day at least a hundred times. Tonight I want to show you why. I want to give you a new perspective on the value of what God did for us, the measure of our great fortune, and the price God paid in order to bless us in this dimension.

Consider one of the most beautiful of all Bible passages. In Hebrews 11, the unknown author of Hebrews is making a point about faith, and, in doing so, he walks through the history of Israel and points out an entire gallery of Old Testament heroes, pointing out that their power and achievements were all demonstrations of their faith and not specific rewards for exceptional obedience. We commonly refer to Hebrews 11 as “The Hall of Faith,” and, in here, we find Abel and Enoch, Noah and Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, Moses, Joshua and Rahab, and then the chapter comes to a close with these nine incredible verses: *“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

Did you get that? Did you get that? Let me read the last two verses out of a different translation so that you can absorb the full measure of this: *“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”*

So what did they not receive? These incredible giants of faith, what could they possibly have lacked? What promise did God withhold from them,...and why? And then why would God have “something better” for us in all of our weakness and immaturity? And what is it that now we have, we own, we possess that these giants of the faith, in all of their power and achievement, could only dream about and strive to experience on even a momentary basis?

Here’s what I believe. For all of their faith and wisdom and supernatural accomplishments, these people never ever here on Earth ever experienced the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, never knew with any consistency any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, any of the divine inheritance which is open and accessible to us any time we call upon the Father. Although we call these people saints, they were not saints; they were spiritual sons of Adam who knew the presence of God only when Christ or the Spirit visited them for a limited time and a specific purpose.

That day-to-day walk as vessels of the Spirit of God was not possible until Jesus Himself came and modeled what we might call “Kingdom life.” We, as modern-day believers, are possessed by God Himself. We have His mind. We have His authority. We have His wisdom. To say we have every imaginable resource is a statement so limited, so impoverished as to be stupid; we actually possess even every unimaginable resources hidden in the Godhead. This day-to-day experience of our divine inheritance was not available to these Old Testament heroes because, in order to share that inheritance with us, Jesus had to come in the flesh, live and die for us, and then go back to the Father.

This is why three of the four Gospels tell us that, as He launched into ministry, that Jesus went from town to town proclaiming, “*Repent! Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand!*” In otehr words, He was saying, “Change your mind! Change the way you think because the Kingdom of God is right here and so real that you can touch, you can feel, you can grasp it.”

That’s why Jesus, on the first occasion when He preached in Nazareth, read Isaiah 61, announcing “the acceptable year of the Lord” or “the year of the Lord’s favor” and then said, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your hearing.”

That’s why at the Last Supper, Jesus said things like this:

(John 14:12-13) Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

(John 16:7) Very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

II. And how do we come into this exalted position? How do we, who feel so inferior to the likes of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses and David come into this measure of favor? By free will. By choosing life. By choosing Christ. By asking God to adopt us into His family, to grant us the gift of His own righteousness, and to share His Kingdom with us. Because we live on this side of the cross; because Christ has died for us and, in doing so, opened the Kingdom to us; because we have both the gift of free will and an open invitation to ask, then we come into these riches, this inheritance simply by asking. We come in by choosing life. We come in by exercising free will.

III. And that gift, free will, is one expensive gift.

A. 10 Truths to Understand Free Will.

1. God's plan since the beginning has been to establish a family.

From the very beginning, God's purpose in creating you and me was to establish a family — an entire Kingdom of adopted sons and daughters all conformed to the perfect image of His Son, Jesus.

Gen. 1:26-27 — “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. 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Rom. 8:29 — “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”

Heb. 2:11 — “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,”

2. The criteria for adoption is simply our choosing life.

The criteria for adoption was not good looks or intelligence or athletic grace. The criteria for adoption was simply wanting to be adopted. The criteria for Him choosing us was simply our first choosing Him. At the cross, Jesus threw the doors to His home open and invited “whosoever will.” He wanted it to be our choice. He wanted us to choose Him. And once we chose Him, He then would do the rest.

John 3:16 — “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever will believeth in Him should not perish but

have everlasting life.

1 Tim. 2:1,3-4 00 — *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men,...3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

3. A choice, by definition, involves the knowledge of at least two options.

Deut. 30:19 — *“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live”*

Matt. 7:13-14 — *““Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”*

4. Adam needed to sin in order to know both good and evil.

Adam was created into a place of eternal life, generous provision and absolute favor with God. That was Option A. But to come into the family of God, in order to be conformed to the image of God’s Son, in order to be fully equipped for God’s larger purpose, Adam had to know Option B as well. Adam had to know — experience and understand — both good and evil. And thus God planted in the middle of the Garden The Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil — right next to The Tree of Life so that both options were clearly represented.

Gen. 2:9 — *“And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”*

5. By Adam’s sin, we gained the power to choose life.

As soon as God spoke out His command — **Gen. 2:16** — God knew Adam would sin. In fact, He planned on it. In the same way that Adam needed Judas to accomplish our salvation, He needed Adam to sin in order to place all of us into a position where we would choose life.

1 Cor. 15:56 — *“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.*

Rom. 7:10-11 — *“And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.”*

6. But Adam paid a high price for His sin.

Adam sinned, and the penalty was death — separation from God and subjection to a whirlpool of pain and suffering. The penalty for Adam's sin involved at least seven facets: (1) loss of daily fellowship with God; (2) loss of His indwelling Spirit; (3) possession by the spirit of sin so that sin became our very nature; (4) Law which is the impossible standard of God's righteousness; (5) judgment; (6) condemnation and (7) death. Whoa!

7. Because of Adam's sin, we were all born under judgment of death.

Adam, for the first time experienced evil. But, in the same way that children born to slaves are born legally as slaves, Adam's position in this world of bondage to evil was passed on to ALL of His offspring.

Gen. 5:3 — "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son IN HIS OWN LIKENESS, AND AFTER HIS IMAGE; and called his name Seth."

Rom. 5:12 — "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"

Eph. 2:1-3 — "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath."

8. God sent Jesus to die in our place.

To set Adam and His children free, someone had to pay the ransom, the price of His release. The penalty, the ransom price was death — and paying that price was only possible to God's Son. The Son of God had to become a man, live a life completely without sin, and then submit to death in order to pay the price for Adam's sin.

Mark 10:45 — "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Heb. 4:15 — "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

1 John 2:2 — "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours"

only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

9. **Until Jesus offered His life for us, no one at all could enter Heaven. No one could effectively choose life.**

Until that happened, no one — no son of Adam including Noah, Abraham, Joseph and Moses — could effectively choose life. No one could enter in. No one could house the Spirit of God in his or her body. No one could be adopted into the family of God.

John 14:6 — “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 3:36 — “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

Acts 4:12 — “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

10. **Jesus, by dying for us, did four things: (1) By dying in a state of absolute innocence, He paid the ransom for all sin; (2) by paying our ransom He purchased freedom for all who would accept it — freedom from Satan, Sin, Law, Judgment, Condemnation and Death; (3) He inaugurated for us “the year of the Lord’s favor” (3) and He established us in a position of free will — where, out of a position of subjection to sin and death, we could choose life and be adopted into His eternal family. He bought for us the right to both live and die in the security of His divine favor and the certainty of life after death.**

IV. Close:

Story of Carol’s Prayer