

# Peace Adult Sunday School

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## *Chosen by God - R.C. Sproul*

### Session 5 – Predestination and Free Will, Part 2

Review from last week...

Today we'll be discussing what St. Augustine said about free will, and what Jesus said about moral ability.

“Can [sinners] be restored through the merit of their own works? God forbid. For what good work can a lost man perform, except so far as he has been delivered from perdition? Can they do anything by the free determination of their own will? Again I say, God forbid. For it was by the evil use of his free-will that man destroyed both it and himself. For, as a man who kills himself must, of course, be alive when he kills himself, but after he has killed himself ceases to live, and cannot restore himself to life; so, when man by his own free-will sinned, then sin being victorious over him, the freedom of his will was lost.” [Augustine. *Enchiridion in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 3, trans. J.F. Shaw, ed. Philip Schaff, (1887), 30.*]

“He is freely in bondage who does with pleasure the will of his master. Accordingly, he who is the servant of sin is free to sin. And hence he will not be free to do right, until, being freed from sin, he shall begin to be the servant of righteousness. And this is true liberty, for he has pleasure in the righteous deed; and it is at the same time a holy bondage, for he is obedient to the will of God.” [Augustine. *Enchiridion in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 3, trans. J.F. Shaw, ed. Philip Schaff, (1887), 30.*]

### Augustine's View

“**Fallen man has a free will but lacks liberty**” (Sproul, 46). But isn't this paradoxical? Freedom and liberty are so closely intertwined, that you seemingly can't have one without the other. What is the resolution for this paradox?

Recall from last week that “free will” refers to our ability to choose what we desire. But the ability to choose what we desire does not mean that we can or will choose what is good. Prior to coming to Christ, our nature dictates what it is that we desire. So we must circle back to what we discussed last week regarding original sin.

What original sin is not:

- Adam and Eve's first act of sin (Genesis 3)
- Satan's act of rebellion

Original sin is a declaration of our natural state resulting from Adam and Eve's first act of sin. So if we are all born in a state of sin, even prior to committing any specific sin, what about those who die in infancy?

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<i>Pre-Fall Man</i>	<i>Post-Fall Man</i>	<i>Reborn Man</i>	<i>Glorified Man</i>

### **Jesus and Moral Ability**

Key passage: John 6:41-44, 65

- “No one” - a universal negative
- “Can” - not a reference to *permission*, a reference to *ability*
- “Unless” - a *necessary condition*

God must effect a change in a person for him/her to come to Christ. But what does it mean for the Father to “draw” someone? One view (Arminian or semi-Pelagian) is that it means to “woo” or to “entice”. What is wrong with this view? See James 2:6 and Acts 16:19. “Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* defines it to mean to compel by irresistible superiority.

Another important passage is John 3:1-8. This passage defines the theological concept of the *ordo salutis* or the “order of salvation”. An oft-debated question is: Which comes first, faith or regeneration? The non-Reformed view would argue that a fallen man has the ability to choose Christ, that they believe and then they are regenerated. From what we’ve talked about this week and last week, this view is not biblical. This would require that man is not completely fallen, that there is some amount of “good” left in their heart.

Let’s look at John 3:16, which is often used by Arminians to argue that man in their fallen state still have ability to believe in Christ. What does this passage say about our moral ability in our natural sinful state? Important hermeneutical principle: “Implications drawn from the Scripture must always be subordinate to the explicit teaching of Scripture” (Sproul, 56).

Romans 8:7-9 teaches us that in a fallen state, we are unable to do anything that pleases God. When God regenerates us, He effects in us an inward heart change that changes our desires so that we will choose Christ. We then freely believe in Christ, not because we are being coerced into it, but because it is what we desire.

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