

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



March 30, 2014

Free Will

All responsible human beings are guilty of sin—but not because they are incapable of doing otherwise. Freedom of the will is central to the message of the Bible.

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Ac. 17:30).

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Historically one of the great battles among believers has raged around the concept of free will in the human heart. The dominant position (Calvinism, named after John Calvin, d. 1564) insists that our wills are in bondage to sin, incapable of choosing to obey God. Others (usually labeled as Arminians, named after Jacobus Arminius, d. 1609) argue that humans are free to choose whether or not to obey God, and some do. (For the record, there is a middle position, Molinism, that tries to split the difference, but it attracts few followers.)

Who’s right?

Countless books and articles have been written in an effort to resolve this controversy, so it would be presumption to claim that this brief article is the last

word on the subject. Nevertheless, there is a simple Bible principle that points us to a quick answer.

Notice a common theme in both of our opening texts: *God wants all men to repent*. Repentance is a change of heart with a view to reforming one’s life. The message is clear: God desires that everyone in this sorry, broken world change their hearts and lives, turning away from selfishness and sin and toward God.

But how could God desire such a thing, *if it were impossible for humans to do so*? Ah, the Calvinist replies, that is the role of irresistible grace. God sends His Holy Spirit to directly and miraculously draw the sinner to Himself, apart from any exertion on the part of the sinner’s filthy heart. The sinner’s captive will is freed by an act of divine grace, to serve and glorify God. Human choice plays absolutely no role in the matter.

Sounds plausible, right? But look again at the texts: God desires that *all* come to repentance, not a few. So either God acts directly to change the hearts of *all* sinners — which no Calvinist claims He does — or all humans are free to

accept or reject God’s offer of salvation. Some will and some won’t—which is exactly what we see.

Calvinists argue that God in His sovereignty chooses to save some and condemn others (unconditional election). But that contradicts what Peter and Paul said: *God desires that all come to repentance*. How could He desire *all* to come to repentance, yet arbitrarily *refuse* to extend His grace to some? That would make God a scoundrel.

God desires that *all* come to repentance; that’s the central theme of the Scriptures. Every Biblical plea to choose life over death, good over evil, right over wrong, implies that men are free to make such a choice. That no one makes the right choice every time does not negate the inherent ability to choose.

Are some so calloused by sin that they cannot escape its grip? Certainly! But it took a long series of personal decisions, freely made, to reach that point. And because it was their choice, God is just in holding them accountable for their behavior. We are free to choose—and God will judge accordingly.

– David King