

UPWARD CALL

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God
IN KING JESUS.

(Philippians 3:13-14)

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Free Will or God's Will?

This is the short version of the article: *Whose Will Saves—God's or Man's?*

The answer to this question should be obvious to all. Unfortunately, it is not, for if it were, there would be no reason to even ask the question. Just in case you are wondering; God's will alone saves! Allow me to offer seven definitional proofs that build a foundation for the answer; some of which come from *A Christian Manifesto* by Francis A. Schaeffer (1912-1984).

First, one of the dictionary definitions of the word *will* is "the power of conscious and deliberate action or choice: as, freedom of the will."

Second, the dictionary definition of *free will* is "able to choose for itself; not restricted by anything except its own limitation or nature."

Third, *humanism* is defined as "the placing of man at the center of all things and making him the measure of all things," which means that man needs no external influence in the exercise of his will. He needs no other knowledge except what he himself can discover and absence any standards outside himself. Simply, man is the measure of all things, and all answers are within man and nowhere else.

Fourth, *humanism* finds its genesis in ***the evolutionist or material-energy, pure-chance worldview*** that is based upon the idea that impersonal matter or energy shaped into its present form by impersonal chance. Consequently, what we see with our human eyes, including our own physical bodies, came about by pure chance and evolved from chaos to order. Material and energy that make up the universe came together or took shape into some form purely by chance. Thus, we have the theory of evolution and mankind evolving from some primordial ooze. There is no personal God who loves and creates or even saves out of His love.

Fifth, humanistic *free will* (my term) refers to man's will as truly free, that is, free from any and all external influence. According to humanism, *free will* is absolute, meaning that man has the first and last say on any matter in his life, and all reference points are entirely within man. The word *absolute* means "perfect, pure, not limited, not conditional, unrestricted, not dependent on anything, considered without reference to anything else."

Sixth, affected [*free*] will (my term) refers to man's will as something exercised or acted upon based on external influences. I propose that once the word *affected* is attached to *free will*, the word *free* loses much of its meaning, if not validity, especially in light of the above definition of *free will*. Once external influences come to bear on the will, the exercise of the will is no longer entirely free, for now restrictions come to bear before action is taken or not taken. It is simply *affected will*.

Seventh, there is an opposing worldview called ***the creationist worldview*** in which all things start and end with the living God, the Creator of all things. All things that are in existence came forth from a personal God who is the Creator of all things. Nothing that came into existence came into being apart from God. There is a personal God who loves and creates and even saves out of His love. God alone is ultimately, intimately, and absolutely responsible for everything in and of His creation.

Following the logic of these seven definitional proofs leads to a few conclusions.

First, there can be only one type of *free will*, and it is humanistic *free will*, for it is the only type that is truly free in every sense of the word. It is free of any and all external influence, and it is free of God. Simply, the exercise of the human will is based entirely and absolutely on what and how man sees things; nothing else matters, not even if one believes in God.

Second, if we accept this first conclusion, then we must also agree that the Christian doctrine that says individual salvation is dependent on exercising one's *free will* is based on the material-energy, pure-chance worldview and not on the creationist worldview. It matters not if one holds the creationist worldview as the basis for reality. It means that those who hold to *free will* have bought into humanism and its lie that says man is the center of all things, at least as far as individual salvation goes.

Third, the fact of the matter is that no one really has *free will*, meaning a will that is independent of any and all external influence. As much as the humanists would like to think that they are the center of the universe and are *free-will* agents, they are no such thing; they believe and espouse a lie. There is no such thing as *free will*, humanistic or otherwise.

At the very most, we all exercise what I call *affected will*, which means that we exercise our will based on a variety of external influences. Simply, our will is not absolutely free of any and all external influence to do whatever it wants, whenever it wants, yielding whatever outcome it wants.

We make choices for ourselves and others each and every day of our lives. We could even say that we often have the freedom to make these choices, but not always, since we can also be wooed, steered, nudged, coerced, restricted, and even forced or mandated into these choices or actions. Of course, we also have the choice to fight external influence or submit to it.

Our wills are influenced all day long by our spouses, our children, our parents, our society/community, and, most of all, by our government and its laws under which we live. Not one of us lives in some protected bubble free of external influence. We don't live in a vacuum!

Fourth, and this is the heart of my reason for this issue, I contend that individual salvation is *not* dependent on man exercising his so-called *free will*, as if he must make the choice to believe; and, if he never makes the choice, then he is forever doomed to an eternal existence in a living *hell* of literal fire, burning sulfur, and worms. I have heard it said many times that God did not create man to be a robot; therefore, He will not interfere with man's will in the matter of salvation. I have news for you; if God did (does) not interfere with man's will, then no one would (will) ever be saved. We had no choice in the matter when death passed through into all mankind (Romans 5:12), then why do we think that we have a choice in coming into immortal life? As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive, but each in his own order (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

John said that becoming a child of God does not depend on the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:13). Paul, who had been set apart from his mother's womb and called through His grace (Galatians 1:15), was apprehended or seized of Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12) and shown mercy as he was acting ignorantly in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13).

For Paul, the concept of *free will* was not part of his personal testimony and never entered into his teaching on individual salvation: 1) *For God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be merciful to all* (Romans 11:32); 2) *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast* (Ephesians 2:8-9); 3) *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Timothy 2:3-4). *So, then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy* (Romans 9:16), *for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things* (Romans 11:36).

There is only one conclusion to be made: Individual salvation comes about when, in His mercy and in His timing, God's will comes to bear on man's will to save him. But on God who has mercy!