

# **Baptists and the Free Will of Man**

**Edited by Leon King**

**John 5:40 (KJV) And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.**

During the 20th century, there has been in Baptist churches a great falling away from the faith of our fathers. Nowhere is this more evident, perhaps, than in what is popularly taught in contemporary Baptist churches concerning the free will of man. Most modern-day Baptist churches believe and teach that man has the ability to voluntarily choose to come to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith and, thereby, produce his own regeneration or new birth. In stark contrast with this idea, our Baptist forefathers believed and taught that man has no ability to voluntarily choose to come to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith until he is first regenerated or born again by the Holy Spirit. Today's Baptists, by and large, believe in the free will of man, but our Baptist forefathers believed in the bondage of man's will. Obviously, someone is right and someone else is wrong about this matter. The question is, are present-day Baptists right to believe in the free will of man, or were yesterday's Baptists right to believe in the bondage of man's will?

Which viewpoint is actually taught in the Holy Scriptures?

**I. The Contemporary Baptist Position: *Man has the ability to voluntarily choose to come to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith and, thereby, produce his own regeneration or new birth.***

A. This would require man to voluntarily choose to do something that is contrary to his own depraved nature and character, and even God Himself does not have this kind of free will (**2Ti 2:13**; **Tit 1:2**; **Heb 6:18**).

**2 Timothy 2:13 (KJV)** *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*

**Titus 1:2 (KJV)** *In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;*

**Hebrews 6:18 (KJV)** *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

B. Man can only voluntarily choose to do those things that are consistent with his own depraved nature and character.

1. Man cannot see the kingdom of God (**Joh 3:3**).

**John 3:3 (KJV)** *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

2. Man cannot hear Christ's speech or word (**Joh 8:43,47**).

**John 8:43, 47 (KJV)** *Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word...He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

3. Man cannot understand spiritual truth (**Ro 3:11**; **1Co 2:14**; **2Co 4:3-4**; **Eph 4:18**).

**Romans 3:11 (KJV)** *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

**1 Corinthians 2:14 (KJV)** *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

**2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (KJV)** *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

**Ephesians 4:18 (KJV)** *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:*

4. Man cannot come to Christ (**Joh 6:44,65**).

**John 6:44 (KJV)** *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

**John 6:65 (KJV)** *And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*

5. Man cannot submit to God's Word (**Ro 8:7**).

**Romans 8:7 (KJV)** *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

6. Man cannot please God (**Ro 8:8**).

**Romans 8:8 (KJV)** *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

7. Man cannot say from his heart that Jesus is Lord (**1Co 2:13**).

**1 Corinthians 2:13 (KJV)** *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

8. Man cannot bring forth any good fruit (**Mt 7:17-18**; **Joh 15:4-5**).

**Matthew 7:17-18 (KJV)** *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. **18** A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

**John 15:4-5 (KJV)** *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. **5** I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

9. Man cannot contribute anything to bring about his own spiritual birth (**Eph 2:1**).

**Ephesians 2:1 (KJV)** *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*

10. Man cannot do anything but serve Satan, sin, and self (**Joh 8:32,34,36,44**; **Ro 6:17-20**; **Eph 2:2**; **Col 1:13**; **2Ti 2:26**; **2Pe 2:19**).

**John 8:32,34,36,44 (KJV)** *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin...36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed...44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

**Romans 6:17-20 (KJV)** *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. **18** Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. **19** I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. **20** For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

**Ephesians 2:2 (KJV)** *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

**Colossians 1:13 (KJV)** *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*

**2 Timothy 2:6 (KJV)** *The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.*

**2 Peter 2:19 (KJV)** *While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.*

**II. The Historic Baptist Position: *Man has no ability to voluntarily choose to come to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith until he is regenerated or born again by the Holy Spirit.***

a. The will of man plays absolutely no role in the supernatural work of regeneration or the new birth (Joh 1:11-13; Ro 9:13). It is produced strictly and entirely by the will of God.

**John 1:11-13 (KJV)** *He came unto his own, and his own received him not. **12** But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: **13** Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

**Romans 9:13 (KJV)** *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

b. Regeneration is the cause of conversion; conversion is not the cause of regeneration (Joh 1:11-13; 1Jo 5:1). In regeneration, God finally makes us willing and able to do His will (Ps 110:3; Php 2:13).

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**1 John 5:1 (KJV)** *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

**Psalm 110:3 (KJV)** *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.*

**Philippians 2:13 (KJV)** *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*