

Freewill

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[0:00] Let me pray and we'll start that way. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we, all of us, have had an hour less sleep than we might otherwise have had last night.

! And we also understand that we're on the very edges of our understanding of what you reveal to us here. So we pray, please, that you would help us this evening. Lord, we want to honour you in the way that we think. We want to be careful to honour your word and to believe it and trust it, even when it says things that we find difficult.

We also, Lord, don't want to assume that we can demand you work in a certain way when you have revealed yourself differently. Lord, so give us tender and submissive hearts and also just allow us the freedom to disagree with one another, maybe, to come to slightly different conclusions, to submit to you and rightly love one another, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Now, I feel I probably need to add a caveat to my advert this morning, which maybe is what brought you here this evening, when I said that I would answer all your questions on free will. I think that the small print to that, which you maybe didn't read, was, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to be able to do that. That is false advertising. I'm sorry.

[1:28] I'm free to advertise falsely, should I choose to. It is a complicated topic, and I am not an academic.

We might all make mistakes this evening, but we're going to try and think together with our Bibles open and seek the Lord's help as we walk through this. So what does free will and freedom of the will mean?

I think the best place for us to start is to start with Adam. Now, we need to start there because Adam in the Bible is in a category of his own. If you've been with us through our Romans series, you'll know that Romans 5 treats Adam differently to the rest of humanity after him.

It's the same in 1 Corinthians 15. Jesus is called the second Adam. So by definition, Adam is the first Adam, and there is no Adams in between Adam and Jesus.

And that means that our freedom, the freedom that we have to sin, is not quite like Adam's because he's in a different category to us.

[2:31] I want to suggest to you that Adam is in a different category in two ways. Firstly, in position. So Adam in the garden is the representative of humanity.

In Adam, all of humanity, if you like, are on probation. They are under a covenant of works where God says, if you do this, you will live. And if you do this, you will not live.

Adam is placed in a temple garden. He's provided with food. He's given a job and a helper, and he's given this covenant. So he is in a unique position. All of humanity are on his shoulders in that moment.

The second thing is, though, he's also unique in nature. He's unique in nature. In other words, I want us to see together that Adam has a freedom in Genesis 1, 2, and 3 that you and I no longer have.

Adam's sin is not quite like our sin today, not only because the consequences for humanity are much more significant, but also because his sin comes from a slightly different place because there's a slightly different nature.

[3:41] So Genesis chapter 3. It's printed on your handout. You can turn to it if you want to, but I'm going to read it to you. Now, the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? The woman said to the serpent, We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it or you will die.

You will not certainly die, the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Now, I am going to assume the first thing is that we need to presume that Adam and Eve are together in this, right?

He was with her, we are told. We can spend another evening, if you like, on the distinction between Adam and Eve and the roles of men and women, but I'm going to do one difficult topic per evening and not all of them in one, right?

[4:57] The rest of the Bible seems to hold Adam accountable for the sin of Genesis 3. So when I say Adam, I am meaning Adam and Eve, but I'm taking Adam to be in a special category as the first Adam.

Now, with that in mind, I want you to think about what is the very first sin? What is the first sin in verse 6? Now, if you define sin as rule-breaking, transgression, which is how the Bible often defines sin, then the first sin is the eating of the fruit.

But if sin has a root before that, then really the sin behind the sin, if I can put it that way, is the desire for the fruit. Notice that the desire for the fruit is not only that the fruit is good for food, that, if you like, is a natural desire, isn't it?

When I mean natural, what I mean is that is an okay desire. That is a human, non-fallen human desire for food. But it's not just that the fruit is good for food, is it?

It is that it is also for gaining wisdom. Here, really, the first sin, the sin behind the sin, is the doubting of God's goodness.

[6:11] It's the, is God really good? Is he holding back from me? It's that desire to seek wisdom outside of knowing God. It's the desire for God-like status for themselves.

Those are the sins behind the sin of eating the forbidden fruit. And that sets a really helpful distinction, which is going to be really important for us this evening as we go forward. And that is the distinction between desire and action.

Desire always comes first and then leads to action. And Adam, along with Eve, in the garden are in a unique position because they are created with both liberty of desire and liberty of action.

In other words, what seems to be really important for us to understand in Genesis 3 is that humanity are not under compulsion in Adam. Satan is not making them sin.

He is the occasion of the temptation for which he himself is held accountable because that was wicked in itself. But he is not forcing them to sin. Rather, he is suggesting to Adam a desire to freely follow.

[7:21] And it is that desire which takes seed and then leads to the action. Now, we have to say that this freedom of desire is good in Adam and Eve.

God did not make Adam and Eve to be obedience machines that would just automatically follow God's instructions. Instead, he makes man and woman as free agents.

He makes them as independent creatures. He gives them a freedom to desire what they will and to work that desire out in whatever way they choose. That is good.

Very good, says God in Genesis. But what happens after the fall is that they lose the freedom of desire. Now, you notice that in two ways.

Firstly, you notice it in the relationship between the two of them. Look down at verse 7 on your handout. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked.

[8:26] So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Notice the loss of liberty for Adam and Eve. They are no longer able to look at one another free from sinful desire.

Selfish sexual desire was now natural to them, if you will. Inherent to their new state. So the instant that they cement their sinful desire for God-like status in eating the fruit, they can no longer look at

each other purely.

Comes instantly, doesn't it? Like that. And the other way you see it is in their relationship with God. Verse 8. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord among the trees of the garden.

Obviously, hiding from God is a hopeless task. Don't ever try it. But that is their new instinct. There is a guilt and a shame to their new sinful nature, which means that they instinctively no longer desire to be in God's presence.

They desire the opposite of God's presence. They desire to hide from God rather than be with God. And in a sense, they are right to desire that, aren't they?

[9:37] Because God cements them in that by throwing them out of the garden, the temple-like garden, and locking the doors behind them, setting up the cherubim so that they can't come back. Now, this is key for us, right?

We are not Adam or Eve because we are not in the same position, right? We are not in the perfect temple garden. We're not born there.

We don't start there. Humanity has left there. Our position is the same as at the end of Genesis 3, where we are excluded from the presence of God, where the soil grows weeds, where relationships are rocky, and we compete for power against one another.

But we also no longer have, we don't have the same position, but remember, we don't also have the same nature. Our nature doesn't have the freedom that Adam's had before the fall.

We are like a post-fall Adam and Eve. We no longer have the freedom to desire what is good and pleasing to God. That becomes really obvious biblically, doesn't it?

[10:40] Cain kills Abel. It seems like this desire for rebellion and desire for sinful, selfish power is innate to Cain.

He doesn't have another Adam-like fall himself. It's just that he is born with sinful desire. Covetous desire, it seems, isn't it? Selfish desire for power and status.

But you can prove it sociologically as well, can't you? We know this. You never have to teach a child how to do wrong. Somehow children know the word mine. I mean, no parent teaches the kid the word mine as one of their first words, but it seems to be instinctive, doesn't it?

That's mine. It's mine. I want it. Why? Well, because we inherit Adam's fallen humanity, not his pre-fallen humanity.

So we are excluded from the garden, and we've lost the liberty to please God that Adam once enjoyed. The Bible describes that in loads of different ways, okay? Ezekiel describes it like having a heart of stone and not a heart of flesh.

[11:47] Jeremiah calls it an uncircumcised heart. Jesus calls it the need to be born again, John 3. The need to pass from death to life in John 5.

Ephesians calls it being dead in our trespasses and sins. Colossians calls it being dead in our sins. Romans calls it the mind governed by the flesh, which is death. And the 1689 Baptist Confession, which we've been looking at together, summarizes this in a couple of sentences.

Here they are. Man in the state of innocence, that is, in Adam, had freedom and power to will and to do what is good and well-pleasing to God.

Yet this condition was unstable so that he could fall from it. And he did.

Now, all of that is quite uncontroversial, if you want to use a... I think it's uncontroversial anyway. I mean, it's controversial outside the church, but inside of the church, it's really difficult to argue with that, right?

[13:02] See, most evangelical organizations will have a statement of faith, which reads something like the FIC one, which says, As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted, and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God.

Every person is therefore under the just judgment of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please him. I mean, that's just essential evangelical Bible faith, isn't it?

That we need to go into the world and tell the gospel, because without the gospel, people are under judgment. Why are they under judgment? Because they are sinful. Why are they sinful? Because

they inherit Adam's guilt and they behave in an Adam-like way.

The evangelical alliance statement of faith, I think, calls it being corrupted by sin, which is the state that we're all in. I don't think that's very controversial, because I think everyone really essentially has to believe that.

But I don't think it's very well taught, necessarily. And I don't think the implications of it are very well worked out. And that's what we're going to try and do together this evening. Because it means, if that is our state, right?

[14:14] If we are in a post-Adam, post-fall world, where we are corrupted by sin, then it means that affects what we mean by the word free will.

So, it is helpful, I think, to differentiate between what we might call liberty of indifference and liberty of spontaneity.

Now, some of you go cold when I say words like this. I mean, I love it like this, but you might go, whoa, whoa, whoa. Anyway, let me try and explain what I mean by those things. Liberty of indifference would be a version of events where you are completely indifferent to either outcome of a choice that's presented to you.

I was trying really hard in my study this afternoon to think of examples of this. This doesn't work for at least one person in this room, but I think for most of us this would work. You know, if you're out for a meal or you go to a bar and you order a Diet Coke, and then they go, oh, sorry, we don't have Coke.

Is Diet Pepsi okay? What they expect you to say then is, or any normal person will say is, that's absolutely fine because I don't know the difference between the two of them, right? Okay, so some of you are saying, because, yeah, I knew that.

[15:24] Is there a difference between that? It's very different. Okay, right. Let me rephrase this. Enter into my imaginary universe where I can't tell the difference between Diet Pepsi and Diet Coke.

So if you present me with that choice, I have liberty of indifference. I am completely indifferent to whether I drink Diet Coke or Diet Pepsi because they both taste exactly the same to me, right? So I don't care. And so in some ways, if you present me with that choice over and over again, it would be kind of random, right? Because sometimes I'd choose Diet Coke and sometimes I'd choose Diet Pepsi and it would be, you know, just entirely random.

I'm indifferent. Now, change it for Marmite, right? Which I, again, this might not work either, but you're supposed to either love that or hate that, right? And again, I know that doesn't work, but go with it for the sake of argument.

If I present you with Marmite on toast or just like butter on toast, because you either love or hate Marmite, you will always choose the same one because you are not indifferent to the outcome.

[16:30] You have liberty of spontaneity. So you could choose to eat the Marmite really fast or you could choose to eat it really slow or you could choose to, you know, eat it now or eat it later or whatever it is.

You cold, Lola? Or are you leaving? One of the two. One of the two. She's getting ready to leave. She is indifferent to the outcome of this.

Okay, so you would have liberty of spontaneity, but not liberty of indifference. Do you understand the distinction between those two? So in liberty of indifference, I don't really care about the outcome.

In liberty of spontaneity, I have a pre-decided will or desire, which always determines my choice, right?

So if you present someone with Marmite or butter on toast, they will always choose the same thing because it's conditioned by their heart's desire. They either love it or they hate it, right?

[17:27] Whereas with Coke that tastes exactly the same, they will just drink whichever one because they're indifferent to it. Now, let me try and give you some more concrete examples that don't involve food because that might be even easier.

I don't think it's that complicated. It works out in important ways. Basically, this is the doctrine that our lives kind of flow out of our hearts, right? So the attitude of our hearts shapes the actions that we perform.

Jesus says that out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. The writer of the Proverbs says that our hearts are the wellspring of our lives. In other words, it is something inside of us that then comes out of us in action.

And so we have a liberty of spontaneity, but our choices are fundamentally shaped by what's going on inside of us, our hearts. John Murray puts it like this in his book, *Systematic Theology*. He says, two men have the power to earn a livelihood. One does it by honorable labor, the other resorts to theft. What explains the difference? It is not the power of volition or the power of choice or free will, but both are endowed with this.

[18:34] It is apparent that we must go beyond the power of choice and the mere exercise of this power in actual choices. That lies at the back of the power and the exercise of its character is the character.

And because there is a radical difference of character, volition is exercised in totally different ways. The character is the habitus or habit of the person, the whole complex of desires, of motives, of propensities, of principles.

In other words, right? What we do comes out of who we are. Now, and that works in a very simple level, doesn't it? So one person chooses to get a job and earn their money honorably.

Another decides to be a thief. But really, the question for us is not about what you want to do for your career. The question is, when it comes to things of God, when it comes to having faith in God, do we have liberty of indifference or do we have liberty of spontaneity?

In other words, if you present sinful humanity, post-Adam sinful humanity, with a choice to have faith in Jesus, are they totally indifferent to the outcome so that it's almost random whether they choose to believe or not?

[19:46] Or do they simply have a liberty of spontaneity so that they will always choose to reject God, even though they have the liberty to do that in whatever way they will, whether that be through false religion or wild living or whatever it is?

Now, I think you have to say that the evidence of the Bible is that in our sin, we are not indifferent to God. We are hostile to him. So when it comes to the things of God, we do not have liberty of indifference.

You present people with the gospel, it is not a choice that they are indifferent to. It is a choice that they have liberty of spontaneity over, so they could choose to reject him in whatever way they would.

But actually, our hearts are predisposed to reject God and to wander our own ways, as of all humanity being post-Adam. That's Jesus' point, isn't it, to Nicodemus, John 3.

You cannot enter the kingdom of heaven without being born again. Because without being born again, it doesn't matter how many times the kingdom of heaven is offered to you, you will never accept it, because you have already rejected it.

[20:52] Ezekiel's heart of stone needs to be replaced with a heart of flesh. The dead man of Ephesians 2 needs to be made alive. This, if you know the term, you might have heard of the term total depravity.

This is this doctrine, isn't it? Total depravity is not that everyone is as bad as they could be, right? That is not total depravity. It is that all of us, without any exception, have fallen in Adam, and so we are hostile to God and his ways.

Total depravity. Total depravity. Every part of us affected by sin. Every one of us affected by sin.

The confession continues like this. Man, by falling into a state of sin, has completely lost all ability to choose any spiritual good that accompanies salvation.

Thus natural man, that is man without the spirit, is absolutely opposed to spiritual good and dead in sin, so that he cannot convert himself by his own strength or prepare himself for conversion.

Let me pause there and take questions or comments. Anything that's not been clear so far. This is not your only chance for questions, so there will be a further chance for questions, but I just want to check that you're all scanning with me and keeping up.

[22:22] Yeah. Yeah. The very last bit that you said about being born again, were you saying that it's, I think you said that we have to be born again before we can accept it.

Yes. Not that acceptance is supposed to be born again. Yes. I think that's, so we're going to come to sort of unpick that a little bit more in a moment, but I think that's Jesus' point in John 3, is that you need to be born again.

So, in order to have faith. So, repentance and faith, those are kind of the two sides of the same thing, right? So, faith is trusting in God, repentance is turning from trusting in ourselves, yeah? So, they're the same thing. Repentance and faith are not possible for someone who is in Adam and completely fallen. And so, we need to be made new.

And what's the first thing that a new thing is? What a newborn Christian baby does is they repent of their sin and they turn to God. Yeah.

[23:31] Now, we're going to unpick that because there are some different views about how that works, and those are going to come through in the next little bit. So, we can maybe suspend some questions on that. We don't know Genesis 6, right?

It says gaining wisdom. I'm sure my proverbs and ephesia 6, so proverbs is God's wisdom, and ephesia 6 is human's wisdom.

So, okay. So, thoughts on that? So, yeah, I mean, proverbs, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

So, the doorway, so, proverbs is not bolt on wisdom for anybody who doesn't trust the Lord, right? I mean, in some ways, some of the things there will help you, like keep your mouth closed, don't say too much, right? That's helpful for everybody to know. But, in a way, you're not going to be any better off with proverbs wisdom without going through the doorway, which is the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

[24:32] I don't think, I think the book of Ecclesiastes is in the Bible, because I think it's, I think it's godly wisdom. Yeah. So, but that's, that's slightly tangential.

So, we might, we might have that conversation later, but yeah. Yeah. Let's, let's keep moving. I'll go on to these options, and then you can, then you can ask questions about it.

So, if we say, so that the doctrine of total depravity is, is essentially agreed upon by most Christians, right? So, the idea that, in Adam, all of us are in sin, in every part of our lives is affected by sin, and that we need God to work, right?

That is, that is uncontroverted. It's very controversial. There are three options about how it might work, okay? Number one, which I don't think anyone says this, but just for the sake of thoroughness. Option one might be that people demand the spirit to make them alive, right?

So, in this scenario, a person says, well, I want to follow Jesus. I know I can't follow Jesus in my own strength, so I'm going to demand that God gives me the spirit in order to make me able to follow him. Asking for the Lord to do what they wouldn't be able to do for themselves.

[25:44] In a sense, that sounds plausible, doesn't it? It maintains dignity and responsibility, because if you don't ask for the spirit, you won't receive it, and so you will receive him, and so you won't be able to follow the Lord.

The problem is that Jesus says the opposite. Let's, let's go to the John three quote there. Jesus answered, very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the spirit.

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, you must be born again. The wind, spirit, blows wherever it pleases.

You hear it sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from. So it is with everyone born of the spirit. It seems, doesn't it, that the spirit does not go where he is demanded, but where he has decided to go.

So I don't think that works. Option two could be that the spirit operates on every individual without exception to give everybody the liberty to respond to the gospel.

[26:45] Here the idea is that God the spirit works on all of humanity to enable them to respond to the gospel when and if they hear it. So this work of the spirit doesn't guarantee that people will become Christians when they hear the gospel.

But it enables them to respond to the gospel should they wish to. This is the bedrock of Arminian theology. If you've not heard of that term, don't worry.

Arminius was an opponent of Calvin back in the 17th century. And Arminius' followers proposed five oppositions to Calvin. So they agreed, Calvin and Arminius agreed on total depravity, that we needed a work of God in order to be saved.

But Arminius said that God's spirit works on everybody. And to support that view, he would use scriptures like John 1, 9. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world, gives light to everyone.

Or John 12, 32. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. Or Titus 2, verse 11. For the grace of God has appeared that offers, or I think probably better, brings salvation to all people.

[27:59] Now, that might seem quite neat, right? Because that then gives us this opportunity of people being held morally responsible for not choosing to follow Jesus, right?

Because they have, everybody that you meet has been enabled by a thing that they call prevenient grace, that is grace for everybody, being enabled to respond to the gospel should they choose to. But there are some obvious problems with it. Firstly, is that the word all in the Bible doesn't always, and probably doesn't even often mean all without exception.

It's probably better to understand the word all in the Bible as all without distinction. That is, that all those who are saved are saved by the grace of God that has appeared in Jesus Christ.

Now, that's not just semantics. Paul in Romans is careful to qualify his alls like that. But it's not just the alls. There's also a logical problem with this doctrine of prevenient grace.

[29:05] Prevenient grace like that, the idea that the spirit enables everybody should they choose to, to respond to the gospel, essentially means that salvation is left up to personal choice.

Removing God essentially from the equation so that theoretically at least, heaven could be empty. Because everybody might choose not to respond to the gospel.

And if heaven could be empty, Jesus could die for no reason, for the salvation of nobody. If Jesus' death on the cross was simply to make salvation possible for those who would choose it, then it is possible for him to have died for no reason because nobody chose to make use of his death on the cross.

And if you could imagine that you have the spectacle of God the Son in human flesh on the cross for no reason, that seems to be the very opposite of the reason that Christ is motivated to go to the cross, which is for the joy set before him, which is the joy of being with his people.

Or in John 10, where Jesus says he lays down his life for the sheep. It's like in Romans chapter 8, where it is along with him God graciously gives us all things.

[30:24] So Christ is given for us. It seems all the time when Jesus talks about his death on the cross, or the New Testament talks about his death on the cross, it's not to make salvation theoretically possible, but he dies on the cross to achieve salvation.

And so we look at him on the cross and go, it was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished. His dying breath has brought me life. So that leaves us with option three.

Option three is God chooses to give the spirit to those God has chosen to save. This is how the 1689 Baptist Confession puts it.

When God converts sinners and transforms them into the state of grace, he frees them from their natural bondage to sin and by his grace alone enables them to will and to do freely what is spiritually good, repenting and believing.

Yet because of their remaining corruption, they do not perfectly or exclusively will what is good, but also what is evil. We're not completely rid of our old sinful natures even after conversion.

[31:37] Now, the confession says that with good reason. That's how Paul describes the order of salvation in Romans 8. And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who've been called according to his purpose.

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. And those he predestined, he also called.

Those he called, he also justified. Those he justified, he also glorified. It's helpful to remember that knowledge in the Bible is not simply knowing facts, but it is relational.

So when God foreknows those he predestined, it is that he enters into relationship with them. He is relationally knowing them. So it's not just that he is aware of what will happen, but that actually his knowledge is it happening.

So those he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. It seems like God in eternity past wants Jesus to have many siblings, spiritual siblings, alongside him in glory, and so chose to send him in order for that to happen.

[32:54] It's how the work of the Spirit is described in Ephesians. But because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

So it's not that we have faith and then we receive, but actually that we receive and so then we are able to have faith. It's by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this, it's in the faith, is not from yourselves, it's the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast. It's how Ezekiel sees the dry bones coming together in Ezekiel 37, isn't it?

Prophecy to the breath, prophecy son of man and say to it, this is what the sovereign Lord says, come breath from the four winds and breathe into these slain that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me and breath entered them and they came to life and stood on their feet a vast army.

Now I want to suggest to you that option three, which is what is put forward by the confessions, actually answers a lot of our really challenging questions about salvation. The question, if option three is right, is not so much why does God condemn to hell those who don't follow him, that's sealed in Adam, isn't it?

[34:27] It's more the question is, isn't it remarkable that God by his spirit enters into dead people to make them willingly long for planting new desires in their hearts to follow and trust and love the Lord Jesus, to do what we would not otherwise do?

You know, all of us in Adam have fallen. The opportunity to choose to follow God has passed in Adam and all of us are dead to God and unable to respond to him and so condemnation is always fair.

It would be fair for all of us. The injustice is not condemnation. The injustice, if there is any injustice, is salvation. Why God in love would choose to save any.

And once we've understood that and understood that God does that and that he's done that for us, then don't we long that he would do that for others. People don't carry a label, do they?

This person is going to be given new life by the spirit, so preach to them. Instead, we're told, go into all the nations and preach the gospel and allow God to do his work and expecting him to save because he is able to save.

[35:45] And so preaching is not futile. Sharing the gospel is not futile. Like Paul was told when he was in Corinth, stay there because I've got many people in that city, says the Lord to him.

So we don't know who's going to be saved, but we do know that God will find them as we tell them the gospel. questions now and comments, observations, thoughts?

Yes. I think, this might be a question, but I think I'm just struggling to see how any of that amounts to it being a form of liberty or spontaneity or a form of free will if what you're saying is certain people have the spirit come upon them or the spirit comes upon them, that's then salvation comes.

It's only certain people and they don't choose which people it will be. But once they're chosen, that's that, they're saved, they won't be in heaven. And other people, the spirit doesn't come on them, they can't choose, they won't be in heaven.

How is that even liberty of spontaneity? So, what I mean, because, so, liberty of spontaneity is the liberty to respond according to my desires in whatever way I choose, right?

[37:08] And so, what's happening in new birth is that God by his spirit has given me a whole new heart with a whole new set of desires. So, I am

free to respond in unbelief in whatever way I choose to respond in unbelief, but my unbelief is pre-programmed into me in Adam.

Yeah. So, I might choose not to listen to the gospel by becoming a very religious Christian who thinks that I am going to be saved by God because I've done lots of great works.

That's a liberty of spontaneity. I, I might choose to rebel against the gospel by wild living. See, it's like the older and younger brother in the parable of the lost son, isn't it?

You can, you're free to choose to be an older or a younger brother, but what you can't do in your own strength is come to Christ. You need God to do that work in you.

And when he does that work in you, you are free to respond to the gospel and to love him and to follow him. And in a way, that will work its way out in all sorts of different ways for each individual as well, won't it?

[38:13] How that actually happens. It could be just like really fast. It could be over a period of time as you kind of slowly dawns on you what the gospel is. It might be because you're raised in a Christian home. It might be because you have a Christian housemate who shares the gospel with you every number of years.

Yeah. But what it means in our responses to God are in our desires rather than just in our choices. Does that make sense?

yeah except but if that's already god's plan you know you're raising a christian home and then god chooses to give the spirit to you yeah and then once the spirit comes we will respond yeah i guess i'm just where's the liberty in the other than the finer details is there actually any liberty in that so um is there any liberty in it oh can i repeat the question for zoom i just thought you were i thought you were just waving because you were excited the question is where is there any liberty if if we're dependent on the spirit to give us new arts so so in a sense there's no liberty but in another sense is it it feels like it right because when i hear the gospel i freely respond to it but the reason i freely respond to the gospel is because god has done a work in my heart to enable me to really respond to it so how many times you can how many times you present like food to a to a dead person they're just not going to they're not going to take it are they and eat it doesn't matter how many times you do it but once that person's made alive they reach out and grab it from you why do they reach out and grab well they want it and so they choose to take it from you but the only reason they choose to take it from you is because they've been brought to life and so it in a way it's freedom but yes it's not entire liberty is it because we're we're not indifferent to to god yeah yes so okay going back to the food analogy who made you love i hate it adam yeah we all fell in adam and so uh and and that's just what you see isn't it consistently after adam you see that humanity is not taught rebellion anymore they're not tempted by satan anymore in the sense of to fall in the same way it is innate to them cain kills abel um it it the kind of decline is is steady and consistent maybe the marmite yeah yeah yeah so we have all inherited adam's sin so we all by nature hate the lord except that god by his spirit has opened the eyes and hearts of his people to respond and made some of his like mama correct so there is not free will in the terms of the idea that i am completely indifferent to anything yeah i think so yes because either either you have absolute freedom or your freedom is determined by the heart that you have so if we're made in his image yeah all of us are made in his image but his image is broken in all of us isn't it image is marred in all of us so um uh and i'm going to struggle to repeat the questions for zoom because they're coming at me so fast and i just can't capture martina's turn of phrase either so yeah yeah god go on just say it again and i'll repeat it if um naturally we all dislike marmite yeah because of adam yeah but you're saying god makes us like marmite right some of us like marmite i'm saying well i didn't ask him to make me like the marmite yeah so he yes and then some of us just whenever there's the point what's the point in what who is he gonna make you like the marmite if he only makes us like yeah nothing of ourselves so yes so uh if god alone makes us love him and want to follow him what's the point when you say the point the point in preaching the gospel or the point in why are we talking about free will at all um because i think well because i think it's used often in a way that probably isn't used in the bible and so i think free will i'm wanting to say that there is we are we freely respond to the gospel but we only do it because we've been given a new heart that wants to respond by that it's like so being a christ like it's like christian living isn't it christian living comes out of a new heart that loves the lord yeah christian living is not trying to train our old heart to do the best it can because our old heart is selfish and it even does good things selfishly even goes to church going oh look at me i'm going to church

right so what we need is a new heart that actually loves the lord and so the confession goes on to say about how actually um the freedom that god gives us in our new hearts enables us um to live to please him doesn't it so uh i think that's point four isn't it when god converts sinners and transforms them into the state of grace he frees them from their natural bondage to sin and by his grace alone enables them to will and do freely what is spiritually good i really want to go to church i really want to follow the lord i really want to turn from my sin i really want to be taking up my cross and following christ i really want to give generously i really want to teach my children the gospel i really want to go where god sends me you know that is god doing all of that didn't i have to say yes is the question i'm just going to nail that for the zoom yes i do have to say yes but the ability to say yes has to come from a new heart do i have a choice to say no when i'm given a new heart no but why did he give you the new heart because he because he chose to i let me just go if amy had a question as well is this in the same line or he yeah go for it yes okay no but so should we pray thank you sorry should we hit when we show in the gospel should we before someone prays a prayer of repentance should we pray that they have the spirit to do it no in a way because their desire to pray a prayer of repentance genuinely comes from the spirit we should absolutely be praying before we share the gospel with our friends lord please go ahead of me please open their eyes to the gospel please make them want to know about jesus and please as i share the gospel with them call them to yourself irresistibly in a way that they can't refuse so that they might come and follow you freely and joyfully but i know that you can only you can do that lord i can't i can't do that um yeah yeah so is the freedom in uh point four different to the freedom in the garden well yes it is in a way different isn't it because it's it's it's better than because it is not unstable the freedom in the garden was unstable because adam could choose to not follow the lord but in eternity which is actually point five which i didn't include because i thought it'd go on too long and i have anyway so only in the state of glory is the will made perfectly and unchangeably free toward good alone so what it means is when we are in glory we will not be free to choose to disobey god praise the lord yeah yeah go on yeah

[47:51] You have the freedom and responsibility to live out that part, live out from that part.

Don't live that freedom in that. You don't have the freedom of your chosen one, choose to support this, and you can just say yes, and choose to walk the steps directly in that.

We have freedom and that's what we're doing at the moment. Okay, so yes, so do we have freedom? What's our freedom like as Christians? So I think it's important to say, isn't it, our new hearts that are given to us by the Spirit are, it's like the foretaste of glory, isn't it?

When Jesus comes back, or if you die before he comes back, the only thing that will not need to be transformed when Jesus returns is the new heart that he has already given you by the Spirit, because that is already new creation in you, yeah?

You are a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come. So the new creation you can only desire to do what is right and please the Lord. The problem that we have is that we live in the overlap of the ages, don't we?

[49:02] So we have this new nature, but we also still have an old nature with us until we die or meet the Lord. And so we are in this battle and we are empowered by the Spirit in the battle to live for Christ and for his glory.

And we do have freedom in that, don't we? Yeah, freedom to choose to follow Christ and obey him rather than sin as Christians. But it is a battle because our wills are pulled in two different directions. Okay, Zane's got one question and then we might end there and then you can, people can be free to go and you can ask me more questions if you want to stay.

Does that make sense? Yes. I don't know if it's going to make sense. Lots of things I've said didn't make sense, so you're free, so come on. I'm talking about my own members.

Yeah. I'm articulating what I want to ask. So, if ultimately, what create, if what allows free will, or ultimately, film and peace will, I don't know about, like, he allows the room to wear it basically for us.

[50:12] How free is Oliver? Yeah. And then you're going to have one say make sense, doesn't it? Say the first bit again. If God... If God allows everyone to wear it then, allows us to...

He gives us... Yeah. How ultimately free is our work because ultimately he's doing that...

Yeah. How... Our will is the vehicle for his ultimate will.

So, how free are our actions? Yeah. You and I live in a world where every molecule is held together and sustained only by the power of a sovereign God, who has chosen in his kindness to govern this world with so-called laws of nature.

They're not laws of nature, are they? They're laws of the creator, right? And so, even the very... Even the very breath that I have before I'm a Christian, where I breathe out murderous threats towards Christ, crucify him, crucify him.

[51:30] Those... The ability to do that is only given and sustained by God in his sovereign power. Yeah. I... In those moments, I am freely shouting that out.

That's a free expression of my sinful desire, right? But it's done and given in a world where God rules and reigns, which is an incredible act of grace and mercy on his part to all people, but then that he even sustains the lives of those who hate him.

Is that freedom? Is that freedom? I don't know. It depends what you mean by freedom. It is a kind of freedom. But it is not, you know, total liberty.

You know, it's like a fish can't choose to walk on land, right? Because it's given the conditions of its freedom. So, so for us. Yeah. That's a single question.

I just feel like it's really important that we see this as the basis for our assurance. Because if God chose us to believe in another one, we must believe in it because he gave it to us in the first place.

[52:34] Yes. So this is the basis of our assurance. There's a whole theological grid that goes together with all of these things. So if you, if you believe in preventive grace that God enables anybody who would like to, to choose the gospel, you also think that people can resist God's will.

That also comes with other things, doesn't it? It also robs you of assurance because it means that you could choose to not respond to the gospel one day and you'd lose your salvation. Right. Which is what I think gets in lots of Christians in a mess.

Yeah. Whereas if you believe that God has to give you a new heart in order to respond to the gospel, that also means that your new heart can't be taken away from you. So that means that you will have an eternal security.

The problem comes when you want to say, I want everybody to be free to choose the gospel, but I also want to know that I'll be held by God until the very end. You can't have those, but you can let you've got it.

You got to one or the other. Yeah. Go on. Yes. I just wanted to make a comment that might not be very helpful. It helps me. Once we discuss more of this, there are things that we are lacking in because we do not fully understand.

[53:42] Yes. Yes. But what we do is that God in his grace has given us faith so that we can be, or has made us alive in Christ and we are now his children.

Yeah. And so for us as Christians, it's that joy and thankfulness and gratitude and grace and honour to God for what he's done for us.

And it's for us then to have we had all of this. We don't know who the Lord is going to say, but to go out and to share his views with others. So that- Just remember, I've got to summarise this for Zoom. By the spirit. You know, the spirit is the one who's going to do the work. So I think for me, I'm all of this. There are things I just don't quite know. Sure. Yes.

But praise him because he saved me. And so therefore, for me, it's to pass them on to others and to just go and do that, rather than us trying to find all the God-ups eyes. Yeah.

[54:41] So in summary, for Zoom, there is mystery in this, but there's also joy in that God has saved us and also calls us to go and share the gospel with others.

Yeah. Great. Why don't we, as we finish, if you turn your Bibles to page 1139, let's read the doxology together from the end of Romans 11. Romans 11, verse 33, 1139.

We've been here a few times today. It's a good place to end. I don't want to suggest to you that I have all the answers. I don't want you to go away with that thought. My, my lecture at university at seminary used to say, if your theology makes you bigger and God smaller, it's wrong.

Right? If your theology makes God bigger and you smaller, it's probably right. Okay. That's not a bad rule of thumb, is it? Verse 33. Let's read this aloud together. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out. Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay them?

[55:58] For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen. Amen. desde desde desde Thank you.