

# Does Man Have Free Will?

## Bible Answers About Denominations

During the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin published his Institutes of the Christian Religion which became the expression of the doctrinal and ethical views of that which is known as Calvinism. A summary of the main tenets of Calvinism can be expressed in the word "TULIP." The "T" stands for "Total Hereditary Depravity." The "U" stands for "Unconditional Election." "L" stands for "Limited Atonement." The "I" stands for "Irresistible Grace." The "P" stands for "Perseverance of the Saints." Previous tracts have discussed each of these tenets and we refer the reader to those tracts for a discussion of each of them.

The reader will readily realize that each of these points clearly teach that man does not have free will:

- "Total Hereditary Depravity" teaches that a person is born in sin, even before he/she can commit any sinful act. Therefore, a person's free will is eliminated. He/she has no free will to make any choice in the matter.
- "Unconditional Election" teaches that God chooses some for salvation and others for condemnation and one can do neither good nor bad to deserve either. Therefore, man has no free will.
- "Limited Atonement" teaches that Christ only died for the elect, those chosen by God before the foundation of the world. Therefore, a person has no free will to choose to be saved because he/she was not one of the souls for whom Christ died.
- "Irresistible Grace" teaches that saving faith is supernaturally placed in the heart of the elect – a process with which a person has no involvement. According to Calvinism a person cannot resist the grace of God and therefore has no free will.
- "Perseverance of the Saints" means that the elect, the saved, can do nothing to fall from grace. In other words, there is no sin that can be committed that will damn his soul in an eternal hell. Therefore, even if a person should choose to be lost, he/she cannot, for one is everlastingly preserved by God's grace and therefore has no free will.

Please observe a comment from the pen of T. W. Brents in his book "The Gospel Plan of Salvation" regarding a person having no free will:

*"Now, if the doctrine here set forth is true, we think it impossible for man to err. Whatever he does, is in keeping with and brought about by God's foreordination or decree, and therefore can not be wrong. If he does anything—it matters not what—whether good or bad—if God has ordained everything, He has ordained that thing. If it comes to pass that a man lies, God has not only ordained that he should lie, but He has unchangeably ordained it. If it comes to pass that a man steals, God has unchangeably ordained that, too. If it comes to pass that a man kills his neighbor, God has unchangeably ordained that, also."*

If a person has no free will then it doesn't matter how he acts, or what he thinks or says, for his eternal outcome will always be the same. This being true, then man will never feel the need to be responsible for his/her actions. In reality, God is responsible. This is the horrible nature of Calvinism.

Instead of listening to the false teaching of John Calvin we should turn to the word of God and listen to our heavenly Father who created us. The Bible clearly teaches that man has the ability to determine his/her spiritual course of action.

Man's power of choice is forcefully illustrated by an example from the early days of Israel. Joshua, the great leader of Israel challenged: "...Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah" (Josh. 24:15). The people responded that they would serve Jehovah also, and Joshua declared: "Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you Jehovah to serve Him" (Josh. 24:21, 22). Then later, the Israelites "chose new gods" (Judg. 5:8; cf. Prov. 1:29; Isa. 7:15, 16; 66:3). The statement in Isaiah is crystal clear: "I will destine you for the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight, and chose that in which I did not delight" (Isa 65:12 NAS). Notice they chose not to answer when God called and they chose evil, that in which God did not delight.

Turning to the New Testament, notice that as Jesus was lamenting over Israel He cried out: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" (Matt 23:37 NAS). It is crystal clear that those to whom Jesus was speaking exercised their free will. They had the capability of choosing, but they were "unwilling." Furthermore, Jesus offered the wonderful invitation: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light" (Matt 11:28-30 NAS). Why would Jesus offer such an invitation if a person does not have free will, the ability to choose? A person can choose to follow Jesus or refuse His wonderful invitation.

Please notice the reference to Paul's preaching in Antioch: "And the next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and {began} contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:44-46 NAS). Notice that of their own free will the Jews pushed the gospel away from them. They judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. Therefore, the free will of the Jews is clearly seen. But would you also consider that if they had no free will and if they had no choice regarding eternal life, why would Paul preach to them? In fact, why should the gospel be preached to anyone if one does not have free will, the ability to choose to be saved?

Yes, the Scriptures abundantly establish the truth that man does have the ability to choose to be saved or to be lost. "...Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4).

Visit us online at: [montevista.church](http://montevista.church)  
or  
Stop by and worship with us!

**Monte Vista**  
**church of Christ**