

Series: God Saves #1426

**Title: Romans 8.29b; John 6.65
Jesus Speaks About the Will**

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We are back together, after the weekend, by the grace of God. I hope you enjoyed the weekend and are ready to jump back into the Bible and the truth of how human free will was powerfully and negatively affected by original sin and Adam's Fall from perfection when he ate of the forbidden fruit in the Garden in Eden. Last week we defined human free will and noted, importantly, that free will does *not* mean a *neutral* will. Free will does not mean a neutral will.

A very common way to define free will, even among Christians, is the ability to make choices and to do so independently without any outside influence. According to this definition of free will, we make choices spontaneously. Nothing previous to the choice determines the choice. The idea is our will is completely neutral. There is a decision before me and I am going to make a choice. And the choice I make is one independent of any outside influence. There is no bias, no prejudice, no inclination within the will. How could there be if my will is truly *free*?

We showed the fallacy of this definition. This is definitely *not* a biblical definition of human free will. The will is (listen) *not neutral*. And so we put the Bible in dialogue with three theologians who have preceded us: Jonathan Edwards, Saint Augustine, and RC Sproul (as our guide). Edwards gave us a better, far more biblical definition of the will and then taught us the distinction between natural ability and moral ability. Augustine gave us the distinctions between people before the Fall into sin, people after the Fall into sin, people who believe in Christ (those who are born again), and those who are therefore glorified and will live in heaven forever. That's what we talked about on Friday. And all of that had to do with moral ability and moral inability. Bottom line: the human will is *not neutral*.

This week I want to begin by showing you what Jesus had to say about our moral ability and moral inability. Hint: what Edwards, Augustine, and Sproul have said – and what we have said in agreement with them – comes from Jesus and His word to us in the Gospel of John. We have heard from Christ all through this series on soteriology with the title God Saves and that will be no less true as we discuss human free will in relation to predestination. So, good news, we will hear from Jesus beginning today. Then, building on what Jesus says, I will reiterate the radical effect original sin and the Fall has had on us.

The reason we are talking about human free will is in response to the biblical teaching on predestination. The question of what is meant by free will always come up in the teaching on predestination because we wonder: if God predestines who is saved *before* we are even born, where then is our free will to choose? Thus, a robust discussion on human free will!

And I do want to remind you that each day's teaching builds on the day before that (in this case Monday builds on the previous Friday), so if you are just joining us and want to listen to what you have missed and/or if you need a refresher, maybe you are feeling a bit lost with the content, this is easily rectified. Just visit our website. Every single broadcast we have ever done is there, available to you as a free podcast. Simply visit godisministry.org, that's godisministry.o-r-g. Once on the homepage, click on the series link God Saves. Boom. Up pops all of the episodes in this current series.

"Ah," you say, "there's so many of them." Yep. Seventy-two so far. But, all of them are worth listening to, *and* all of them are essential if you really want to understand what the Bible says about *how* God saves us from our sins. That is especially true when we get to Romans 8 and verse 29. I recommend starting at Romans 8.29 if you want to jump into our current discussion on predestination. And that is easy to find because each day's podcast has a title and in that title we identify the specific Scripture verse we will look at that in that episode. You will see Romans 8, verse 29 in the title. Begin there. Or, go all the way back to Romans 8, verse 28 and the start.

Alright, godisministry.org is built as a resource for you and anyone you want to share it with. Please do take advantage of the website and follow the teaching. Tell others about this. If you have any questions about how this works, feel free to email me. My address: mark@godisministry.org , that's m-a-r-k@godisministry.org. This address and my mailing address are given at the end so stay tuned until then and write these down, then, write to me! I would love to hear from you, answer your questions, and correspond about what we are learning. Oh! And I should add: each day's transcript is also available so you can read what I say. Just click the link for "Read Along" at each podcast and, well, read along.

If you have your Bible handy and like to follow along, please open the text to John's Gospel and chapter 6. John 6 and soon I will read verse 65. (That's John 6, verse 65.) As you find that, let me quote from Dr. RC Sproul and his book *Chosen By God*. What he writes here nicely summarizes what we have learned thus far and leads into the statements of our Lord. Quoting now, "We conclude that fallen man (and by "man" he includes women) we conclude that fallen man is still free to choose what he desires, but because his desires are only wicked he lacks the moral ability to come to Christ. As long as he remains in the flesh, unregenerate, he will never choose Christ. He cannot choose Christ precisely because he cannot act against his own will. He has no desire for Christ. He cannot choose what he does not desire. His fall is great. It is so great that only the effectual grace of God working in his heart can bring him to faith (*Chosen By God*, 199)."

This nicely reiterates what we said last week: desire motivates choice. Desire is the reason for the choice. We choose according to our desires. Our choices are determined by our desires. The human will always chooses according to its strongest inclination at the moment of choice. And for someone who is not yet a Christian, that person is morally *incapable* of making the choice for Christ, because that person cannot act against his or her own will and the will has no desire for Jesus. Original sin and the Fall have so damaged the human will that *unless God acts*, we would never make a positive choice to believe in the Lord Jesus. We are too wicked to do that.

These wise words from Sproul also lead us forward today into the Gospel of John and I hope you are now there if you can access God's Word. Hear then the Word of the Lord. In John 6, verse 65 Jesus says, "**For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.**" Whether we realize it or not, at first reading, at first hearing, these words are deeply transformative to our understanding of human free will and predestination. Mark this. Note this. John 6.65, "No one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." Let's talk about the meaning.

Our Lord begins with a universal negative: "no one." There are no exceptions. This is all-inclusive. Pay attention literally *everyone*. No one. Not one single, solitary soul. And then note the next word, "can." This speaks to ability. If I say, "I can swim" that tells you that I know how to get one from end of the pool to the other using my arms, my legs, and controlling my breathing in and out in water. I have the ability to swim. If you say, "I can speak Japanese," then I take that to mean you have the ability to communicate to my friend Kazuhiro in his native language.

Jesus is not speaking about permission. He is not saying "no one may come to Me," he is saying "no one can come to Me." May I? This is a question about permission. Can I? This is a question about ability. Put another way, Jesus *is* saying "no one is able to come to Me." This is about ability, or rather the lack of ability. None of us can come to Jesus *unless* something happens to make it possible for us to come to Him.

And something *does* happen. What happens? We will discuss this tomorrow when we again meet Jesus right here, because God Is.

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