

A study on divorce and remarriage in the church

by Jim Drago

Free Will

Lately the use of the term “free will” has been being used in conversations I have been involved in with increasing frequency. How often have you heard the phrase “You must remember he/she has their free will”. It is usually spoken in a tone that renders certain hopelessness to the situation that is being discussed. The term has been given so much power that it is used in a sense that seems to insinuate that somehow a person can be in rebellion to the point that Almighty God is rendered impotent, in a sense that unless the person chooses to change nothing can be done, in a sense that seems to say that the person has control over the situation and God must wait for them. It is spoken as if somewhere in scripture it is used in a way that lends credence to it as doctrinal. I might also add that when this statement is made it is very seldom followed by an affirmation of the assuredness of God's sovereignty over any and every situation and person. Hearing this phrase used so freely, and given the power it has been given, has always caused uneasiness in my spirit; Can man, as insignificant as we are thwart God Almighty? I decided to do some research.

Here is a very powerful website for searching scripture <http://www.biblegateway.com/keyword> at least 10 interpretations of the Bible ready for immediate search. What I found was interesting; though not surprising. I searched the phrase “free will”, in 10 different interpretations. The phrase only showed up a handful of times. Over 80% in reference specifically to free will offerings in Numbers and Leviticus the rest of the times as choosing rightly without coercion as in Philemon 1:14. Not once was it used with the connotation of one being in a state of rebellion. In conversational usage in the church today I have very seldom heard it used except to describe one being in a state of rebellion. How does that happen?

The question becomes; Do we believe God is completely sovereign or not? Do we believe that He has the power to complete His will or not? Is He MY GOD? It comes down to this question "What is the foundation of my belief, and how deeply have I accepted and surrendered to the belief that God is supreme? Do I believe that He and He alone is the final authority?" I have chosen to stand for the restoration of my marriage. I know that God loves and honors covenant marriage, and that He hates divorce, so I pray, and hope and yearn, and to the best of my ability I trust that He will completely restore my marriage to all that He intended it to be and for His glory. If and when He chooses my wife will respond. Period. Rest assured, the same is true for the people you are praying and believing for. If my God should choose to test my faithfulness to Him for the rest of my life and my marriage is not restored, it will not be because the precious young woman that He and I love so deeply is too strong for Him. If and when He chooses to restore, Job 33 promises that He knows how to get one's attention. For above even rebellion God is sovereign. He knows the breaking point of every person. That is a terrifying and humbling thought, but it is the truth. Scripture backs it up over and over. Pharaoh, the enemies of the children of Israel, Jonah, Saul over and over people set themselves against God's will to no avail. I'm not debating whether or not man can rebel; of course we can. What we need to always remember though is that God's authority is not subject to man's will. He can melt the hardest heart, mend the most depraved mind, and move the strongest will to surrender.

So what is the conclusion that I've come to concerning the phrase "free will"? At it's simplest I believe it is a statement that has been coined by the church today and is so frivolously misused that it can and has weakened the faith of 1000's. I also believe that it is completely contradictory to the true depth of God's sovereignty and authority. Those who hold and teach this as a doctrine will say that it's not that God can't, but rather that He won't go against man's will. If this were true, a very sobering question must be asked. Why should I pray? If indeed a third party has ultimate control over whether or not God Almighty my loving Father, Who commands me to pray, can or can't, or will or won't answer my prayers then; why pray? Is the Bible then in contradiction? I'm commanded to pray in faith knowing that I receive, yet a person can thwart whether or not God can or can't, or will or won't answer? Do you see that this raises man to a position above God? Nowhere in scripture is it taught that man can usurp the authority of God to the point that God becomes powerless in the situation. To the contrary, over and over we are told that God's plans will prevail. Proverbs 16:9, Proverbs 19:21, Proverbs 21:1, and most notably Job 33:12-30 to name a few. So pray, and believe, and trust, and be patient, because nothing or no one can or will deny God when He decides to be heard and decides to move and decides to answer your prayers. He is completely sovereign, the final authority. The truth at it's most simple and complex is that only one truly has free will. He is my God. I hope that He is yours also with all that that entails...

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