

The Will Of Christ

One of the most popular doctrines in this country today is the doctrine of Calvinism. This doctrine more or less consists of five points. The first, that man is born in sin, or Total Depravity. Next, that God has predestined certain men to receive salvation, or Unconditional Election. Then, Christ's blood only covers those whom God chose or predestined, or Limited Atonement. After that the belief that God sends the Holy Spirit upon you and you cannot reject it, or Irresistible Grace. Finally, that once you are saved, you are always saved and cannot lose your salvation, or Perseverance of the Saints. All five points revolve around one main theme: Man has no choice whether or not he is saved. The free will of man is taken away by belief in these points. The basis of this erroneous teaching came from a man named Augustine, who lived in the third century. Augustine taught that a man inherited the sin of Adam, and therefore we are born in sin, and not born pure. This doctrine is widely known as Original Sin. John Calvin took that basis and established the rest of the points we just pointed out.

This rule of thought has been passed down through the centuries and is now a staple taught by most religious folks. The problem that has arisen, though, is that people are not just leaving the false thinking that man has no free will to be saved or not, but are also pushing that Jesus Christ Himself had no free will. Now, this is only one part of a greater issue concerning the deity of Christ, but we will just focus on this part for the time being.

We know that when it comes to man's salvation, there is a part that God provides, and there is a part which man provides. God's part consists of Him sending His Son to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). Paul tells us in Ephesians, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Ephesians 2:8). So God, by His grace, sent His Son to be the forever sacrifice for sin, that man (God's creation) might have the opportunity to become holy and righteous in God's sight. As for man's part, there is an obedience required of the terms which God has laid forth to man. In the conversion of Saul, Ananias spoke to him and said, *"And now why are you waiting, arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). Romans 10 says that we are to believe and confess Jesus as Lord unto salvation. So these terms are what God has said for man to do to receive salvation.

Man now has a choice to either obey or to not obey what has been laid forth by God. God forces no one into salvation (John 12:48). But did this same pattern of choice apply to Jesus Christ? I am not asking whether Jesus had

sin or not, as the scriptures clearly state that Jesus was a sinless soul (Hebrews 4:15). Rather, the question is, "Did Jesus have the choice to obey the Father's will or disobey? Was there in fact free will in Christ?"

The scriptures speak very openly about how Jesus was indeed a man, however He also was Deity. This was His nature, both man and Deity. One cannot deny that Jesus Christ was Deity. The scriptures state, "*Being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men*" (Philippians 2:6-7). There are certain attributes that Christ demonstrated while on the earth that are limited only to the power of God. Jesus could read the hearts and thoughts of men (Matthew 9:3-4). We also learn from this same passage that He had the power to forgive sins, a charge which He backs up by proclaiming it again on the cross (Luke 23:41-43). We also know though, that Jesus also showed the attributes of the flesh. When He came out of the wilderness after fasting for 40 days, He was hungry (Luke 4:2). When Jesus was with His disciples on the boat, He slept (Matthew 8:23). At the death of Lazarus, before Jesus raised him from the dead, He wept for him (John 11:35). So Christ showed characteristics of being both man and God in nature. This is something that none of us have experienced, therefore it can be a hard concept to grasp for us. But we must not overshadow one over the other, but rather look at each equally.

Now we answer the question, "Was there free will in Christ?" The answer is simply, "Yes." Jesus had the free will to do what He wanted, but He chose to do the Father's will. God did not force Jesus to the cross. This is not because of what I say, but rather of what the scriptures say. We read in Philippians 2:8 that Christ "*humbled Himself*" and was obedient even to the point of death. The phrase "*humbled Himself*" shows us that Christ chose to obey God. Jesus, though He was the Son of God, learned obedience by the things that He suffered. It was something that He had to learn. It was not automatic. Several times in the gospels, Jesus refers to the fact that He came not to do His will, but the Father's will. When He was in the garden, Jesus prayed, "*... nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done*" (Luke 22:42). "*... I do not seek My own will, but the will of the Father who sent Me*" (John 5:30). "*For I have come down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent me*" (John 6:38). These scriptures establish there was a choice involved with Christ: to obey the Father's will, or to follow His own will. Jesus CHOSE to do the Father's will.

So then, the next question that is posed is, "Could Jesus sin?" Not that He did; however, we want to examine if He had the capacity to sin. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, He did not give in to any of the

temptations, but countered back with scripture. But the very fact that Jesus was tempted shows the possibility of Him sinning. Otherwise, it would cease to be a temptation, and the devil wasted his time. The very meaning of temptation or trial means "to fall aside," or "to apostatize." If this was impossible for Christ, then it would have been pointless for Satan to do so. But then God's word reveals something else to us. Hebrews 4:15 says, "*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*" When we are tempted, can we sin? Yes, if we give into the temptation. So it was with Christ, as He was tempted as we are. Christ could not mediate for us as our High Priest if He did not know what it was like to suffer as a man. But He can mediate for us because He felt things as we feel things. We are told that Christ became our perfect example in all things, but if He could not sin, then the credibility of that example is useless, as we cannot be like that.

Jesus Christ came to this earth to do all His Father's will that was commanded Him. When He accomplished this by His own free will, He became the "*author and finisher of our faith.*" Christ was not God's puppet, being controlled with every move, but rather was a man with a choice and made the choice (as we should too) to follow the Father in all things.

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