

April 17, 2016

Free Will Isaiah 1:18-20

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Does man have free will, or has God already made every _____ affecting his salvation? Today, we're asking if man is free to _____ God. The Lord's way is wise and good. It leads us in the _____ of righteousness and away from sin. The Lord's way leads us to love and blessing. No other path is so important to your _____. Some people hold the view that God has _____ predetermined everything that we think or do. They think God has _____ us the way we are, predetermined our motives and attitudes, and even predetermines the _____ that we will make. According to them, we may think we are free to choose right or wrong, but God has already _____ whether we will follow Him or follow the world to destruction.

While we recognize that God is sovereign and has a _____ for this world, we also understand that God has made each of us a _____ moral agent. If God predetermined every motive and intention on our part, how could we ever freely love and choose Him from our _____? If man has no free will, then he is but a _____ on a string. We maintain that our choice to take up our cross and follow Christ is not _____ upon us. We do so out of committed _____ and _____, not out of compulsion.

The Bible says, "This is good, and it's pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be _____ and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). God wants you to come to _____ Him, to _____ Him, and to _____ Him. So, we study and we try to learn the _____ so that we may know how to _____ Him and to be saved from sin. This allows us to live with Him _____.

Our reading from God's Inspired Word comes from the prophet Isaiah 1:18-20.

The word "if" has but two letters, but it's one of the most _____ words of the Bible. In the passage in Isaiah, God wanted to _____ with Israel so they would take a different path than the one they had taken earlier. In that first chapter, the people had abandoned and despised the _____. They were spiritually _____; their worship was offensive to God because of their _____. God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, "Wash yourselves; make yourselves _____; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; _____ to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause" (Isaiah 1:16-17). They were sinners, but they didn't have to _____ in sin. They could _____. They could cease their _____ and they could learn to do _____. God believed they could change and _____ them to do so. Life is filled with so many choices, and we must _____ to choose wisely. Since we have to

live with the consequence of our choices, we must be _____ to choose what is right. The Bible teaches that we have that ability. Many passages teach that man is _____ to choose between good and evil, and between God and Satan, and that man can change his choice.

Read what the Bible says God will do in Romans 2:6-11.

God hasn't arbitrarily _____ some people for salvation and other people for condemnation. He permits each person to make a _____ either to do good or to do evil. People can follow the commandments of God or they can refuse to _____ the truth. We're all choosing what we follow. If we choose to follow God, we'll find _____ and blessing; but if we choose to follow sin, we'll only find _____. We each are choosing what we will follow and serve in this life, and it will _____ the next life.

Read what God's Word says in Romans 6:16-18. You make the choice of your _____. You'll present yourselves to someone as an obedient _____. Notice that the people who were at one time slaves of sin made the decision to _____ that life. They were enslaved to sin but they were still _____ to make a choice. They could leave their _____ master and come to a _____ master. They could be freed from that sin, the sin that was destroying them, and serve a master who would give them _____ life. They did this by _____ from the heart. They weren't _____! They _____ to make a change!

Remember the prodigal son, he thought he was serving himself, but actually he was really serving sin and _____. He thought he was _____, but his sins were destroying him. Sin will _____ you where you have nothing left, just like he had nothing left. When this boy finally came to his senses, he _____ the pig farm, confessing his sins and repenting. He decided to go _____. He changed his ways. He didn't have to _____ in sin.

The people that Peter preached to on the Day of Pentecost were _____ of crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ. When they sought for an _____ to their guilt, they asked Peter "what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the _____ of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). They were not told they could do _____ about their sins. They were not told that God would have to work a _____ in their lives. They were told to _____ and to be _____ for the forgiveness of their sins.

Peter then said, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40). What does that mean, "Save yourselves"? Are we suggesting that a person can _____ his way to heaven? No, by no means! We're saying a person can and must repent and be baptized, for the forgiveness of sins in order to _____ in faith to God. No one earns salvation, but we are given salvation when we respond to the _____; you "save yourselves" by responding to the grace and the forgiveness that God _____ to you. God's not going to save you against your _____.

If you're drowning and I throw you a rope and a life preserver, don't you have to _____ hold? God graciously provides our salvation through the _____ of Jesus, but we have to

respond by faith and obedience to that grace. We can't save ourselves by our own _____, but we can respond to the gracious gift of salvation, and we have to. Wouldn't it be foolish to have God's rope of grace extended to us and then we just throw up our hands and say, "oh, we can't do _____." Of course, we can do something. We can grab hold of the _____ that Christ purchased for us at such a great _____.

Read what the same inspired apostle Peter wrote on another occasion about how people are saved in 1 Peter 1:22-23. People purify their souls when they _____ and _____ the gospel truth. They are born again not through some miraculous movement of God, but by obedience to the _____ of the Word of God. It is the _____ that saves (Romans 1:16). **Read 1 Corinthians 1:21.** This was God's _____ of how to save people, giving them a gospel and saving them through their response to that message.

That man has free will to _____ the gospel message or to _____ it is also very clear in the Scriptures. Throughout history, people have made _____ as to whether they will obey God or not. Joshua, late in his life, addressed the people of Israel. **Read what he said in Joshua 24:14-15.** Joshua knew people could _____ which god they served, whether the God of Heaven or some other false god. They had freewill.

The prophet Elijah faced off against 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah on Mount Carmel. The prophets of Baal were completely overcome by the God of Heaven when the _____ came down and consumed Elijah's _____. Elijah challenged the people, saying, "How long will you _____ between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Of course, Baal was just an _____ and was never anything but a figment of the people's imagination. The God of Heaven, however, was _____ and sent fire down from heaven, which convinced the people to kill the prophets of Baal. When the people saw the _____, they chose God and rejected Baal. They had _____ will, and, my friend, so do you. Revelation 22:17 says, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who _____ say, 'Come.' And let the one who is _____ come." God _____ us to believe and obey! The gospel _____ blessings and He gives them to "whosoever will." Whosoever means anybody; anyone and everyone who _____ to come to the Lord may come to the Lord!

The Bible says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). God doesn't _____ anybody to be lost, but He will not make you repent. You have to _____ that for yourself. God allows you to make that decision; He won't make it for you.

The belief that God has predestined us for heaven or hell and we have no choice in the matter goes against the grain of _____. If we cannot change, why does the Bible urge us to _____? Why does it urge us to _____ God? Why does it tell us to _____? Why does the Bible warn us about _____? Such language becomes absurd if you have no free will.

The very word temptation refers to a moral _____, whether we will choose to do right or give in to the wrong. The Bible says, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). If people cannot make a choice to do right or wrong, they cannot be tempted; but _____ faces temptation regularly.

You’re not a _____ or a _____. You’re a person made in God’s _____ and accountable for your choices. If a person were arbitrarily predestined to heaven or hell, no matter what choices he made, how could God be _____? How can man be held accountable to God for his actions in _____ without free will? Only people with _____ can be held responsible for their choices. Wouldn’t God be unjust to _____ someone arbitrarily and eternally when that person could not choose? The God of all _____ is not so monstrous.

God does not show partiality. **Read what Peter told the first Gentile convert Cornelius in Acts 10:34-35.** God wonderfully, marvelously, graciously offers to us the _____ of Jesus to cleanse us from sin. We can choose to be _____ with Christ and we can enjoy God’s grace and forgiveness; or we can _____ against God and live our lives as we wish. Oh, friend, what will you choose, what will you do?

Sin, all sin, is a serious issue. When we choose to sin we must _____ the consequences. We can’t _____ our sins and hope they’ll go away. We can’t _____ our sins away. We can’t _____ anyone else. We can’t _____ our sins from God. Sin is that huge issue coming _____ God and us. Sin offends God and it _____ us from Him. God will not simply _____ what we did. Sin has to be _____ with.

Sin that’s left unresolved will cost us our _____. That’s why we _____ the blood of Jesus to be saved. How do we come into _____ with that blood? By believing in Christ, repenting of our sins, confessing Jesus as the Christ, and by being baptized. When we, from the heart, _____ the gospel, we’re baptized into the _____ of Christ, and that’s where the blood was _____. It’s in baptism that the blood of Jesus is _____ to our souls and _____ them clean. That’s the time our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16). My friend, do you want to be saved today?

You have to make a choice. You can _____ against God and stay in your sins or you can _____ to Christ. You can live your life on your own terms or you can _____ to the Lord. Today, is the very best day you’ll ever have to change your life, to leave the old man of sin behind, and to follow the Lord. Oh, I hope you’ll be like the prodigal son and come to your senses. Isn’t it time to come back home to God and to the abundant life in Christ. God has given you free will. Use it! God is offering you eternal life in Christ. Why not grab hold of life and never, never, let it go?