

Westminster Confession of Faith
Chapter 9: Of Free Will
Woodland Bible Chapel
November 15, 2020

1. God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that is neither forced nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil.^a

a. [Deut 30:19](#); [Mat 17:12](#); [James 1:14](#).

2. Man, in his state of innocency, *had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God*,^a but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it.^b

a. [Gen 1:26](#); [Eccl 7:29](#). • b. [Gen 2:16-17](#); [3:6](#).

➤ *possible to sin; possible not to sin*

3. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, *hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation*,^a so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good,^b and dead in sin,^c *is not able*, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.^d

a. [John 15:5](#); [Rom 5:6](#); [8:7](#). • b. [Rom 3:10](#), [12](#). • c. [Eph 2:1](#), [5](#); [Col 2:13](#). • d. [John 6:44](#), [65](#); [1 Cor 2:14](#); [Eph 2:2-5](#); [Titus 3:3-5](#).

➤ *not possible not to sin*

➤ cf. [Gen 6:5](#), [8:21](#); [Jer 17:9](#)

4. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin,^a and *by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good*,^b yet so as that, *by reason of his remaining corruption*, he doth not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.^c

a. [John 8:34](#), [36](#); [Col 1:13](#). • b. [Rom 6:18](#), [22](#); [Phil 2:13](#).
• c. [Rom 7:15](#), [18-19](#), [21](#), [23](#); [Gal 5:17](#).

➤ *possible not to sin*

➤ cf. [1 John 1:8-10](#)

5. The will of man is *made* perfectly and immutably free to good alone, in the state of glory only.^a

a. [Eph 4:13](#); [Heb 12:23](#); [1 John 3:2](#); [Jude 1:24](#).

➤ *not possible to sin*

➤ cf. [Rom 8:31-39](#); [John 10:25-30](#)

source: <https://www.apuritansmind.com/westminster-standards/chapter-9/>

Key Ideas:

- man created holy but able to fall
- man's fall brought spiritual and physical death
- Adam's sin is passed to all humanity (WCF 6.3)
- fallen man is only inclined to sin continually
- regeneration frees man from the *power* of sin
- glorification frees man from the *presence* of sin

Discussion Points:

1. What is the difference between the biblical doctrine of man's free will and the popular belief about man's free will? Is man's will ever completely free? What constrains it?
2. How does the will reflect the strongest inclinations of the heart? Why would it be fair to say that one's desires are often conflicted?
3. If man's will is indeed "free," then why does he continue to sin even after his heart is renewed by conversion?

Historical Controversies

- monergism vs. synergism
- Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism vs. Augustinianism (5th century)
- Arminianism vs. Calvinism (16th/17th century)
- perfectionism ("entire sanctification")

What About Fallen Angels and Unsaved Men?

- those unregenerate at the moment of death remain in a permanent condition of sin and pass into eternal punishment (there is no possibility of redemption after death); cf. [Luke 16:19-26](#)
- there is no redemption for fallen angels; at the end of the age they are cast into hell; cf. [Matt 25:41](#)

R.C. Sproul: "Salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end. Yes, I must believe. Yes, I must respond. Yes, I must receive Christ. But for me to say 'yes' to any of those things, my heart must first be changed by the sovereign, effectual power of the Holy Spirit. Soli Deo Gloria!"