



Welcome to Unity's Interactive Worship Service

**Today's Topic: The Question of Free
Will**

Power Point notes available at:
www.unityofbakersfield.org

The Question of Free Will

At one of the Tuesday morning classes the question of free will came up as we began looking at Jesus's early ministry.

Did he have free will to do as he pleased or was he following a pre-ordained course of action laid out for him by God with no choice in the matter but to follow it?

Or is the idea of free will a paradox, never to be completely understood?

The Question of Free Will

The Constitution outlined that we had free will to live a life that afforded us certain rights to which were life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, or did it?

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

The Question of Free Will

If the Creator (God) endowed us with these rights, do we have the free will to pursue them? After all in Book of Genesis...

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die" (Gen 2:16-17). So do we have free will or not?

The Question of Free Will

Without the knowledge (the conscious awareness) of good and evil how can we pursue life, liberty, and happiness? Were we given that right, the right of free will to discover for ourselves what was best, or did God know something we didn't and decided to keep it from us? And if God did know (Omnipotent) why put a temptation in front of us to begin with and then be punished for it? So we come to a fork in the road.

The Question of Free Will



In his Dialogues, Philosophy 36, Peter Russell writes:

If the world unfolds according to fixed laws, then everything that happens is determined by events that have gone before.

The Question of Free Will

Since our brains are part of this world, their state is also determined by preceding events. Hence, so are our thoughts and experiences, and, most significantly, the decisions we make. On the other hand, we all experience making choices from small things like what to eat, to bigger issues like career and marriage. We live our lives on the assumption that we do indeed have free will. The two views, “free will versus determinism,” seem incompatible. Hence the paradox. And the question: Which is right?

The Question of Free Will

It has been said that it was mankind’s free will that caused humankind to “fall into sin” through Adam and Eve’s willful disobedience to God. Now this begs the question:

How could they exhibit willful disobedience if they had no knowledge before hand that they had free will to do so?

The freedom to disobey and the free will to do so are often treated as one because the two terms are commonly used as synonyms.

The Question of Free Will



The late Mortimer Jerome Adler, an American philosopher, educator, and popular author wrote: There are three kinds of freedom:

1. Circumstantial freedom is "freedom from coercion or restraint" that prevents acting as one wills. (Bondage, Slavery)

The Question of Free Will

2. Natural freedom (a.k.a. volitional freedom) is freedom to determine one’s own “decisions or plans.” Natural freedom is inherent in all people, in all circumstances, and “without regard to any state of mind or character which they may or may not acquire in the course of their lives.”

John 7:17 Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

The Question of Free Will

3. Acquired freedom is freedom “to live as one ought to live,” a freedom that requires a transformation whereby a person acquires a righteous, holy, healthy, etc. “state of mind or character.”

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” Matt 6:24

The Question of Free Will

Pelagius (c. 360–418 AD) was an Irish moralist, who became well known throughout the Roman Empire. He opposed the idea of predestination and asserted a strong version of the doctrine of free will. He was accused by St. Augustine for need of divine aid in performing good works. They understood him to have said that the only grace was necessary for the declaration of the law; humans were not wounded by Adam’s sin and were perfectly able to fulfill the law without divine aid.

The Question of Free Will

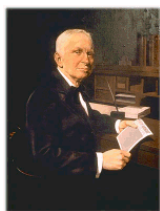
Pelagius denied Augustine's theory of original sin and so he was declared a heretic by the Council of Carthage in 418. His interpretation of a doctrine of free will became known as Pelagianism. He believed that man is completely autonomous, and completely responsible for all his actions, no matter what. That one's free will is completely free and unconditional. This freedom is a grace which comes from the Grace of God.

The Question of Free Will

If humankind is predestined to sin, and only a few will be chosen to enter the kingdom, what does that say about God and God's grace?

If faith and good works can't get you into the kingdom because you have already been predestined to fail, why should we even try to do the will of God? What good is having free will?

The Question of Free Will



Charles R. Fillmore's take on the question of free will:
Free will is our inherent freedom to act as we determine. There can be no perfect expression without perfect freedom of will. If we determine to act in accord with divine law, we will build harmony, health, happiness, and eternal life, which is heaven.

The Question of Free Will

Charles R. Fillmore's take on predestination: Since man is created in the image and after the likeness of God, he is predestined to bring the perfect pattern into expression. "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). The belief that God makes men do certain things cannot be true in a single instance, because, if it were, man would not be a free agent. If God interfered with man's will in some things, it would follow that He could interfere in any and all things. He was given freedom of thought, and must work out his own salvation.

The Question of Free Will

Now here is something to think about.

