

Free Will

“What is a person able to do in his/her conversion and regeneration from his/her own powers remaining after the Fall?”

A Dim Spark of Knowledge that There is a God But Otherwise..... Romans 1:19-21, 24, 32 “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him.” 1 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 4:17-18; Matthew 13:11-13; Romans 3:11-12

In the dark, weak, sick, finished and entirely dead! The person who is spiritually dead in sins cannot by his own strength make or apply himself to acquire spiritual and heavenly righteousness and life. This is true unless he is delivered and brought to life by God's son from the death of sin. Ephesians 5:8; Acts 26:18; John 1:5; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:13

We are not merely dead, we are actively turned away from God! Not only are we weak, incapable, unfit, and dead to good, but we are also sadly perverted, infected and corrupted by original sin so that we are entirely evil, perverse and hostile to God by nature. We are dead to God but alive to sin. Genesis 8:21; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 5:6-8, 8:7; Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:14, 18; Romans 7:22-23. We are actively striving against God, according to our old sinful flesh.

Who gets the credit for our life in Christ? Holy Scripture does not give any credit to our human power of free will for: conversion, renewal and all that belongs to the beginning or end of them. No Boasting! Ephesians 2:8-10

God: He is a really big deal. Holy Scripture does not give any credit to our human power of free will for: conversion, renewal and all that belongs to the beginning or end of them. Our free will gets no credit. None. Zip. Nada. Neither in whole or in the tiniest little part. Conversion and regeneration is completely the Holy Spirit's divine work. Acts 16:14; Philippians 2:13; Acts 5:31; 2 Timothy 2:25; Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 2:8; John 6:29; Deuteronomy 29:4; Titus 3:5-6; Ezekiel 11:19; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; James 1:17; John 6:44; Matthew 11:27; 1 Corinthians 12:3; John 15:5; 2 Corinthians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 4:7

If God does it all, it doesn't matter what I do, right? "When we teach what the Bible has to say about free will and our natural abilities according to the flesh, the danger is that there will come along some people who say, what difference does it matter what I do? Many people have grown disorderly and dissolute. They have grown idle and lazy in all Christian exercises of prayer, reading, and devout meditation. They say that since they are unable to convert themselves, they will just do whatever they want and wait for God to force Himself on them, or since God does it all anyway, they can just not concern themselves about reading the Bible, attending Church, receiving the Sacrament, but will just wait until God "waves a magic wand" over them and converts and regenerates them. And some people will fall into great agony of doubt when they are aware of no strong faith and sincere obedience, they may just be tempted to chuck it all!" Martin Luther Romans 6:1

In Christ we are free to live as God's people. As soon as the Holy Spirit has begun the work of regeneration and renewal through the Word and Sacraments then we can and should cooperate through His power, in great weakness, of course. This comes entirely from the work of the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 6:16. The new birth in this life is not complete, but it is a new life! Galatians 5:17. Each Christian will experience ups and downs, some days particularly joyful and mindful of the grace of God, some days not. At some times we feel particularly intense in our love for God and others, but at other times we feel cold and weak.

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. — Martin Luther; Small Catechism; Explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed .