

James 1:14 *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.* Each one when he is drawn away, enticed and baited by his own desire, His own desire it baits the hook, and man swallows it and is thus entrapped and enticed. Our Subject today is an understanding of **FREE WILL** .

We saw Last week a brief overview of the Doctrine of Christ. As we have been going through the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith- an aid to help us to grasp and understand the foundational truths of Scripture clearer. The confession we believe. We saw last week - Christ the Mediator, Christ The Saviour the redeemer. **We also realise why man needs a redeemer** – Man is fallen, and sin has so damaged us we need to be made new. We need to be born again. We are going to see just how damaged man's ability is to choose right is. **The state of mans will.** Man **will not hear** the Word of God, **will not receive**- will not believe. - Man will not endure sound doctrine. *Man is not willing to come to God that you may have life-*

The issue of free will, raises many questions, does man really have a free will? I think as we look at this paragraph and the **proof texts**, we see the answer is clearly yes, He does. **Yet we need to understand what is meant by free will** – All Men and woman have the ability to choose what they want, then, of course, fallen people have free will. **Yet if we mean that fallen humanity** has the moral power and ability to choose righteousness, or choose God then, *free will* is far too much of a high term, or grand term, to apply to fallen man.

Our will is free to follow our preferences or likes, but fallen people always turn away from God. We want to address this subject, and gain an understanding, from scripture which brings glory to God and yields responsibility to man. The confession helps us understand by pointing us to many proof scriptures. **We all know** that if we want to know something that Scripture is the most reliable source.

As we now begin with chapter 9 of the London Baptist Confession we note that it is very similar almost word for word to the **Westminster confession of faith, and also to the Savoy declaration.** **The whole chapter is the state of man** -both before he knows God - and also after coming to know God.

It teaches us that man by nature possesses free will – **lets read how it is worded by the framers of the confession-** *God hath endued the will of man with that natural*

liberty and power of acting upon choice so that it is neither forced nor by any necessity of nature determined to do good or to do evil.

We have just read a definition of Human will with regard to our lives, and moral actions in relation to our wills. **By free will we mean** that no one is **forced or coerced** by some external force greater than themselves to do anything **against their desires**. We are not programmed to respond in only in certain ways, so as to free us from being responsible for our actions and behaviour. No, we are not robots- rather we know that our nature, our mind and emotions greatly determine our wills - but we realise and see Fallen man WILL NOT CHOOSE contrary to His nature. His nature always affects his choices. We are free to make decisions, but because of our sinful nature, there is one decision we will never want to make: the decision to bow our knee to the Lord and God. God must intervene to change our nature before we will do that. This will not in man means man will not inherit the kingdom of God.

As we look at the **remaining 4 paragraphs of Ch 9** - they are clearly summarised by the Scottish Puritan named Thomas Bostan by what He calls the four states of Human Nature. This old and rich book of the 1700's was treasured in Scotland at the time and was said to be the most popular book in Scotland after the bible. The four states of human nature are-

1) **THE STATE OF INNOCENCE**, is when Adam and Eve in the garden, when man was in a **state of innocence** and he had an **unblemished free will**. He had the opportunity when he was in that state to choose that which was good and to resist that which was evil. *In the garden Adam had the ability to do what was well pleasing to God.* Yet while they were innocent their will was still mutable. That means changeable. They had free will to choose what was good. But they were also subject to mutability- so they did not always consistently choose good. We know this because they fell when they listened to the council of the serpent. But let us skim over that and focus upon the next heading-

2) the **STATE OF NATURE**, which is a description of fallen man, This is based upon **Paragraph 3. That man has fallen and unable to save Himself.** The proof texts are many but let's look at 1 or 2 *Romans 5:6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* - *John 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.* Also *Rom 8:7; Eph 2:1; Eph 2:5; Tit 3:3-5*

We note and learn that unsaved man is so damaged he rather chooses to do evil, because of His fallen condition. Fallen man is dead in trespasses and sins. The will of fallen man has been damaged by sin; scripture teaches no man seeks God nor not one. Given the choice, fallen man never desires God, and will not seek after God nor the things of God. **We see clearly man is not willing** *John 5:40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.* We see that man's will, must be restored by God's grace in the work of conversion. Man, and by this, I mean mankind men and women are dead **unless we are begotten to a lively hope.**

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Sin caused every man born to die. But now in Jesus Christ we are born again never to die.

Let me just spend a few moments looking just how dead the one is who is not begotten again to a living hope is... Just how much we need a saviour. The day Adam sinned by taking the forbidden fruit, sin entered and he died. He didn't fall down immediately, He continued to eat and drink and walk around and talk. Yet **HE DIED LEGALLY**, or we could also say that **death was recorded against Him.** It's the same in the high court when the judge pronounces the death sentence, I read that he traditionally the Judge puts on a black cap, for the very solemn announcement of the sentence. When sentence is passed that person **is reckoned to be dead by law.** They are legally dead yet They may walk back to their cell, even sleep and eat for many months or a long time - **But sentence has already been passed they are condemned.** He cannot continue business, He cannot inherit anything, if there was an election he cannot vote he is considered dead. How does this apply to us to men today- Every **ungodly sinner is already condemned;** The Eternal Judge has put on the black cap and condemned them already. **Oh, is that in the bible?** It can't be that I've been condemned already, don't I have to wait till judgement day.... No, no, that day will be execution of the sentence. **For them who believe not they are condemned already.** *John 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Sentence is passed yet men seem not to care and just continue in all manner of wrong pleasures. Not realising sentence is already passed. If only men would realise this, **sadly they do not realise they are blinded-** it is as if they think the sentence of God is of no effect. but Legal sentence has already been passed. We are legally dead. **yet**

there is mercy there is hope, for it is possible to be shown and to find legal life in the person of Jesus Christ as we shall later see.

What's more we are also spiritually dead. Our hearts are dead, stoney and hard; cold as ice without any warmth. This death entered our conscience, Our imagination our soul everything. Everyone knows when death comes to a person the heart stops, the breath stops, life ends. **This is what happened to Adam Spiritually.** His mind lost the mighty power, and ability to climb into heavenly things to see into glory, he lost his good judgement. He lost the power to clearly judge between good and evil. **Although something remained in the conscience of man, it was tainted.** Every power of his ceased to be morally alive; goodness had been the force behind them, and it was gone. Virtue, holiness and integrity are the life of man and now these were gone ... We know Ephesians 1:2 speaks of man as being dead in sin. Adam was Spiritually dead. Unsaved man loves darkness more than light. *John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* In this state of Spiritual death, no man would choose right, no man would choose God. **But We see Grace at work- We see Hope** *John 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*

How urgent it is that we receive the grace of God in the kindness of Jesus Christ; before we enter into the final state of unsaved man - the state of ETERNAL death. *Let me outline* **How serious this terrible condition is.** When any person dies, they are present before the Lord. **But for the lost it will be something like this.** The books are opened, and sentence is given- **depart from me you cursed into everlasting flames.** Mat 25:41 That lost soul looks up, but there is no hope- that soul looks down, and there is only dread and fear. You see; misery has possessed that soul for ever and forever. There is no way of escape. He looks around, there are no friends, no comforts, their fate is sealed the key is cast into the depths of eternity never to be found again. He longs he may be swallowed up into nothingness, He longs for annihilation – But this sentence is eternal. ‘Oh, what a fool I was’ they will cry, I believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. – **that is man's state without grace** – It is sad beyond measure - But there is such HOPE. next we look at

3) **THE STATE OF GRACE**, which is a description of the converted man who's still living in a fallen world, **Grace works in us overcoming our resistance and**

stubbornness and blindness, By grace we are brought into a state of favour with God - we are endowed with gracious qualities - Our hearts and eyes are opened- it's a change of my mind, a change of my will, a change in the very way I think . What used to be precious to me is no longer precious. *We used to enjoy watching questionable and worldly tv programs –

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

We are born again of the Spirit to **legal life** in Jesus Christ *John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

As we saw earlier, all mankind inherited sin from Adam **we are legally dead** had **already been condemned.** But now we see the grace of Christ that if we believe in and trust in Christ, we have been freed of all charges, royal pardon given, freed from the death sentence because He died for us. Pardon not just because He forgave us - Our sins are pardoned because e Christ died for them. He died in my place so that I don't have to die. Christ suffered full punishment for them. **"There is therefore NOW no condemnation unto us who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."**

When the Jews came out of Egypt the first thing they did was to partake of the Passover – for us this means we partake and get life by feeding upon the flesh and blood of the SON OF GOD living in Him , trusting in Him , believing in His grace and power. *John 6:54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* Imagine a prisoner sitting in a cell condemned to death. And they hear they don't have to die any more, for someone died in their place, someone suffered on their behalf. That is what has happened for us. Christ died on our behalf. The Passover Lamb has been slain and His blood is on our lintels and door posts and the destroying angel can never touch us.

We are so thankful that He sought us while we were lost in sin. That the Gospel is no longer foolishness unto us but rather it is the power of God unto Salvation.

Our wills were damaged would not consider Christ Crucified – But now the Grace and tender mercy of God had enabled us to see He gives us knowledge of His legal Pardon. It is not just a story or analogy; we are condemned to eternal death – It is a reality. If a man was about to be hanged for crimes, receiving a full pardon he

would feel the reality. The relief would flood His soul, 'I've been pardoned from death, I cannot be touched now. I've been set free.' **Friends this is our Lot we have gained legal life in Christ** - We have been given Eternal life, not temporary live we cannot lose it, the sentence cannot be reversed. **THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST.** We were spiritually dead He has given us a new heart. God has placed His hand upon our lives. Our hearts cry out to Him. Our Eyes look unto Him. We believe in Him and trust in Him- Now we will, we desire to be saved. **Who has done this?** Who is it who gives us eternal life. We are out of time- Eternal state of man is the final state of man.

I close with **John 10:28** And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

But Eternal life is given to those who come for it. He is also able to save to the uttermost, **those who come to God through Him...** Hebrews 7:25. Everyone who comes will find that Christ is able to save, **not just a little**, not just to deliver them from a few sins, not just able to keep him in a small trial. Not just to carry him a little way then forsake him, but HE is able to save us to the uttermost extent. unto the uttermost of the length of this trials., to the uttermost depths of our sorrows, unto **the uttermost duration even unto all eternity.** What a saviour there is none on earth or in heaven that can save so completely. and **'him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'** Oh come today you shall find mercy You shall find pardon, forgiveness of all your sins. The sentence of death shall be cancelled, and you shall have eternal life. I can beg you, I can try to convince you, But unless God touches your heart you will make excuse after excuse. **If man had not a fallen heart he would come to Christ the moment he heard the Gospel.** But if you do feel a desire to come, if the Gospel seems to be drawing you, not forcing you, love drawing you, God is working in your heart. If you hear His voice today do not refuse Him Come and be redeemed. He that Comes I will in no wise cast out. If you will not come then go home with this thought – I am of a nature so perverse, so fallen and so damaged that I will not come to Christ. And this wicked nature deserves exactly what it will inherit. I will get what I deserve Eternal death. But there is the kindness and grace of God available. I have not lifted mans nature up I've shown you how damaged our nature is. May God rescue us and save us - AMEN.

