

FREE WILL -- A SLAVE

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"And you will not come to me, that you might have life."

John 5:40

This is one of the great guns of the Arminians, mounted upon the top of their walls and often discharged with terrible noise against the poor Christians called Calvinists. I intend to spike the gun this morning, or, rather, to turn it on the enemy, for it was never theirs. It was never cast at their foundry at all, but was intended to teach the very opposite doctrine to that which they assert.

Usually, when the text is taken, the divisions are: First, that man has a will. Second, that he is entirely free. Third, that men must make themselves will to come to Christ, otherwise they will not be saved. Now, we shall have no such divisions, but we will endeavor to take a more calm look at the text and not, because there happens to be the words 'will' or 'will not' in it, run away with the conclusion that it teaches the doctrine of free-will.

FREE WILL IS SIMPLY RIDICULOUS

It has already been proved beyond all controversy that free-will is nonsense. Freedom cannot belong to will any more than ponderability can belong to electricity. They are altogether different things. Free agency we may believe in, but free-will is simply ridiculous. The will is well known by all to be directed by the understanding, to be moved by motives, to be guided by other parts of the soul, and to be a secondary thing.

Philosophy and religion both discard at once the very thought of free-will. I will go as far as Martin Luther, in that strong assertion of his, where he says, 'If any man does ascribe anything whatever of salvation, even the very least, to the free-will of man, he knows nothing of grace, and he has not learned Jesus Christ aright.' It may seem a harsh sentiment, but he who in his soul believes that man does of his own free-will turn to God cannot have been taught of God, for that is one of the first principles taught us when God begins with us, **that we have neither will nor power, but that he gives both. He is the 'Alpha and Omega' in the salvation of men.**

A SUMMARY

Our four points this morning shall be: First, **that every man is dead**, because it says, 'You will not come unto me that you might have **life**.' Second, **that there is life in Jesus Christ**. 'You will not come unto me that you might have life.' Third, that there is life in Christ Jesus for **every one that comes for it--'You will not come unto me that you might have**

life," implying that all who go will have life. And fourth, the gist of the text lies here, **that no man by nature ever will come** to Christ, for the text says, 'You will **not** come unto me that you might have life.' So far from asserting that men of their own wills ever do such a thing, it boldly and flatly denies it and says, 'You **WILL NOT** come unto me that you might have life.' Why, beloved, I am almost ready to exclaim, Have all free-willers no knowledge that they dare to run in the teeth of inspiration? Have all those that deny the doctrine of grace no sense? Have they so departed from God that they wrest this to prove free-will, whereas the text says, 'You **WILL NOT** come unto me that you might have life?'

NO LIFE IN DEATH

I. First, then, our text implies **THAT MEN BY NATURE ARE DEAD**. No one needs to go after life if he has life in himself. The text speaks very strongly when it says, 'You will not come unto me that you might have life.' Though it says it not in words, yet it does in effect affirm that men need a life more than they have themselves. My hearers, we are all dead unless we have been begotten unto a lively hope.

LEGAL DEATH -- CONDEMNATION

First, we are all of us by nature **legally** dead: 'In the day that you eat thereof, you shall die the death,' said God to Adam. And though Adam did not die in that moment naturally, he died legally--that is to say, death was recorded against him. As soon as, at the Old Bailey, the judge puts on the black cap and pronounces the sentence, the man is reckoned to be dead at law. Though perhaps a month may intervene before he is brought on the scaffold to endure the sentence of the law, yet the law looks upon him as a dead man. It is impossible for him to transact anything. He cannot inherit, he cannot bequeath. He is nothing. He is a dead man. He is shut up in his condemned cell, and he is dead. Ah! and you ungodly sinners who have never had life in Christ, you are alive this morning by reprieve. But do you know that you are legally dead, that God considers you as such, that in the day when your father Adam touched the fruit and when you yourselves did sin, God, the Eternal Judge, put on the black cap and condemned you? You talk mightily of your own standing and goodness and morality. Where is it? Scripture says you are 'condemned already.' You are not to wait to be condemned at the judgment day; then will be the execution of the sentence. 'You are condemned already.' In the moment you sinned, your names were all written in the black book of justice. Everyone was then sentenced by God to death, unless he found a substitute in the person of Christ, for his sins.

What would you think if you were to go into the Old Bailey and see the condemned culprit sitting in his cell, laughing and merry? You would say, 'The man is a fool! He is condemned and is to be executed, and yet how merry he is.' Ah! and how foolish is the worldly man who, while sentence is recorded against him, lies in merriment and mirth! Do you think the sentence of God is of no effect? Do you think that your sin, which is

written with an iron pen on the rocks forever, has no horrors in it? God has said you are condemned already. We ought all to weep if we lay this to our soul--that by nature we have no life in God's sight. We are actually, positively condemned. Death is recorded against us, and we are considered in ourselves now, in God's sight, as much dead as if we were actually cast into hell.

SPIRITUAL DEATH -- A WALKING CORPSE

But besides being legally dead, we are also **spiritually dead**. Not only did the sentence pass in the book, but it passed in the heart. It entered the conscience, it operated on the soul, on the judgment, on the imagination, on everything. 'In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die' was not only fulfilled by the sentence recorded, but by something which took place in Adam. Just as in a certain moment--when this body shall die--the blood stops, the pulse ceases, and the breath no longer comes from the lungs, so in the day that Adam did eat that fruit, his soul died. His imagination lost its mighty power to climb into celestial things and see heaven. His will lost its power to always choose that which is good. His judgment lost all ability to judge between right and wrong decidedly and infallibly, though something was retained in conscience. His memory became tainted, liable to hold evil things and let righteous things glide away. Every power of him ceased as to its moral vitality. Virtue, holiness, integrity were the life of man, and when these departed man became dead. And now every man, so far as spiritual things are concerned, is 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Nor is the soul less dead in a carnal man than the body is when committed to the grave.

I wish I could preach to your hearts concerning this subject. It was bad enough when I described death as having been recorded, but now I speak of it as having actually taken place in your hearts. You are not what you once were. You are not what you were in Adam, not what you were created. Man was made pure and holy. You are not the perfect creatures of which some boast. You are altogether fallen. You have become corrupt and filthy. Oh, listen not to those who tell you of your moral dignity and your mighty elevation in matters of salvation. You are not perfect. That great word 'ruin' is written on your heart, and death is stamped upon your spirit.

Do not conceive that you will be able to stand before God in your morality, for you are nothing but a carcass embalmed in legality, a corpse arrayed in some fine robes but still corrupt in God's sight. And think not that you may by your own might and power make yourself acceptable to God. You are dead! You may array the dead as gloriously as you please, but still it would be a solemn mockery. There lies queen Cleopatra. Put the crown upon her head, deck her in royal robes, let her sit in state. But what a cold chill runs through you when you pass by her. She is fair now, even in her death. But how horrible it is to stand by the side even of a dead queen, celebrated for her majestic beauty! So you may be glorious in your beauty, fair and amiable and lovely. You put the crown of honesty upon your head and wear about you all the garments of uprightness. But unless God has

quicken you, unless the Spirit has had dealings with your soul, you are in God's sight as obnoxious as the chilly corpse is to yourself. You would not choose to live with a corpse sitting at your table. Nor does God love that you should be in his sight. He is angry with you every day, for you are in sin. You are in death. Oh, believe this! Take it to your soul, appropriate it, for it is most true that you are dead, spiritually as well as legally.

ETERNAL DEATH -- HELL

The third kind of death is the consummation of the other two. It is **eternal death**. It is the execution of the legal sentence. It is the consummation of the spiritual death. Eternal death is the death of the soul. It takes place after the body has been laid in the grave, after the soul has departed from it.

I wish I had the words to depict to you what eternal death is. The soul has come before its Maker. The book has been opened. The sentence has been uttered. 'Depart you cursed' has shaken the universe and made the very spheres dim with the frown of the Creator. The soul has departed to the depths where it is to dwell with others in eternal death. Oh, how horrible is its position now. Its bed is a bed of flame, the sights it sees are murdering ones that frighten its spirit, the sounds it hears are shrieks, wails, moans, and groans. All that its body knows is the infliction of miserable pain! It has the possession of unutterable woe, of unmitigated misery. The soul knows nothing of hope of deliverance. It has heard the everlasting key of destiny turning in its awful wards, and it has seen God take that key and hurl it down into the depth of eternity never to be found again. It hopes not, it knows no escape, it thinks not of deliverance. The soul pants for death, but death is too much its foe to be there. It longs that it might be swallowed up in nothingness. When eternity shall have rolled round multitudes of its everlasting cycles, the soul shall still be dead. Forever knows no end.

LIFE IN CHRIST

II. Second, IN CHRIST JESUS THERE IS LIFE, for he says, "You will not come unto me that **you may have life.**" We dare not, and cannot apply in the first place, either to God the Father or to God the Holy Ghost, for spiritual life. The first means whereby we get life is by feeding upon the flesh and blood of the Son of God--living in him, trusting in him, believing in his grace and power.

I will show you that there are three kinds of life in Christ, as there are three kinds of death.

LEGAL LIFE -- NO CONDEMNATION

First there is **legal** life in Christ. Just as every man by nature,

considered in Adam, had a sentence of condemnation passed on him in the moment of Adam's sin, and more especially in the moment of his own first transgression, so I, if I am a believer, and you, if you trust in Christ, have had a legal sentence of acquittal passed on us through what Jesus Christ has done. Oh condemned sinner! You may be sitting now condemned like the prisoner in Newgate. But before this day has passed away, you may be as clear from guilt as the angels above. There is such a thing as legal life in Christ, and, blessed be God! some of us enjoy it. We know our sins are pardoned because Christ suffered punishment for them. We know that we never can be punished ourselves, for Christ suffered in our place. For us there is no hell. In Christ Jesus we are now delivered. 'There is, therefore, NOW no condemnation to us who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.'

Are you legally condemned? Do you feel it? Then, let me tell you that faith in Christ will give you a knowledge of your legal acquittal. It is no fancy that we are condemned for our sins; it is a reality. So it is no fancy that we are acquitted; it too is a reality. A man about to be hanged, if he received a full pardon, would say, 'I have a full pardon, I cannot be touched now.'

SPIRITUAL LIFE -- A CORPSE MADE ALIVE

Second, there is **spiritual life** in Christ Jesus. For the man who is spiritually dead, God has spiritual life for him. There is not a need that is not supplied by Jesus, there is not an emptiness in the heart that Christ cannot fill. We have known the man whose views were carnal, whose lusts were mighty, whose passions were strong, and who suddenly, by irresistible might from heaven, consecrated himself to Christ and became a child of Jesus. Moreover, we ourselves, in our own persons, have felt that there is spiritual life. Well can we remember when we sat in the house of prayer, dead as the very seat on which we sat. We had listened for a long, long time to the sound of the gospel, but no effect followed. Then suddenly, as if our ears had been opened by the fingers of some mighty angel, a sound entered into our heart. We thought we heard Jesus saying, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.' An irresistible hand placed itself on our heart and squeezed a prayer out of it. We never prayed like that before. We cried, 'O God! have mercy upon me, a sinner.' To every sinner, however dead, we say, 'There is life in Christ Jesus.'

ETERNAL LIFE -- NEVER LOST

In the third place, there is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus, for he has said, 'Where I am, there shall my people be.' 'Father, I will that they also, whom thou has given to me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' 'I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish.' Now, any Arminian who would preach from these texts must buy a pair of rubber lips, for he would never be able to speak the whole truth without winding about in a most mysterious manner. Eternal life! Not a life which they are to lose, but eternal life. Oh blessed thought! Our eyes will

sparkle with joy and our souls burn with ecstasy in the thought that my soul will live in blessing and joy for all eternity.

GOD SAVES ALL WHO COME

III. This bring us to the third point: ETERNAL LIFE IS GIVEN TO ALL WHO COME FOR IT. There never was a man who came to Christ for eternal life, for legal life, for spiritual life, who had not already received it, in some sense, and it was manifested to him that he had received it soon after he came. Consider the text, 'He is able to save to the uttermost them that **come** unto him.' Every man who comes to Christ will find that Christ is able to save him--not able to save him a little, to deliver him from a little sin, to keep him from a little trial, to carry him a little way and then drop him, but able to save him to the uttermost extent of his sin, to the uttermost length of his trials, to the uttermost depths of his sorrows, to the uttermost duration of his existence.

ONLY THE CHOSEN WILL COME

Now another text: 'He who comes to me (note that the promises are nearly always to the coming ones), I will by no means cast out.' Every man who comes shall find the door of Christ's house opened, and the door of his heart too. Every man that comes--I say it in the broadest sense--shall find that Christ has mercy for him.

People ask me, 'But suppose a man should come who was not chosen, would he be saved?' You are supposing nonsense. If a man is not chosen, he will never come. When he does come, it is a sure proof that he was chosen. Says another, 'Suppose anyone should go to Christ who had not been called of the Spirit.' That is a supposition you have no right to make, for such a thing cannot happen. I say that every man who comes to Christ shall be saved. I can say that as a Calvinist as plainly as you can say it. I have no narrower gospel than you have, only my gospel is on a solid foundation whereas yours is built upon nothing but sand and rottenness. 'Every man who comes shall be saved, for no man comes to me except the Father draw him.'

NO MAN WILL TO COME

This bring us to the fourth point: BY NATURE NO MAN WILL COME TO CHRIST. The text says, 'You will not come unto me that you might have life.' I assert on Scripture authority, from my text, that you will not come to Christ that you might have life. If I should preach to you forever and borrow the eloquence of Demosthenes or Cicero, you will not come to Christ. I might beg on my knees with tears in my eyes and show you the horrors of hell and the joys of heaven, the sufficiency of Christ and your own lost condition, still none of you would come to Christ of yourselves unless the Spirit that rested on Christ should draw you. It is true of all men in their natural condition that they **will not** come to Christ.

I think I hear another question: 'But could they not come if they liked?' My friend, I am talking about whether they **will**, not whether they **can**. We are talking only about the will, and it is certain that men will not come to Christ that they might have life.

We might prove this from many texts of Scripture, but we will take one parable. You remember the parable where a certain king had a feast for his son and bade a great number to come? The oxen and fatlings were killed, and he sent his messengers bidding many to the supper. Did they go to the feast? No, but they all with one accord began to make excuses. One said he had married a wife and therefore could not come. Could he not have brought her with him? Another had bought a yoke of oxen and wished to test them. The feast was at night. Was he planning to test them in the dark? Well, the king was determined to have the feast, so he said, 'Go into the highways and hedges and **compel** them to come in,' for even the ragged fellows in the hedges would never have come unless they were compelled.

NO 'FREE WILL' PRAYERS

You have heard a great many Arminian sermons, I day say, but you never heard an Arminian prayer. An Arminian on his knees would pray like a Calvinist, for he cannot pray about free will; there is no room for it. Fancy him praying the following: *'Lord, I thank you that I am not like those poor presumptuous Calvinists. I was born with a glorious free will. I was born with power by which I can turn to you of myself. I have improved my grace. If everybody had done the same with their grace that I have done with mine, they might all have been saved. Lord, I know you do not make us willing if we are not willing ourselves. You give grace to everybody. Some do not improve it, but I do. There are many that will go to hell who had as good a chance and were as much blessed as I was. It was not your grace that made us to differ. I know it did a great deal, but it was I who made the difference. I made use of what was given to me and others did not. That is the difference between me and them.'*

WHY NONE COME

Now, I must tell you the reasons why men will not come to Christ. First, **no man by nature thinks he needs Christ**. Man conceives that he has a robe of righteousness of his own. He is well-dressed, not naked; he needs no grace to purify him. No man knows his need until God shows it to him, and until the Holy Spirit reveals the necessity of pardon, no man will seek pardon. A doctor may have a good practice, but nobody will buy his medicines until he feels he needs them.

The next reason is, **men do not like Christ's way of saving them**. One says, 'I do not like it because he makes me holy. I cannot drink or swear if he saves me.' Another does not like it because the 'gate of heaven' is not quite high enough for his head, and he does not like stooping. That is the chief reason you will not come to Christ, because you cannot get to him

with your heads straight up in the air. Another does not like it to be grace from first to last. 'Oh!' he says, 'If I might have a little honor.' Ah, proud sinners, you **will not** come to Christ. Ah, ignorant sinners, you **will not** come to Christ, because you know nothing of him. And that is the third reason. **Men do not know his worth**, for if they did, they would come to him. Why did not sailors go to America before Columbus went? Because they did not believe there was an America. Columbus had faith, therefore he went. He who has faith in Christ goes to him. But you don't know Jesus. You don't realized how applicable his blood is to a sinner, how great is his atonement and how all-sufficient his merits. Therefore, you will not come to him.

NO EXCUSE

My last thought is a solemn one. I have preached that you will not come. But some will say, 'It is their sin that they do not come.' It is so. You will not come, but then your will is a sinful will. It is not part of man's original nature, but belongs to his **fallen** nature. It is sin that has brought you into this condition that you will not come. If you had not fallen, you would come to Christ the moment he was preached to you. But you do not come because of your sinfulness and crime. We do not preach this doctrine to excuse you, but to humble you. The possession of a sinful nature is my fault as well as my terrible calamity.

Go home with this thought: 'I am by nature so perverse that I will not come to Christ, and that wicked perversity of my nature is my sin. I deserve to be sent to hell for it.' And if the thought does not humble you, the Spirit using it, no other can. God humble us all. Amen.