

Can Man Choose Salvation?

Exploring the Depths of Grace and Redemption

"Can man, in his natural state, choose salvation? This is no mere academic query, my friends. It is a question that strikes at the very heart of our understanding of God, grace, and humanity itself. So, let us journey together, with minds alert and spirits eager, to examine what Scripture has to say about man's moral ability, the sovereignty of God, and the miraculous nature of salvation.

I. The Condition of Man: Spiritually Dead and Depraved

Now, let us begin at the beginning—man's condition. Scripture does not mince words on this matter. Humanity is not merely spiritually unwell or slightly lost. No, the Bible declares us dead in sin.

Consider Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2:14:

"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."

Note carefully the phrase "not able." Paul speaks not of reluctance but of utter incapacity. The natural man, unregenerate and lost in sin, finds spiritual truths absurd. And why? Because understanding them requires the work of the Holy Spirit. Without this divine illumination, the human mind remains clouded, darkened, and blind to the brilliance of the gospel.

And Paul sharpens this truth in Romans 8:7-8:

"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Observe the depth of our predicament. This is not mere resistance to God—it is outright hostility. And Paul uses that sobering phrase again: "it cannot." This is the doctrine of total depravity, my friends. Sin touches every part of our being—our thoughts, our wills, our desires. As the Westminster Confession so aptly puts it:

"Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation."

You see, the fall did not surprise God. From eternity past, He knew Adam would sin, and all creation would bear the weight of that rebellion. And some might ask, "Why would a loving God create humanity knowing this?" Ah, but the answer is profoundly glorious: that His mercy might shine most brightly against the backdrop of our sin and guilt.

II. The Call of Christ: Irresistible and Sovereign

Now, let us hear the words of Christ Himself, in John 6:44:

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."

Did you hear that? "No one can." This is a universal statement of inability. Jesus does not say that man may not come, as though permission were denied. He says man cannot come, as though the ability itself were absent. The natural man is powerless to approach Christ.

But what does it mean for the Father to "draw" someone? Some imagine this as a gentle wooing, a soft beckoning. But the word Jesus uses, *helkō*, has a much stronger meaning. It is the same term used in James 2:6, where the rich "drag" the poor into court, and in Acts 16:19, where Paul and Silas are "dragged" into the marketplace. This is not passive persuasion. It is an active, compelling force.

Even when applied to drawing water from a well, the word implies effort and force. One does not merely invite the water to rise; one compels it upward. In the same way, God's drawing is an act of sovereign grace, irresistibly bringing His chosen ones to Himself.

III. The Necessity of Regeneration: Life Before Faith

And now we turn to the necessity of regeneration. In John 3:3, Jesus tells Nicodemus:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Regeneration—this new birth—is not a human achievement. It is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus clarifies further in John 3:5:

"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

And Paul echoes this in Ephesians 2:1-5:

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved."

A dead man cannot revive himself, my friends. He requires the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. This is why regeneration must precede faith. Without the Spirit's intervention, man remains spiritually lifeless, unable to respond to God.

IV. Faith as a Gift: Grace Alone, Not Works

And what of faith? Paul answers this in Ephesians 2:8-9:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Faith, you see, is not something we conjure up from within. It is a gift, graciously given by God. As the Westminster Confession states:

"Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the gift of God."

And because it is a gift, salvation is entirely by grace. There is no room for human boasting, as Paul reminds us in Romans 3:27:

"Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded."

V. The Sovereign Plan of God: Predestined for Glory

Finally, we come to the sovereign plan of God, beautifully laid out in Romans 8:30:

"And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

This "Golden Chain of Redemption" reveals that salvation is entirely the work of God, from predestination to glorification. And as Philippians 1:6 assures us:

"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

VI. The Response of the Redeemed: Worship and Wonder

And how should we respond to such grace? With worship, of course! 1 John 4:19 declares:

"We love because he first loved us."

Let this truth humble us, convict us, and compel us to adore the God who saves.

Conclusion: Christ Alone is Our Hope

So, can man choose salvation? The answer, according to Scripture, is clear: no. Left to ourselves, we are hopeless. But God, in His infinite mercy, has done what we could never do. He draws us, regenerates us, grants us faith, and secures us in His love.

Let us rest in this promise from Philippians 2:12-13:

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

Surrender to His mercy. Trust in Christ. For He alone is mighty to save."