

The Simple Truth Series # 3

Free-will



When the Lord created us, He didn't put us in a cage, blindfold us, cover our mouth, tie our hands, or bind our feet. He let us go free, completely free. We can go anywhere we want, do anything we want, and say anything we want, and He will not stop us, because, He will never interfere with our Free-will.

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'And expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.' Acts 18:26.

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1.

The freedom to choose

When the Lord created us, He didn't put us in a cage, blindfold us, cover our mouth, tie our hands, or bind our feet. He let us go free, completely free. We can go anywhere we want, do anything we want, and say anything we want, and He will not stop us; because, He will never interfere with our Free-will.

The Oxford dictionary defines Free-will as, 'The power of acting without the constraint of necessity, or fate. The ability to act at one's own discretion.' A constraint is something that hinders, or stops us, from doing something we would do otherwise. So, having Free-will, is being able to act free from necessity, or fate being involved in our decisions.

2.

Constrained by necessity

To act *with* necessity being involved, is to be the bus driver. He's driving the route 36 bus, which goes down Main Street. It's all quite boring, office buildings and industrial sites. But, if he turns right at the roundabout, he can go down Wild Street, that's his favourite place. It's all bush, and it's steep, and there's the biggest waterfall around; and suicide bluffs, and the swimming hole that he swam in every weekend as a boy. That place is so full of memories. But he doesn't go down Wild Street, as much as he'd like to, because necessity tells him, there are people on Route 36 who are waiting to be taken to work, and people taking the transfer to the airport. So, he gives up his Free-will for the necessity of seeing that his bus runs to the timetable.

He could go down Wild Street if he chose to; the steering wheel, yes, it *will* turn that way. But he chooses for necessities sake, to keep his job, and see that everyone else get to their appointments on time. He will go down Wild Street another time, maybe on Saturday, but not today, because, others are counting on him. We all have to do that throughout our lives in a million different ways, for necessities sake, it's necessary.

3.

Acting without fate being involved

Then we have the power of acting *without* the constraint of fate. That's without fate being involved. I decide to go to town one day, and I think "I'll get chauffeured," so I catch a bus. Someone else gets on the bus behind me, and sits opposite me. We turn, to look at each other, and it's a girl. I don't know her, but her name is Mary. I look her up and down, and think "She's got beautiful ...shoes," and she looks me up and down. We get to town, and go our separate ways.

I get a coffee at Wendy's coffee bar later on, and someone else orders one, and sits nearby. We turn to look at each other, and it's the girl with the beautiful shoes. We smile at one another, get our coffees, and leave. At lunch time, I go to Frank's Burger Bar, order a burger, and sit down to wait. Someone else orders one, and sits down too. We turn to look at each other, and it's Mary again. My heart is beating like a drum, but I say to her "I think we were *fated* to meet, we've met three times today." She looks me up and down, but something inside her says "He's a rascal, keep away from him." So, she replies, "No, I think we were *doomed* to meet." And so, we get our burgers, and leave, and I never see her again.

It was Free-will that caused that. We both *chose* to do the *same* thing, at the *same* time, in the *same* place. That isn't fate, it's coincidence. It's like two people arriving at a phone box at the same time. They both try to push in. "I was here first," says number one. "I was," asserts number two. "I was," insists number one. "No! I was!" demands number two. That's no different than me and Mary, except there are no hearts and flowers, and dizzy feelings, just a lot of swearing and bad tempers.

4.

Constrained by fate

But, to act *with* fate being involved, means the event was fore-ordained to happen. The Lord knew that Mary and myself could get on well together, so, He decides to help us meet that day. He also knows it could be beautiful, or it could be a fizzer. We might just admire each other from a distance, and both be too nervous to say anything to the other. But, He decides to open the door between us, by having us both arrive at

the Bus stop, the Coffee shop, and the Burger Bar at the same time.

At the Burger Bar, I get courage up and say to her “I think we were fated to meet, we've met three times today.” And I feel, that talking to this complete stranger, is the bravest thing I’ve ever done in my whole life, and I feel like Sir Lancelot. She looks at me all starry eyed, and replies, “Yes, I do too.” And she holds her hand out, and says, “I'm Mary.” So, we shake hands, and I say “I’m um? um?” But, my heart’s beating so hard, that my mind has gone blank, and I can’t even remember my own name. But Mary doesn’t care that I’m acting like the village idiot, because she thinks I’m Sir Lancelot too. So, we ride off, (in the bus), into the sunset, and live happily ever after.

She does find out that I’m not really Sir Lancelot, of course, I was just the village idiot, dressed up as Sir Lancelot to nail a damsel. But she doesn’t care, because I’m *her* Sir Lancelot; and the Lord was right, we do get on perfectly together. But even though the Lord chose for us to meet, both of us have the choice to say yes, or no. Free-will gives us that choice. And, having Free-will means nothing is set in concrete. It’s like the Pirate’s code, ‘It’s more guidelines, than actual rules.’

5.

Free-will

That wasn’t Free-will, because our definition of Free-will means, ‘The ability to act at our own discretion.’ Meaning without anything else causing the outcome. We can *decide* the outcome. When the Lord said free, He meant free. He doesn’t set us free, then stop us when we go to do something He doesn't approve of. He lets us sin. He lets us make mistakes. He lets us make wrong choices. But our choices do have consequences, and my Free-will cannot trample on your Free-will, except to my own hurt.

6.

Restraining Free-will

When we put restraints on people, to stop them using their Free-will, things go wrong, because it dooms us to slavery. A lady from Malaysia told me the children there will never touch anything in a shop, and never speak unless spoken to. We have a word

that was given to us in the 17th century via the Portuguese. 'Amauco,' from the Malay word 'Amok.' It's a noun, denoting a Malay in a homicidal frenzy. These people have been controlled, and denied Free-will for so long, that inside a desire is festering, to break out and do something without the world's permission. Something, that is against everything they've ever been allowed to do. Eventually, they 'run amok.' Go on a homicidal rampage. They kill their family, then kill others. Why? Because, we weren't made to be controlled like that.

When we put restraints on others, it takes away their Free-will. We weren't made to be told "This is how you dress," and "This is what you can do." The only people who can be told that are slaves, and prisoners, because, they have lost their freedom. But God didn't make slaves, He made free men, and free women, with the freedom to make all their own choices. The Lord gave us Free-will so we *wouldn't* conform. He doesn't want conformity, He wants individuals, because that's how He created us, and that's how He sees each one of us.

There will always be people around who will want to control others, they're called bullies. And there will always be people who will feel they can't do something, because others won't approve. That's the herd mentality. But neither is the Lord's Will. We do need guidelines for the sake of order and decency, but those guidelines are only there for those who would impinge on the rights of others.

7.

Free, but not really free

Unfortunately, most Christians have no idea what Free-will really is. They see the Lord as a fairy godmother, minus the frilly dress, and magic wand, and if you ask for anything she will do it. But, when something goes wrong, someone dies before their time, a marriage breaks up, or a calamity happens, the fairy godmother gets the blame. "You were supposed to stop that from happening!" Really? They never take into account the fact that there are other things that affect us in this life, besides our fairy godmother.

Firstly, there's the Fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord said, "*Cursed is the ground for your sake. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth.*" (Genesis 3:17). So, when an unbeliever plants lettuce seed in their garden, lettuces grow, but weeds also grow, thorns and thistles, because of the curse. Then that unbeliever becomes a Christian, and he plants lettuce seed again. And lettuces grow, but so do weeds, thorns and thistles, because the ground is still cursed, and it still affects us, even as Christians.

The second thing that affects us, (and the most important one), is Satan. You can't have an effect without a cause. There is evil in the world, because there is an evil one. The Lord called him "*the enemy*." He said, the enemy comes to kill, to steal, and to destroy, so he isn't going to make life pleasant for any of us. The Christian life isn't a playground, it's a battleground. Satan influences people to do the most monstrously evil things, but he isn't guilty of a lot that he is charged with. Having the knowledge of good and evil, makes us able to *do* good or evil. We have the choice, and, sometimes good people do bad things for a wrong reason. Free-will gives us the freedom to do that.

8.

The price of freedom

The third thing that affects us, is Free-will. Because we have the freedom to go anywhere we want to; we can be in the wrong place at the wrong time, and be hit by a bolt of lightning, or flattened by a falling rock, or drive around a corner and be killed by a drunk driver on the wrong side of the road. Having Free-will means that accidents happen.

It also means, that I can treat my body like a rubbish bin, and live on unhealthy food, until it gets to the point where I am so unhealthy, that my body cannot function properly any longer, and I have a heart attack, or a stroke, and die before my time. Why didn't the fairy godmother stop me from eating like that? Because, she gave me the freedom to choose what I eat, and I chose. We can also live on a beach, and be washed away by a tsunami. Or, live on a fault line, and be crushed by our house, when it collapses during an earthquake.

9.

Making choices

I don't believe any one of us would want the Lord to be a fairy godmother, stopping everything bad from happening to us, and only allowing good things. Because she wouldn't only stop calamities, she would also keep us all safe, and that would take the fun out of life. Most of us thrive on adventure, adrenaline rushes, danger, risk taking, exhilaration, recklessness, and living life on the edge. So, we would look outside in the

morning, and there's a clear blue sky, with a hint of fun on the wind. So, off we go, driving, with the wind whistling through our hair. 60. 70. 80. 90. 99. Then, "Tut, tut!" We look up, and the fairy godmother is waving her finger at us. "Slow down!" "But l...?" "But nothing! stay below 100." "But I'm just getting warmed up?" "Slow down or else!" And my enthusiasm drops with my speed. But that's what our fairy godmother would do, to keep us safe.

And our Sister would look out on the same glorious morning, and exclaim, "Oh, what a beautiful day! I'm going to the beach." She's so excited, imagining her feet sinking into the warm, soft, sand, as she steps out the front door. But, "Tut! Tut!" The fairy godmother up above is wagging her finger, "No! No! No!" "what?" "You've got housework to do!" "But? I'll do it later." "You'll do it now!" "But...?" "Do your chores first, then you can go and play!"

10.

Given the freedom to choose

Is that what we really want? Life doesn't have to be boring. *'God gives us richly all things to enjoy.'* (1 Timothy 6:17). We have Free-will, so we can leave the house work, and go to the beach today. We can go 100, 150, or 200 kph, and the Lord will not stop us, not even when we swerve, and that power pole seems to come rushing at our car, and we're 'kaput.' We do like to live life safely, but who created stormy seas, rugged mountains, sharks, tigers, speed, and thrills. The Author of our lives, and Creator of our world, Jesus Christ.

When we become Christians, the Lord doesn't take away our Free-will, and shackle us, and He doesn't leave us alone to muddle-on-through, the best we can, being subject to chance, and the wrong choices of others. He gave us the best He could. Himself. The Spirit of God within each of us. And He said, "Hey buddy, this world is a minefield! But I'm going to order your footsteps, and keep you safe. Just walk where I lead, and I will protect you." When we can reply, "Not my will, but Yours be done," and follow Him faithfully, we will be kept safe. He knows the future, we don't.

He won't stop us getting sick, but He does promise us healing. He won't stop us walking away, but His still small Voice will always call to us. Disasters will happen, but He will go through them with us. He will guide us through the storm, and the valley of the shadow of death, because we chose Him.

11.

The ultimate choice

Why did the Lord give us Free-will? Because at some time in our lives, He would knock on the door, between His world and ours, and ask each one of us to “Come follow Me.” There are no constraints, or demands. It’s a choice we can respond to, or ignore. Free-will gives us that choice, and it’s a choice each one of us must make for ourselves. So, choose wisely.

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Ed.D.