

# **The Relation of the Nature and the Will**

*By Jesse Morrell*

**The Nature:** The natural tendency, bias, or influence of the flesh towards a certain direction or towards a certain end.

**The Will:** A faculty within man to determine his own choices, to make his own decisions, to choose his own end.

Much confusion arises in the theological realm when a confusion of the relation between the nature and the will exists. Often, there is an assumption made regarding the relation of the nature and the will. But theology is too serious for assumptions. We must not merely ask what man's nature is and what man's will is, but what is the relation between the two?

**I propose to answer the following questions:**

1. What are the existing views of the relation of nature and will?
2. What is inevitably implied in both views?
3. Which relation between these two does the bible support?
4. Objections Answered

**1. What are the existing views?**

## **- THE CAUSATION VIEW**

One view is that the relation between man's nature and man's will is that of causation or determination. That is, if man's nature is biased towards sin, man's will would be caused or forced to choose sin. Man's will is not merely influenced by his nature, according to this view, but man's will is caused and determined by his nature.

In this view, the will is but the servant or slave of the nature, not being free or independent.

## **- THE INFLUENCE VIEW**

The other view is that the relation between man's nature and man's will is that of influence. That is, if man's nature is biased towards sin, man's will could be influenced to commit sin, but not caused to commit sin. Man's will is not determined or caused by his nature but is influenced by his nature.

In this view, the will is independent and free, not being the servant or slave of the nature.

## **2. What is inevitably implied in both views?**

For the sake of argument, let's assume each position to see its contrary implication.

### **- THE CAUSATION VIEW**

#### **If this were true:**

**A.** A sinful nature would force a man's will to choose sin, seeing that the will is the slave of the nature, being incapable of willing anything other than the demands of the nature.

**B.** This would imply that if a being had a good nature, or a nature biased towards the good, he would be incapable of willing or doing that which is sinful. His will would be determined by his nature, thus his good nature would render him impossible of sinning.

Very simply, if a sinful nature means the will is incapable of doing good, a good nature means the will is incapable of doing evil.

### **- THE INFLUENCE VIEW**

#### **If this were true:**

**A.** Man's will would be free to obey even if his nature influenced him to commit sin. Man's will would be capable of willing obedience despite his nature's demand for disobedience.

**B.** This would imply that a man's will would be free to disobey even if his nature influenced him to obey. Man's will would be capable of disobedience despite his nature's demand for obedience.

Very simply, whether man had a good nature or a sinful nature, man's will could still either obey or disobey the demands of his nature.

## **3. Which relation between these two does the bible support?**

The proper view of the relation between nature and will is the scriptural view. The scriptures are the only court of competent jurisdiction, being the unquestionable and final authority on all matters theologically.

If it can be shown anywhere within the scriptures, that there has been at least one single case where the will has gone contrary to the influence of the nature, the causation view is seen to be entirely false. Only one single scriptural instance is needed to show that the

nature does not force, cause or determine the will. But there is more than one instance of this in scripture; there are multiple instances of this in scripture.

Observe,

**A.** God created Heaven and earth, angels and man, and declared all of it to be "good". (Genesis 1:31)

**B.** Mankind especially was good because it was made in the image of God. (Genesis 1:26)

**C.** Despite their good nature, Adam and Eve sinned against God. (Genesis 3:6)

**D.** Despite their good nature, Lucifer and many other angels sinned against God. (Isaiah 14:12-16)

All theological camps, those who hold to the causation view and those who hold to the influence view, unite and agree as to the original condition of mankind, namely, that it was completely good. The Augustinians, the Pelagians, the Semi-Pelagians, the Calvinists, the Armenians, the Wesleyans and the Finneyites all concur that man (Adam and Eve) was not created by the hands of God as inherently evil, but that man (Adam and Eve) came from the hands of God originally good.

Cornelius Van Til, a late professor of Calvinism at Westminster Theological Seminar with a Ph.D. from Princeton writes, "If God does exist as man's Creator, it is as we have seen impossible that evil should be inherent to the temporal universe. If God exists, man himself must have brought in sin by an act of willful transgression." He goes on to say that "a denial of man's responsibility for sin" is to make "God responsible for sin." Even John Calvin wrote that there was no "disturbance" in the nature of man as he came forth from the hands of God, but that sin originated with the will of man.

Very simply put, God did not make man inherently evil in his nature, but evil came into existence because of the will of man, and to deny this is to make God the author of sin. Augustine, Pelagius, Arminius, Finney, and Wesley, would all give a hardy amen to Calvin and Van Til.

Adam was not created with a sinful nature, seeing that he was made in God's image and declared by God to be "good". Neither did Adam have any physical depravity that influenced him on the inside to be biased towards sin. Adam's nature was good, his flesh was good, his mind was good, and everything about him was good, seeing that God created with His hands nothing that wasn't good.

Yet, even with a good nature, and a good flesh, and a good mind, Adam sinned.

Eve was not created with a sinful nature, seeing that she too was made in the image of God. Eve did not have any physical depravity that influenced her on the inside to be

biased towards sin. Eve's nature was good, her flesh was good, her mind was good, and everything about her was good, seeing that God created nothing with His hands that wasn't good.

Yet, even with a good nature, a good flesh, a good mind, Eve sinned.

Lucifer, the arch-angel, was not created with a sinful nature. Lucifer did not have any sort of physical depravity that influenced him or biased him towards sin, seeing that angels are spirits and not made of flesh. Lucifer's nature was good; in fact, everything about him was good, seeing that God creates nothing with His hands that isn't good.

Yet, even with a good nature, and no flesh to influence him to sin, Lucifer sinned.

Not a single angel ever created by the hands of God was created evil, seeing God only creates that which is good.

Yet, even being made good by the hands of God, many of the angels sinned by following Lucifer.

### **WHAT THEN IS THE CAUSE OF SIN?**

In Genesis we scripturally see that the will has gone contrary to the nature. Adams will, Eves will, Lucifer's will, and many of the angels, went entirely contrary to their nature in their will. This is not one single instance, but multiple instances where the will has acted contrary and against the nature.

If nature was a sure cause or determiner of the will, the fall of Adam, Eve, Lucifer, and many of the angels would not have occurred at all to begin with, seeing that they had good natures. But their good nature did not force them to do good, nor forced them to sin, rather, it influenced them to do good and not to sin, and yet, despite the demands of their nature, they sinned anyway.

A good nature does not render the will incapable of evil, and a bad nature does not render the will incapable of good. Causation has never been the relation between the will and the nature, causation is not the relation between the will and the nature, and so the nature has never been nor never is responsible for the will of man.

If original sin, or a sinful nature, or total depravity, rendered man's will incapable of rejecting sin and choosing good, then original holiness, a good nature, total perfection (as was the agreed original condition of Adam, Even, Lucifer, and all the angels), then that would have rendered their will incapable of choosing sin and rejecting what was good. If the causation view is correct, then the good are incapable of doing evil, and the evil are incapable of doing good. This is absurd, unscriptural, and soul destroying.

We can clearly see from the testimony of scripture, the story of Adam, Eve, Lucifer, and the angels, that it is not the case that the relation between nature and will is that of

causation, but that it is a relation of influence. This is crystal clear. The causation view is entirely and totally incompatible and irreconcilable with the story of the fall of Adam, Eve, Lucifer, and the angels.

Since the nature is an influence, and not a causation, and the will is free to do contrary to the demands of the nature or free to conform to the demands of the nature, we can see why Adam, Eve, Lucifer, and many of the angels sinned - because their will was selfish. But they did not sin because their nature was sinful or even biased towards sin. Sin is always caused by a sinful will, and while it may be influenced by a sinful nature, sin is never caused by a sinful nature.

The sole determiner of any moral agent's actions and intentions is his own will, though his nature (either good or evil) is only an influence. A moral agent then can and does make decisions completely independent of his nature, but never independently of his will.

**The choice to sin is entirely a choice of the will, not a necessity of the nature:**

\*The fountain of sin has always been the will or heart of man, in which Christ said out of which proceeded all sin. (Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21).

\* The heart, or will, of man is capable of being desperately wicked. (Jeremiah 17:9)

\*The heart, or will, of man is capable of keeping God's commands and being perfect. (1 King 8:61; 1 King 15:14; 2 King 20:3; 1 Chronicles 29:9; 2 Chronicles 19:9; Isaiah 38:3)

\*Man must obey the gospel out of the heart, that is, with his will, in order to be saved. (Romans 6:17)

\*Christ rebuked unrepentant sinners, not because they were not capable of repenting, but because they did not "want" to repent and come to Him. (Matthew 22:3; John 5:40).

\*Man's will is capable of rejecting God's will, even rejecting God's will for their salvation. (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34)

\*From the perversion of Sodom and Gomorrah to the modern day Sodomite parades, we clearly see that man's will can, has and sometimes still does go "against nature". (Romans 1:26)

Man's sin and man's damnation, though both entirely avoidable, is entirely his own fault. Man cannot blame nature for what was his own doing. No man is the victim of his own sin, being forced to commit it by necessity, but each man is a criminal for his sin, being the originator of it.

We can see then that mankind needs Jesus Christ, not because we cannot obey God, but because we haven't obeyed God. If man couldn't obey God, man wouldn't need Jesus, because man would have no guilt. But because man can obey, but hasn't obeyed, man has

guilt, and therefore needs Christ.

No moral agent has ever sinned out of the necessity of his nature. For such is impossible. But a moral agent can only disobey out of the heart, that is, out of the will. And no moral agent ever obeyed out of necessity of his nature. For such is impossible. A moral agent can only obey out of the heart, that is, out of the will. There is no virtue in necessity, no personal deserve of personal blame or deserve of personal reward for what was not a willful choice, but for what was done out of necessity. Choices of the will are the only kind of personal choices. Choices out of necessity are not choices at all. It is impossible for virtue to consist in doing what you cannot but do, and it's impossible for guilt to consist in doing what you couldn't help but to do. Virtue must consist of willful obedience to the revealed Law of God. Nothing else can constitute virtue. And disobedience must consist in willful rebellion to the revealed Law of God. Nothing else can constitute as disobedience.

Justin Martyr of the First Century Church said, "Unless the human race has the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions, whatever kind they be." He went on to say, "for not like other things, as trees and quadrupeds, which cannot act by choice, did God make man: for neither would he be worthy of reward or praise did he not himself choose the good but were created for this end; nor, if he were evil, would he be worthy of punishment, not being evil of himself, but being able to do nothing else than what he was made."

Without the ability to freely choose moral decisions, there can be no personal moral character. Without the ability to decide moral choices, there can be neither a holy nor a sinful character. And without free choice there can be no responsibility and no accountability, no personal deserve of guilt and punishment and no personal deserve of praise and reward. Man could not commit sin if it were not his choice that was responsible. And it could not be a choice at all had it been forced, or had he not been able to choose the contrary. Forced disobedience is not disobedience at all, and forced obedience is not obedience at all. Such are oxy-morons, contradictions in terms.

So men are not dictated by their nature, but rather influenced by their nature. Men sin only when it is in their will to do so. And men obey only when it is in their will to do so. Therefore each man is entirely responsible of all of his moral actions, seeing it was their will that caused their moral actions and not necessity that caused their moral actions, thus leaving all men without any excuse for sin and disobedience.

Failure to recognize that the will can act contrary to the demands and dictates of the nature requires either a lack of understanding of the fall of Adam, Eve, and angels, or is a flat out denial of the fall of Adam, Eve, and angels.

### **CONSISTENT OR PRE-COMMITTED?**

There are some who will still hold to the causation relation view because their pre-committed theological system requires it; however they must be inconsistent if they agree

that:

1. In the beginning God created *all things* good.
2. Therefore Adam, Eve and Lucifer had good natures.
3. But Adam, Eve, and Lucifer sinned anyways

To hold to the causation view, one must deny one of these scriptural points. The influence view alone is consistent with these scriptural points. But there is no scriptural reason to believe that the relation between the will and the nature is that of causation. It simply gives theological convenience to certain theological systems, but is not founded on a single scripture, it is rather simply assumed as a presupposition.

Genesis clearly shows that a good nature does not cause obedience, and likewise, a sinful nature cannot cause disobedience. However, both a good nature and a sinful nature can be an influence, inclining towards the good or inclining towards the evil, but never causing it. The *nature* is but an *influence* and the *will* is the *cause*. Therefore both sin and obedience are possible to all men, whether their natures are good or evil. And God requires holiness and obedience from all, regardless of their nature, because they are completely capable in their will.

**There are other questions I'd like to answer in the future, such as:**

What is the condition every man is born with?

What is the practical result of the wrong view regarding the relation between will and nature?

What is the practical result of the right view regarding relation between will and nature?

How does the proper view of relation affect our view of God, His nature, His will, and His holiness?

How does the proper view of relation affect our view of man, his nature, his will, and his sin?

How does the proper view of relation affect our view of eternity in Heaven with a glorified body?

And most importantly, how does the proper view of relation affect the perspective and presentation of the gospel?

But as of now, the foundational argument of the nature's influence, but not causation, will suffice. If one can grasp a proper understanding of this relation, it lays a proper foundation for a good understanding of other theological doctrines. But if one does not grasp a proper understanding of this relation, a soul-destroying theology will result.

## OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

### 1. Does the bible say that a sinner is not capable of obeying God?

Often, the scripture used to say sinners cannot obey God is: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” (Romans 8:7) But the previous verse explains what being carnally minded is, “For they that are [walk] after the flesh do **mind the things of the flesh.**” (Romans 8:5). Very simply, those who walk after the flesh mind the things of the flesh, and to mind the things of the flesh is to be carnally minded. Just as to be spiritually minded is to mind the things of the Spirit, as being Heavenly minded is minding the things of Heaven.

The scriptures go on to say, “so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Romans 8:8)

This verse is not saying that moral obligation does not extend to the mind, or that the carnal mind is some how exempt from the law. We certainly know that “to be carnally minded is death” and that “the carnal mind is enmity against God”. The scriptures are not saying by “are not subject to” that the carnal mind is not disobeying the law because it is not under obligation to the law, but rather that the carnal mind is very simply not being controlled by the law. Simply, it’s clearly saying that the carnal mind is in disobedience to God, and therefore cannot please God.

We see this scripture must be properly understood as saying that the carnal mind does not please God (is not subjected to the law) and that the carnal mind cannot please God (neither indeed can be), that is, as long as it’s carnal, so long as it “minds the things of the flesh”. A sinner does not please God; neither can please God, so long as he’s a sinner, walking according to the flesh. If the carnality is forsaken, the disobedience repented of, a sinner can please God. If he exercises faith and repentance and is reconciled through the cross, then he actually does please God. But so long as the mind is used for carnality, and so long as a sinner chooses sin, they do not, and they cannot, please God, seeing that God can never be pleased with carnality and sin.

It also should be noted that 1 John 3:9 teaches that “whosoever is born of God cannot commit sin”. “Cannot” is a reflection of their will, not their ability. When Joseph was tempted with adultery and he cried out, “how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God” (Genesis 39:9) this was not a reflection upon his ability but upon his will. His ability was capable of committing adultery, but his will was not capable of committing adultery. Likewise, sinners are capable in their ability of obeying, but not willing in their heart. And saints are capable in their ability to disobey, but are not willing in their heart.

Those who are “born again” cannot sin while they are walking in “newness of life”. But if they forsake the newness of life, they commit sin. And those who are carnal cannot please God while they are walking in carnality. But if they forsake the carnality and walk

in obedience, then they please God.

But if we interpret “cannot” in regards to sinners as lack of ability; we would have to say “cannot” in regards to saints as lack of ability, or else we become theologically biased in our interpretation. But if we interpret “cannot” in regards to ability, we would be concluding that sinners cannot obey God and saints cannot disobey God. But this is contrary to the whole of the bible, logic, and experience.

## **2. Doesn't the bible say God created evil?**

"That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." -- Isaiah 45:6-7

We know for certain that all that God created in the seven days of creation were “good” and that God looked upon all of it and said that it was “very good”. Nothing evil was created by God during those seven days of creation.

However, the bible does speak of an “evil” God has and does create. But this evil does not consist as immorality. That would make God a sinner. God does not create or tempt man with what evil that He Himself creates. That would make God a hypocrite. The evil God creates does not consist in maliciousness, for that would be contrary to the benevolent nature of God. God is love. God did not originate the existence of immorality. God does not tempt man with sin. God is light and in Him is no darkness.

The “evil” created here is not contrasted with any sort of morality. Rather, the “evil” created here is contrasted with “peace”. The “evil” created by God is not the opposite of morality, but it is the opposite of peace.

Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?" Amos 3:6

This evil could also be translated “calamity”. God created “evil” is identical with God created “calamity”. When Nineveh repented of their wickedness, God repented of the “evil” He was going to bring upon the city. (Jonah 3:10). The evil God was going to bring upon the city was not immorality, but calamity.

This evil would not constitute the immoral choices of man's will, but rather the punishment of man's immorality. Noah's flood was God's punishment for the heart of man, the will of man, being intent on evil continually. Noah's flood would be considered a calamity, or an evil, but not in the sense that it's immoral, for it was a moral act of The Moral Governor, but in the sense that it was destruction, calamity, and not peace.

Judgment Day is considered “the great and terrible day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31) a day that is “darkness, and not light” (Amos 5:18). But Judgment Day will be just and all punishments given will be deserved. So it is not “evil” or “darkness” in the sense that it's

immoral or unjust, but strictly in the sense that it is destructive, miserable, and will give no peace to the wicked.

Evils like the flood and darkness like Judgment Day come because of the loving heart of God, upon condition of the evil hearts of sinners, but do not come because of any evil that is in God's heart.

The heart of the Lord, the ultimate intention of the Lord, is that He would most willing give eternal well-being to all if they all meet the conditions of that eternal well-being. "For I know the thoughts I think towards you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

### **3. Aren't sinners servants of sin?**

There are only two available answers to this question, only two available options in this inquiry.

1. Sinners willfully serve sin and are thus servants of sin.
2. Sinners un-willfully serve sin and are thus servants of sin.

It cannot possibly be both. A person cannot willfully and un-willfully do the same thing at the same time. These are total and complete opposites. So it is not extreme or unbalanced to say it is either one or the other, for there is no false dilemma.

What says the scriptures?

"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." (John 8:34)

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16)

To obey anything is to serve the thing that you obeyed. Obeying always precedes the serving. You are not serving anything until you obey it. And once it is obeyed, then it is being served.

The scriptures say that sinners are servants of sin upon the condition that they obey sin. But they do not obey sin upon the grounds that they are servants of sin. The ground or reason they sin is because it is their choice, they are seeking self-gratification. But the result is that they inevitably serve what they are obeying, seeing that you cannot but serve that which you obey.

The scriptures never say sinners obey sin because they are servants of sin, but it says they are servants of sin because they obey sin. By law of necessity, you serve whatever you obey; hence you are the servant of whatever you obey. In both the scriptures relating

servant hood to obey, the obeying always precedes the serving; the obeying is the condition of the servant hood. Not a single scripture credits their obeying to serving, but the scriptures always credit their serving to their obeying.

They serve sin willfully and are therefore willful servants. They “let” sin reign in their mortal bodies (Romans 6:12). They “yield” their members as instruments of unrighteousness (Romans 6:13). “Let” and “yield” are undeniably acts of the will.

Christians are “servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:18). But we do not obey righteousness because we are servants of righteousness; rather, we are servants of righteousness because we obey righteousness. Obeying is the cause, serving is the effect. But we are not servants of righteousness contrary to our will, that is, without our “letting” and “yielding”. Paul exhorts Christians that as they previously “let” themselves be servants of sin, now they must “yield” themselves to be servants of righteousness. (Romans 6:19)

Just as one willfully disobeys, so one willfully obeys. There can be no disobedience and there can be no obedience without a state of willingness, for what is caused and what is forced cannot be a moral character of obedient or disobedient. So servants of sin are willful servants just as servants of righteousness are willful servants.

## **6. Doesn't the bible teach that Paul was an unwilling servant of sin in Romans 7?**

There are different interpretations of the battle Paul is describing in Romans 7. Some say it's the battle between the will and the flesh, but we should let Paul interpret what he is saying.

Two key passages help us to unlock the mystery of the battle described in Romans 7. These passages help us to properly interpret what Paul is talking about is:

Romans 7:23 – “But I see another law in my members, warring against the **law of my mind**, and bringing me into captivity to the **law of sin which is in my members**.”

Paul makes the same point in Romans 7:25 – “So then with my **mind** I myself serve the **law of God**, but with the **flesh** the **law of sin**.”

Here, we see Paul speaking about the law of his mind, the law of his intelligence, which is in collision with the law of sin, the physical desires for gratification brought by sin, which he finds within his own members.

This helps us to understand:

Romans 9:15 – “For that which I do [flesh] I allow not [mind]: for what I would [mind], that do I not [flesh], But what I hate [mind], that I do [flesh].

Romans 9:19 - "For the good that I would [mind] I do not [flesh]: but the evil which I

would not [mind], that I do [flesh]."

This is describing the battle between Paul's mind and Paul's flesh. Remember, Paul here is in a state of conviction for his sin (vs 13). This conviction is not a mere phenomenon of the sensibilities, but is a convincing of the mind (vs 12). Paul's mind has been utterly convinced, or utterly convicted by the law of God that he is guilty of sin, and that sin must not be chosen. But Paul's flesh has been corrupted by himself, so that his flesh is almost crying out for sin because of the gratification that it brings.

A great illustration of this battle Paul is having can be seen in the struggle of a cigarette smoker. Suppose a smoker is utterly convinced in their mind that smoking is not good for them whatsoever. They do not want to smoke, that is, in their mind they do not want to smoke. But their flesh now has a law for smoking, a demand for smoking. There is now a conflict between the law of their mind and the law of their flesh.

Motivation has not yet been introduced into this scenario. When a smoker's heart motivation, or their ultimate will, is that of self-gratification, they will smoke. They do not smoke because they love the cigarette. For in fact, they hate cigarettes. But they love self-gratification. And so they do what they don't want to do, what they in fact hate to do, because they love what it brings. They go contrary to the "want" of their mind to fulfill the "want" of their flesh. The wills "want" submitted to the flesh's "want" rather than the mind's "want".

This is where Paul is in his story of his conversion in Romans 7. By the law came the knowledge of his sin (vs 7). His mind has been utterly convinced of the rightness of God's requirements (vs 12). He delights, with his mind, in the law of God (vs 22). He consents, with his mind, that the law is good (vs 16). Therefore he hates, with his mind, the sin (vs 15). He does not want, with his mind, the sin (vs 15). But with his flesh, he wants the sin (vs 20-21). His mind wants to do good, but his flesh wants to do evil (vs 23). His mind serves the law of God; his flesh serves the law of sin (vs 25).

But this has not yet mentioned the "want" of his will, but only the "want" of his mind and the "want" of his flesh. These "wants" mentioned by Paul are not of the heart or the intention, but of the mind and of the flesh. His motivation or his intention determines which direction he will walk in. If his motivation is self-gratification, he will obey the flesh. If his motivation is the glory of God and the well-being of all, he will walk according to the Spirit. And he goes on to Romans 8 about walking after the Spirit instead of the flesh, how those who obey the flesh are condemned but those who obey the Spirit have no condemnation.

The struggle Paul is describing in Romans 7 is not the struggle between his own will and his own flesh. Nor the struggle between his own will and his own mind. Paul is not saying that he is an un-willful servant of sin. For that would contradict what Jesus said about servant hood (John 8:34), and what Paul elsewhere said about servant hood (Romans 6:16) that what you willfully obey is what you are serving. That servant hood is always preceded by willful obedience. But the specific "warring" which Paul is

describing in detail is the battle between his minds demands under the influence of the law and the demands of his flesh under the influence of excited passions. (vs 23, 25). But it cannot be properly interpreted to say that Paul was sinning against his will, or a servant of sin against his will, but rather that the "want" described was not regarding the will at all, but was regarding the "want" of his mind and the "want" of his flesh.

**5. Isn't the will capable of choosing between right and wrong before the choice, but once the choice is made then the will is rendered incapable of choosing anymore?**

There is no scripture that says such a thing. To readily accept this view requires prejudicial conjecture, or a theological bias, to assume such a doctrine is true, seeing there is no scriptural backing for it.

Those who hold to such a view, that after the original choice is made, the will is rendered incapable of later choosing the contrary are not consistent in their view. That is, they do not want it both ways. If the will is rendered incapable of choosing right after choosing wrong then the will could also be rendered incapable of choosing wrong after choosing right. But this is absurd, and those who hold to such a view know it is.

Observe,

1. Suppose the will is rendered incapable of choosing anything other than its original choice.
2. Adam and Eve obeyed God multiple times, by refraining from eating the tree, and by choosing to walk with God. Every second they refrained was a second they obeyed.
3. Even after making the original choice to obey God, and walking in a continual obedience, walking with God, they later choose to disobey God.
4. Therefore Adam and Eves will was not rendered incapable of disobedience after choosing to obey.
5. Likewise, Adam and Eves will was not rendered incapable of obeying after they choose to disobey.

Christ did not believe that the original choice of an object did not render the will incapable of later choosing the opposite object. Scriptures directly contradicts this supposed doctrine. Christ taught that those who originally choose to obey can later choose to disobey, and those who originally choose to disobey can later choose to obey. Remember the parable that Christ told when a father was instructing his two sons. The first said he would obey the instructions, but then later did not. The other said he would not obey the instructions, but then later did. Here we see that original heart-disobedience does not render executive obedience impossible, and likewise original heart-obedience does not render executive disobedience impossible.

The scriptures no where teach that the original choice determines all future choices, but rather says the opposite, that that will is not bound to obey the nature, neither is the will bound to obey its own previous choices. But at every given moment, the will of every moral agent is entirely free to intend any ultimate end, either selfishness or benevolence.

After every choice the ability of the will stays the same, only the aim of the will changes. The original choice does not determine the possible future choices. One can choose to obey God, and then later disobey God. Thus, a saint is capable of sinning even after conversion. And one can choose to disobey God, and then later obey God. Thus, a sinner is capable of converting, that is, a sinner is capable of obeying the gospel from the heart, of surrendering his will (heart) to God, of giving his heart (will) to Jesus Christ.

Think of Peter who chose to deny the Lord three times and then later was reconverted. Also, the Apostle Paul speaks of those who had previously been in sin, who later “obeyed the gospel from the heart”. If one cannot obey from their heart, that is to say from their will, after choosing wrong, true heart conversion would be rendered impossible! But the Apostle Paul tells us that such is not the case. The only alternative would be forced obedience. But forced obedience is an oxy-moron, a contradiction in terms.

If the will is rendered incapable of choosing the opposite of its original choice, thus making it impossible to choose right after choosing wrong, then the will would also be rendered incapable of choosing wrong once it was used for choosing right. But those who hold to this would never dare say such a thing! They want to believe the will cannot choose right after choosing wrong, but do not want to believe that will cannot choose wrong after choosing right. This is theological inconsistency, because this whole view is inconsistent with scripture, logic, and experience.

## **6. But aren't sinners under the power of the devil?**

“The power that now works in the children of disobedient”

Sinners are “under the power of the evil one”

The power which both God and the devil uses is the power of influence; God through the influence of truth, Satan through the influence of lies. But both deal with moral agents through the power of influence, not through the power of force, lest moral agents no longer be moral agents, but necessity agents.

## **8. Aren't sinners “dead in sin” and therefore do not have any more ability to make choices then a dead man does?**

It is true that sinners are “dead in sin”, but the implication of this scripture is not what some claim it to be.

A sinner being “dead in sin” simply means that a sinners is without eternal life, not being alive unto righteousness. This scripture is references the moral state of a sinner and has no reference to his natural ability.

To attempt to use this scripture in reference to natural ability is to connect dots that are not to be connected. Such a connection is simply illogical. For example:

Christians are considered “salt” in the bible. But have you ever seen salt talk? Have you ever seen salt walk? Have you ever seen salt read? Can we logically conclude that because Christians are described as salt in the bible, that Christians cannot talk, walk, or read? No! Such an interpretation is connecting dots that are not meant to be connected, so such an interpretation is illogical.

Jesus is described in the bible as being the “bread of life”. But again, have you ever seen bread preach a sermon? Walk on water? Work as a carpenter? Can we conclude that Jesus never preached, performed miracles, or worked as a carpenter, because Jesus is described as “bread” in the bible? No! Such an interpretation is connecting dots that are not meant to be connected, so such an interpretation is totally illogical!

Likewise it is, to say that because sinners are “dead in sin”, and since a dead man can make no moral choices, therefore sinners cannot choose to do what is right or have no ability to naturally obey God, is an interpretation to connect dots that are not meant to be connected, so such an interpretation is grossly illogical!

All that this scripture is teaching that is a sinner is “dead in sin” and therefore is without eternal life, not being alive unto righteousness.

### **9. Are you sure that man’s heart is man’s will?**

The heart is the seat of the will, where a man’s secret purposes, intentions, designs come from. A man’s heart is a man’s real intention, or strictly speaking, his ultimate intention.

But what else could “adultery in the heart” mean other than willing adultery? Who else is guilty of “adultery in the heart” but those who have a will for adultery? (Matthew 5:18)

What else could be meant by “the heart of man was upon evil continually” other than that the will of man was for evil constantly? (Genesis 6:5)

What else is meant by saying that King David was a “man after God’s own heart” other than that King David’s will was God’s will that? And that David desired what God desired. (1 Samuel 13:44)

What else is meant by saying that King David had a “perfect heart” if it does not mean he had a perfect intention, or genuine sincerity of the heart? (1 Kings 11:44)

What else could “obeyed the gospel from the heart” mean other than willing obeying the gospel? (Romans 6:17)

What is meant in the English language when a person says, “God see’s my heart” other than that “God see’s my motive” or that “God see’s my intention”?

What does it meant by someone who says of a person, “you could really see his heart” or

“he’s got a good heart” other than genuineness or sincerity in the intentions or in the will of a person?

These scriptures describe the heart as possessing a moral character, and nothing can have moral character other than willful intention. The heart of man could be nothing other than the will of man, or more strictly, the ultimate will of man.

And so God influences the heart (will) through truth, and when the heart (will) submits to the truth, the whole man is changed from top to bottom, because as the router of a boat steers the whole ship, so does the will of man direct the life of man, and when the will (heart) is changed, the whole man is changed.

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For further reading of sound theology, I highly recommend the 1851 edition of “**Lectures on Systematic Theology**” by Professor Charles G. Finney.

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**Quotes:**

Cornelius Van Til: The Defense of the Faith, page 74. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. Phillipsburg, New Jersey. 1955

Justin Martyr: The Ante Nicene Fathers Volume One, Chapter XLIII – Responsibility Asserted. Page 347-348