

The Bondage of the Will - Article 10 of the 39 Articles

13th September 2020

Article 10 – Of free will

“The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he **cannot turn and prepare himself**, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God.

Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, **without the grace of God by Christ** preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.”

1, Introduction

“Surely good people go to heaven?”

Article 9 (last week) – We all have a sinful nature – the same tendency as Adam to turn away from God. “**Shove off God; I'm in charge; Not you.**” Cosmic treason.

2, We cannot prepare ourselves for faith

“Cannot” - concerns our ability to turn to God and do works pleasing to him.

A matter of the will - “the faculty of conscious and deliberate choice of action.” “That by which the mind chooses something.”

Luther v Erasmus

“Semi-pelagianism” - God's grace is needed, but human effort is needed and God “makes up the difference.”

Luther's response - “Free will without grace has the power to do nothing but sin.” (Heidelberg Catechism).

The Bible's teaching:

Ephesians 2:1, John 5:24

- > It's not saying we can't do good things – eg acts of kindness, science, arts etc.
- > It is saying we can't do anything to seek God or please him.

3, We need God's grace

- > “Preventing” - Prevenient grace – grace which prepares us to seek God through his Holy Spirit.
- > “Working with”

The Bible's teaching:

Ephesians 2:4, 10

4, Thinking it through

- > Don't understand? Think it through / talk to me!
- > Isn't freedom one of the most important things? Yes. But freedom in what way?
 - Two types of freedom – Freedom to choose; freedom to choose what to choose. Eg marmite!
 - Spiritually: I am free to choose whether to sin. But I am not free to choose whether I want to sin – I do! (John 8:34)

Sinning by necessity versus sinning by compulsion

- > Not fair? I wasn't compelled so I'm responsible.

5, What difference does it make?

- > “Good people”
- > *How we work as Christians – Colossians 1:28-29*
- > *Our attitude as Christians – humble, grateful, joyful, God-centred*

Further reading: “Foundations of Faith” -

(<https://churchsociety.org/product/foundations-of-faith-paper-back>)

"Reformation 500" – "Grace" – Sunday 5th November 2017 at www.anlabychurches.org.uk – Go to Resources / Listen again (talks)