

GROWING IN GRACE LETTERS! – Calling saints in Christ, (in our homes and with one another in Church), to walk in the Steps of Jesus! (1 Peter 2:15-25) Edited by James Bell, a servant of Jesus Christ!

9 29 25 V1n21 The FREE WILL of GOD and of Man!

When the subject of FREE WILL is brought up— most folk run to discuss, debate, deny, or promote the FREE WILL of man! **But what about God's Free Will?** Jesus says, *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. **So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.**"* (John 3:8)

Ephesians 2:1-3 gives us the necessary Bible backdrop in order to appreciate the astounding wonder of sinners 'being saved' by the wonderful and free grace of God. LET US BE AMAZED: *"**And you hath He quickened**, [raised from death to life], **who were dead in** trespasses and sins; **Wherein in time past ye walked according to** the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also **we all had our conversation [our way of life] in** times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; **and were by nature the children of wrath**, even as others."* (Ephesians 2:1-3)

SO, the lost are dead in sin, **dedicated** to the fashions of this world, **demonized, disobedient, dominated by** cravings of carnal passions and **desires** of evil imaginations rule, and they are **DOOMED** under the just and holy wrath of God. **Christians:** We dare not look down our noses at the wicked— **for as lost masses are, we once were!**

DON'T MISS THIS: Jesus came into a world **already under** the sentence of just and holy wrath. IF GOD HAD ONLY BEEN JUST and not merciful— the entire human race would have received only holy justice even as did

all of the fallen angels who got justice! God's mercy, love, and grace is owed to no human! **People often say,** *"Everyone DESERVES a 'chance' to be saved!"* **NO, every sinner DESERVES GOD'S HOLY WRATH. RELATED TRUTH:**

When God looks down from heaven into the hearts of the lost— **WHAT DOES HE SEE? A widely accepted belief, [which I was taught], is that** God looks down from heaven and He sees and knows in advance who will BELIEVE if they are given the Gospel. God, therefore, chooses to give NEW BIRTH to those He knows will by the power and choice of their free will choose Him. **In other words,** in salvation, God chooses to give His stamp of approval to man's FREE WILL choice! **What does the Bible say?** *"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. **They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.**"* (Ps. 14:2-3; Note: Ps. 53:2-3 repeats this; and Romans 3:9-18 is similar— WITH Romans 3:11 declaring that **NONE seek God**. So, the Bible DOES DECLARE what God sees when He looks down from heaven— but it is not sinners of their own free will bowing in repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ!

Moreover, see what else the Bible declares about the bent of the heart of lost sinners— THEY, (1) naturally love sin and hate God (Rom. 8:7); (2) love darkness (John 3:19); will not come to Christ (John 5:40); (3) are dead in sin (Eph. 2:1; Col. 3:13); will not seek God (Rom. 3:10-12); (4) are sin and satan enslaved; and (5) under the just wrath of God!

Thus, the question must be asked: **HOW IS IT POSSIBLE FOR SUCH SINNERS to escape all of that and become sons and daughters of God?**

Ephesians 2:1-3, obviously, is followed by Ephesians 2:4-10 which gives us GOD'S ANSWER: "BUT GOD, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us [given us life!] together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved; And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. **For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.** For we are **his workmanship,** created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."**

HOW GOD BRINGS ABOUT THIS MIRACLE: THE HOLY SPIRIT USES 'MEANS'... that is, the great Triune God accomplishes His saving grace in human hearts **by means of the GOSPEL which is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth;..." (Rom 1:16)** Thus, "... as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: **Which were born, not of blood, **nor of** the will of the flesh, **nor of** the will of man, **but of God!"** (John 1:12-13) **"Being BORN AGAIN, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **BY THE WORD OF GOD,** which liveth and abideth forever."** (1 Peter 1:23) [The 'WIND OF THE SPIRIT' BLOWS [The Holy Spirit!], giving new birth: John 3:1-8]**

AMAZING GRACE: When the GOSPEL IS PREACHED, the gospel commands the humanly impossible! Just as it was impossible for dead and 'stinking' Lazarus to come out of the tomb by his own doing— **Gospel messengers (Christians!) proclaim the GOSPEL and cry out,** "Repent, ye therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19) ... **OR: "...WHOSOEVER** believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)... **OR: "For WHOSOEVER**

shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved.” (Rom. 10:13) **By the way, FROM THESE VERSES, IT IS OBVIOUS that God does** not place any road block, God does not prohibit nor hinder any lost soul from repenting and believing! **And it is also obvious**, that those who are already in Christ are to PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL to the lost and plainly tell them: “Repent, ye therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out...” (Acts 3:19) “...**WHOSOEVER** believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)... “For **WHOSOEVER** shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved.” (Rom. 10:13) **[BY THE WAY: Whenever Peter (Acts 2:22ff; and when Stephen preached (Acts 7ff) — they DID NOT PREACH, ‘God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life!!’ NOR... ‘please understand, this message is only for the Elect!’]**

THIS REALITY STANDS: ONLY GOD is powerful enough to bring a **DEAD IN SIN sinner** to repent, to believe, to call upon Jesus! **“But God,** who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us** [given us life!] **together with Christ,** (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:...” **Glorious reality: Sin hardened sinners are made willing in the day of God’s power by divine QUICKENING and by means of the PREACHED Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. Therefore, as Christians OBEY the Great Commission** in planting and watering the gospel— **GOD HIMSELF gives the INCREASE!** (1 Cor. 3:6) **“The WIND of the Spirit blows— John 3:8!!**

QUESTION— how many people will be saved? When Paul preached the GOSPEL to the Gentiles at Antioch, Luke records— **“...and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”** (Acts 13:48) As Jesus was praying

to His Father, He said: "As thou [GOD, the Father], hast given him [JESUS] power over all flesh, that **He [JESUS] should/shall give eternal life to as many as Thou [God, the Father], has given Him.**" (John 17:2) **As the Scriptures reveal, people are saved by the amazing grace of God (Eph. 2:1-10)** Yes, the Gospel call goes out far and wide to dead in their sin sinners: *"Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST and thou shalt be saved."* **Ultimately, a 'numberless multitude' from every tribe and people of all nations will be saved,** (Rev. 7:9-17) This 'numberless multitude' will all be with Jesus for eternity because of God's amazing grace, because **they were given by the Father to the Son! Saints of God, you were given!** (Eph. 2:1-3; John 17:1-24) **Do these multitudes repent believe? YES, for** they were quickened [given life!], by GOD! **In contrast, those who are ultimately cast into hell will be there ONLY because of their sin—** (Rev. 14:7-11; 21:8; John 3:36) And the Word of God plainly declares that they are without excuse: Romans 1:18-21!

BE CLEAR ABOUT THIS: God DOES NOT predestinate sinners to hell. The whole human race, because of sin, is naturally and already under the holy and just wrath of God. **Man's free will is a slave to sin! GOD'S FREE WILL gives new birth!** (John 3:8) **The great wonder is not** that there will be people in hell. For all who enter this fallen world are dead in sin, dedicated to the fashions of this world, demonized, disobedient, dominated by carnal passions, desires prompted evil imaginations rule and they are DOOMED under the wrath of Holy God. (Eph. 2:1-3) **The wrath of God is right now ABIDING** upon those who do not savingly believe on the LORD Jesus Christ. (John 3:36)

EVERY HUMAN NATURALLY loves sin, hates God (Rom. 8:7), **loves darkness** (John 3:19), **will not come to the light** (John 3:20), **will not come to Christ** (John 5:40), **is dead in sin** (Eph. 2:1; Col. 3:13), **will not**

seek God (Rom. 3:10-12), **loves the praise of man** (John 5:42-44; 12:43), **cannot receive the Spirit of truth** (John 14:17; 1 Cor. 2:14), **is satan controlled and under the just wrath of God** (Eph. 2:1-3). **MOREOVER, AS THE HUMAN RACE nears the end of time**, God will begin to intervene with 'controlled judgment and wrath'... — however, masses of mankind STILL WILL NOT repent: Rev. 9:20-21; Rev. 16:8-11.

THEREFORE, the time will come when the full wrath of God will be poured out upon the unrepentant, in the presence of the LAMB OF GOD, forever and ever! (Rev. 14:8-11)

Moreover, the angels of God will worship God for giving out true and righteous justice! JUSTICE— Justice is no mark against the character of God! (Rev. 16:5-7) **Justice for the guilty** is what should take place **for the entire** fallen human race, even as was done for the fallen angels. And for such justice, God is worthy of worship: Rev. 16:5-7; Rev. 19:1-4.

But wonder of wonders — instead of justice — **MERCY, LOVE, and GRACE is given and is coming to a numberless multitude, who were/are no less sinners and no less justice deserving than anyone else!**

THUS, the saved are to live and PROCLAIM the Gospel of Christ to the whole world— for JESUS is still SEEKING and SAVING the lost (Luke 19:10); and has commissioned the saved to PLANT, to WATER, and HE will give the INCREASE! (1 Corinthians 3:6-9) Until all given by the Father to the Son (John 17:2) are out of adam and in Christ, the free will of the 'WIND' still blows! So, Christian— LIVE the gospel and PROCLAIM the gospel!

HERE IS RELATED REALITY TO THE SUBJECT AT HAND: So often, when folks speak of 'FREE WILL' they do not properly distinguish the VAST differences between man's God-given FREE WILL when he was in a state of innocence vs when he is in other conditions. We must make PROPER DISTINCTIONS between— **1.** Man in innocence; **2.** Fallen Man; **3.** Redeemed Man and; **4.** Glorified Man. Below, we look at the 4 stages of humans **in relation to Free Will, Sin, God, and the Holy Spirit.**

1. MAN IN INNOCENCE: *AS TO FREE WILL— A look in Genesis clearly reveals that Adam and Eve began **totally free**, willing and able to choose, to reason, to plan, to rule, and to have dominion with a spirit of wisdom and in a state of innocence. **They were ALIVE to God.** The Tree of Life was a gracious provision to sustain and empower; and revealed their need for dependence upon and fellowship with God.

***AS TO SIN—** Adam and Eve were **free and able to sin**; but in the beginning they had not done so. The LORD GOD had placed them in the Garden with clear instructions and gracious provisions. To disobey would be sin. **IF they freely chose to sin, they would immediately DIE spiritually and in time, die physically.** But in the beginning they had perfect fellowship with God and there was no sin found in them. Their FREE WILL was really FREE!

***AS TO GOD—** Again, Adam and Eve were **spiritually ALIVE** to God and enjoyed perfect communion with God. They were free and able to choose fellowship with God, free and able to worship and to know God intimately; and they did. (There is a VAST difference between a human will that is spiritually alive to God and one that is DEAD!)

***AS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT—** Genesis does not give us any specific verses connecting Adam and Eve with the Holy Spirit. It is possible that for them

to partake of the Tree of Life would have been for them to experience DIVINE INFLOW of the Holy Spirit in some way. **But regardless of just how it all worked out**, they were in perfect harmony and in LIVING fellowship with the great TRIUNE GOD: **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

2. FALLEN MAN IN SIN: *AS TO FREE WILL— Adam and Eve sinned and immediately DIED spiritually. Their ability to have communion and fellowship with God DIED. **They still had a FREE WILL!** They and all humans since are still FREE, willing, and able— to plan, to reason, to rule, and to make choices. **Fallen man is FREE to do what he wants to do! But that is the problem. Fallen man is spiritually DEAD and does not want to please God.** He wants to continue to rebel and sin. He has dominion on earth and makes choices that are deeply stained by pride, selfishness, and rebellion. **He is DEAD in sin. His FREE WILL is a slave to sin, self, and satan. Note:** When we say that fallen man is FREE to do what he wants to do that does not mean that fallen man is able to impose his will upon God. **GOD alone has ULTIMATE FREE WILL.** (John 3:8) God carries out His purposes, regardless of what man does. God rules supreme and at time over-rules man! **But so far as salvation is concerned God prohibits NO ONE.** Jesus says, “COME TO ME...” “And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” (Rev. 22:17) **HOWEVER, as to the FREE WILL of fallen men, we have to remember: All who enter this fallen world are dead in sin**, dedicated to the fashions of this world, demonized, disobedient, dominated by carnal passions, desires prompted evil imaginations rule and they are DOOMED under the wrath of Holy God. (Eph. 2:1-3)

THE BIBLE IS CLEAR: EVERY FALLEN HUMAN naturally loves sin and hates God (Rom. 8:7); **loves darkness** (John 3:19); **will not come to the light** (John 3:20); **will not come to Christ** (John 5:40); **is dead in sin** (Eph.

2:1; Col. 3:13); **will not seek God** (Rom. 3:10-12); **loves the praise of man** (John 5:42-44; 12:43); **cannot receive the Spirit of truth** (John 14:17; 1 Cor. 2:14); **is satan controlled; and is under the just wrath of God** (Eph. 2:1-3). **ALL OF THESE VERSES SHOUT THAT GOD REALLY MEANT IT WHEN HE WARNED THAT THE WAGES OF SIN WOULD BE DEATH! These verses SHOUT that for the spiritually dead MUST BE GIVEN the gift of Divine life: Ephesians 2:1-10.**

***AS TO SIN—** Fallen man is free and able to sin. Indeed, he loves sin and is a slave to sin. Even his 'good' deeds are tainted with sin. His heart is deceitful above all things. (Jer. 17:9) He is a sinner by nature and a sinner by choice. He is dead in sin. His FREE WILL is a slave to sin.

***AS TO GOD—** Fallen man is free to choose to worship, to submit to God. He is free to so choose. No one stops him. God places no fresh evil in his heart. **HE IS FREE, BUT HE WILL NOT.** He will not seek God, although he may seek his blessings. In reality, he hates God, loves sin and darkness and will not come to the light. (See earlier verses)

***AS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT—** Obviously, the fallen man is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In fact, he 'cannot receive' (John 14:17) the Holy Spirit; and has no natural ability to receive the things of the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 2:12-14) He is in darkness. (Col 1:13)

3. REDEEMED MAN: *AS TO FREE WILL— Redeemed or saved man is now free, willing, and able to make choices, to reason, to plan, to have dominion and to rule— **EMPOWERED by new, indwelling divine life.** He/she is now BORN AGAIN and sees and has entered into the kingdom of God! (John 3:3, 5) The FREE WILL of the redeemed is now ALIVE SPIRITUALLY. We still have the capacity to choose to sin; but now we are LED BY the Holy Spirit and our WILLS ARE NO LONGER SLAVES UNDER

the dominion of sin, self, and satan. **Our FREE WILLS are now being MASTERED by the indwelling Christ!** (Romans 6-8)

***AS TO SIN—** Yes, the redeemed, saved man is still able to sin. He does sin. But he is no longer dominated by nor a slave to sin. He has a growing hatred of sin. He is progressing out of sin. He repents of sin. He will be chastened if he does not repent of sin. (Rom 6; 1 John; Heb 12:5-11)

***AS TO GOD—** The redeemed man is ALIVE IN CHRIST. Christ is IN Him. He is spiritually alive to and in fellowship with the great Triune God. He KNOWS God and desires to know Him more. He is a son/daughter of God, **born not of the will of man or the flesh— but born of God**. He is a walking miracle of God's mercy, love, and grace. (Eph. 1:1-13; 2:1-10; John 1:13-14; Titus 3:6-7; John 6:37; Phil. 3:7-10)

AS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT—** There is, in the ways of God, a point in time in which so many things are happening... and they seem to us to be in one set of sequence... and in some aspects some seem almost simultaneous— nevertheless, God's Word reveals this: *** **It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit** upon and through the Word of God and the Gospel of God to convict sinners of sin, righteousness, and judgment; AND He is pleased to use us as His missionaries to give out the GOSPEL and plead: 'REPENT! BELIEVE on the LORD JESUS CHRIST; and you shall be saved! **It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to QUICKEN THE DEAD, to give life to the spiritually dead...** a far greater miracle that of Jesus raising Lazarus from physical death. Thus, Jesus told Nicodemus, "YOU MUST be born again."

BUT HOW?... **He says: 'THE WIND BLOWS!'** The *wind of the Spirit* gives new life. He gives life to the dead. He indwells. He baptizes into the

sphere, the life and communion with God. He FILLS and commands the believer to be continuously filled, etc. (John 3:5-8; 16:7-11; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13-14; Eph. 5:18) JESUS and JESUS ALONE is the **Author and the Finisher** of our faith! (Heb. 12:2) ALL PRAISE BE TO HIM!

4. GLORIFIED MAN *AS TO FREE WILL— The glorified man will be free in the fullest and best of all possible ways. He will rule and reign with Christ for all future time and eternity. There will be full perfection of wisdom and freedom of will in the ultimate sense. **For there will not be ANY conflict of will—** for the will of glorified man will be in perfect harmony with God's holy/perfect will!

***AS TO SIN—** Redeemed man is saved from the penalty of sin; and he is being saved from the power of sin by the very life of God in his soul. **BUT THE GLORIFIED MAN is, IN ADDITION, saved from even the presence and possibility of sin; and he will be free from all of sin's consequences, forever and forever, AMEN!** (Rev. 21:1-5; 27)

***AS TO GOD—** The glorified man will enjoy perfect fellowship with God. His WILL is perfectly FREE from even any inclination to sin. He will be a LIVING DISPLAY, an eternal TROPHY of God's amazing grace! (Eph. 1:3-23; 2:6-7; Romans 8:28-39; Rev. 22:1-5) In heaven all praise is to God and to the LAMB!

***AS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT—** The glorified man is in a relationship of absolute perfection with God. All that he is and all that he has is the result of the manifold operations of the Holy Spirit of God. The glorified saints of God in Christ will, for all eternity, rule and reign with Christ; and DISPLAY the outshining radiance of Christ-likeness in perfection. (Romans 8:29; Rev. 22:1-5)

BOTTOM LINE: We live in a time when very few Christians are AMAZED BY GRACE. Meditation upon the Scriptures of this article call ALL SAINTS, 1. To great WONDER AND AMAZEMENT at the mercy, love, and grace of God; **2.** To fresh GRATITUDE and WORSHIP; **3.** To a newly empowered FLEEING from sin which so easily besets! (Romans 12:1-2) **4.** And to a fresh zeal to give the gospel to others— for so we are commanded; and so God has ordained that we plant and water gospel seed and HE GIVES the increase! (The WIND blows!)

Amazing Grace to you! James Bell / www.southsidegallatin.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Sunday Services, OCTOBER 5, 12, 19, 26

Sunday School @ 9:30am; classes all ages

WORSHIP SERVICE @ 10:45am

SPECIAL MEETINGS:

OCTOBER 4, 5PM – CHURCH-WIDE BONFIRE/COOKOUT!

There will be Chilli, Hotdogs, fellowship, singing of hymns by the fire, etc... **PLEASE BRING YOURSEVES and a Chair and a SIDE-DISH.**

Please TEXT DAVID, if you plan to attend@ 615 – 300 - 7091 //

ADDRESS: 165 Rock Bridge Rd, Gallatin

October 5, AFTER MORNING WORSHIP-- Monthly 'Covered Dish' Fellowship Meal

October 19, at the end of the Morning Worship service—THE CHIEF WORSHIP SERVICE OF THE CHURCH: THE LORD'S SUPPER!!

October 26, Monthly EVENING WORSHIP SERVICE

EVERY SATURDAY @ 8:00am— Men's Bible Study (Doors open by 7:30am— Enjoy Coffee / Juice / Donuts / Hardee's Biscuits!)[AT THE

back of the Church building, come in at double doors; turn LEFT at first Hallway...]STUDY starts @ 8:00am— 10/04/25, Bob Boettchar

NEXT Ladies Bible Study— October 14 @ 11:00am
(LESSONS from JOB) – (Downstairs, BIG Bible Study room)

EVERY TUESDAY @ 10:00am – 10:30am LADIES PRAYER
MEETING (Back door, first room on right)

TUESDAY EVENING, Teens, Young Adults— Bible Study,
'EXODUS!' ... 7:15pm @ Jaden & Rhi's home

WEDNESDAYS, 6:30pm— (Come in back double doors; **ADULT
MEN'S PRAYER GROUP**
YOUNG FAMILIES— Study & Prayer Service

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For Church Ministry and/or MISSIONS:

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Southside Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1594, Gallatin, TN 37066 / OR... TO
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