**BIBLE QUESTIONS: SESSION 9**

**Questions: Does man have free will? Are there limits to his free will? Did man have free will before the fall, if not, why? Does man have any or all autonomy?**

*(For the definitive “Lutheran” answer to the question of “Free Will”, consult the Formula of Concord in the Lutheran Confessions. Article II of the Epitome, and of the Solid Declaration)*

1. **Does man have free will?** 
   1. **A*nswer: Not in Spiritual matters before conversion/regeneration.*** 
      1. Before receiving faith through the free Gift of the Holy Spirit, all men have a will that is bound to sin. That is, they are spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God and cannot and/or will not see, follow or love God.
   2. “Free will” = “What a man can do by his own power”.
      1. The Lutheran Confessions, Formula of Concord/Article II deals with the topic of “Free Will or Human Powers”
      2. (English translations of the Bible use the term “freewill” only in the OT and only with reference to “freewill offerings” (e.g., Exodus 35:29, 36:3, et. al.) In this sense, “freewill” is synonymous with voluntary or not required/coerced by law.)
   3. Consider the four views on the relationship between God’s Power and Man’s ability in salvation: Pelagianism; Semi-Pelagianism; Synergism; and Monergism.
   4. Justification is Monergistic; Sanctification is Synergistic.
      * 1. Lutheran Confessions say that it is God’s work alone (Monergism) that men are justified/saved; but that man can work with (Synergism) and cooperate (though in great weakness) with the Holy Spirit in his sanctification (good works).
2. **Are their limits to his free will? Does man have any or all autonomy?**
   1. Yes, the only truly free will is God’s. Man does not have “all autonomy” Autonomy (self-governance) is always subject to the absolute autonomy/sovereignty of God.
   2. However, man does have some autonomy. The Lutheran confessions say that we have free will/autonomy in matters “below us”, e.g., what to eat, whether to go to church, whether and whom to marry, what job to take, what clothes to wear etc. It is only in matters “above us” that we have no autonomy or choice. God must choose and save us (Justification); and he must enable and empower the good works he prepared for us to do beforehand (Eph. 2:10).
      1. In spiritual matters, we do not have the power to contribute anything to salvation (John 15:5; Eph. 2:1). The only power we have is to resist the working of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 7:51)
3. **Did man have free will before the fall?**
   1. Neither the Bible nor the Lutheran Confessions answer this explicitly.
   2. Implicitly, since Adam was created “good”, and he was created in God’s image; it follows that Adam had, in some sense, the natural ability to choose what is good and resist what is evil…meaning he wasn’t bound to sin before the fall.
      1. Adam chose to sin without the inclination (Free Will); whereas we sin with the inclination (Bound Will).
      2. The natural man cannot do anything but sin; whereas the spiritual/regenerate man. by the Spirit, can do good works, though they are always tainted by sin.
4. ***Does man after conversion/regeneration have a free will the same way Adam did before the fall?***
   1. No, Adam did not have sinful flesh before the fall. However the Christian, regenerated in Christ, still has the old sinful flesh.
      1. Adam didn’t have the natural desire to sin that we Christians still do.
         1. “For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.” (Romans 7:19)
      2. Unlike Adam, Christians must “subdue the flesh” on account of their sinful nature. (Romans 8:13, 1 Cor 9:25-27)