

## The Theology of the Westminster Standards WCF 9.2–5 – Of Free Will

*“Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light  
My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.”*

– Charles Wesley, “And Can It Be”

### I. Review: The Nature of Human Freedom (“Natural Liberty”)

- A. *“God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good, or evil. (WCF 9.1)”*

*“In shorthand, the law is: Our choices are determined by our desires. They remain our choices because they are motivated by our own desires. This is what we call self-determination, which is the essence of freedom.”*  
– R.C. Sproul, *Chosen By God*, 54.

1. **Matt 17:12** – *“But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased.”*
2. **Deut 30:19** – *“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live ...”*
3. **James 1:14** – *“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.”*

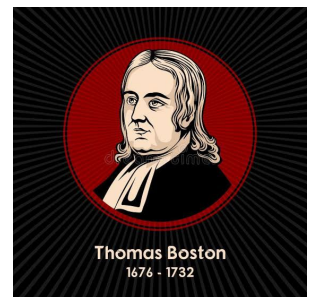
### II. Human Freedom in the State of Innocence (*posse peccare, posse non peccare*)

*Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom, and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but yet, mutably, so that he might fall from it. (WCF 9.2)*

- A. **Eccl 7:29** – *“God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.”*

### III. Human Freedom in the State of Sin (*non posse non peccare*)

*Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto. (WCF 9.3)*



- A. Does fallen person still retain the power to will what he/she most wants? Do they retain “natural liberty” *in that sense*?

*“[The fallen sinner] acts wickedly by will, not by compulsion. Well put, indeed, but what purpose is served by labeling with a proud name such a slight thing? A noble freedom, indeed—for man not to be forced to serve sin, yet to be such a willing slave that his will is bound by the fetters of sin!”* – John Calvin

B. What about all the “good” we see non-Christians doing in the world? Doesn’t that count for something?

1. **Rom 8:7** – *“For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”*

#### IV. Human Freedom in the State of Grace (*posse non peccare*)

*When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin; and, by his grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so, as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil. (WCF 9.4)*

A. **1 Thess 2:11** – *“To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power.”*

B. **Gal 5:17** – *“For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”*

1. Are you surprised when you see a believer sin? Should you be? Why or why not?

#### V. Human Freedom in the State of Glory (*non posse peccare*)

*The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to good alone, in the state of glory only. (WCF 9.5)*

A. In terms of the human will, how is this final stage of history the best of all? Contrast this last stage to the prior three.

B. **1 John 3:2** – *“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”*

*“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, <sup>25</sup> to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 24)*