

WHAT FREE WILL  
BAPTISTS BELIEVE  
AND WHY



A SERMON BY

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#### AUTHOR'S NOTE

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This little sermon is not sent forth to create strife, or prejudice, but to impart information. Neither does the author claim for it any literary merit. The sermon is a plain, simple, concise statement of the "Truth" as the Free Will Baptists understand the "Plan of Salvation."

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Glenville, Ga.

# What Free Will Baptists Believe and Why

## HISTORICAL

The Free Will Baptists are not a "split off" from some other Baptist church as many believe.

This question is often asked the writer: "When did your church split off the Missionary Baptist church?" or "When did you all slab off the Hardshells?"

To this frequently asked question, I reply: "The Free Will Baptists are not a 'slab off.'"

Most any well-informed person, on church history, knows that we were first called "Free Wills" in 1780, in the town of New Durham, N. H. Benjamin Randall was the first preacher to bear that name, because Benjamin Randall preached "freedom of the will," or "the free agency of man. The Calvinistic Baptists dubbed Benjamin Randall "a Free Willer," and the name has clung to the Free Will Baptist ever since.

The Calvinistic Baptist were quarreling among themselves over mission work, Sunday Schools and Masonry. This quarrel culminated in the year 1832, when the Calvinistic Baptist church split—slabbed off—from each other. Those Calvinists in the church who did not believe in Missions, and were opposed to Masonry, were in the majority and they turned the minority out of the Calvinistic church. Some few years after this event, which occurred in 1832, these excluded members took the name of Missionary Baptists, and the other side took the name of Primitive Baptists.

Now reader, you can readily see that the Free Will Baptist church is not a "split off" from the Missionary

church, neither is it a "slab off" from the Hardshell Baptist church.

The Free Wills were named in 1780. The Calvinistic Baptist church split in 1832, so you can easily see, we, as a church, could not have been a part of something that did not exist until fifty-two years afterwards. In other words, the Free Will Baptists were fifty-two years old when the Calvinistic Baptist church finished their fight over missions and Masonry.

There were no Calvinistic Baptists before the days of John Calvin, who introduced the "Fatalism of the East" into the religion of Jesus Christ. There has always, since the days of Christ, been a Baptist church which did, and has not taught the Christalized Fatalism of John Calvin, and that Baptist church was called "Free Will in the year 1780. In that year, Washington and the Revolutionary patriots were fighting for political freedom, and Benjamin Randall was fighting for spiritual freedom from the meshes of India, Oriental, Eastern Fatalism.

#### DOCTRINAL FATALISM

"Adam, by transgression, fell." God did not make him fall, God did not cause Adam to fall. If so, God is responsible for the act, and not Adam. The cause is, and must be, responsible for the effect. Adam fell, the cause of that fall is responsible for the act, or fall.

Then it follows, that if God created Adam and caused Adam to fall, God, not Adam, is responsible for the act, and its consequences. This may seem sacrilige, but it is not. I am only using the common sense God gave me.

In order that the Creator might hold Adam, the man created, for his own actions, first, man must be a responsible being and endowed with the "freedom of the will;" the power to choose between two or more things. Second,

two or more things must be placed before man in order that he, man, can exercise his "freedom of the will." Third, the opportunity must be given.

This opportunity was given to man, the creature, by God, the Creator. When He, God, gave to man, the creature, a law, with a penalty attached, and commanded man to obey it—it necessarily follows that man, the creature, must have the power to choose—exercise his right of choice between obedience and disobedience in order to be free. Otherwise he, man, is not free, not responsible, and therefore suffering unjustly for doing what he could not help doing. Now God is just, the law is just, and man's punishment just, because man was unjust. The law was for man's good, not God's good; hence the law was holy, ordained to keep man holy, as God, the loving Creator had created man.

The Free Will Baptists have always believed that man is responsible to God, his Creator for his acts, hence man is a "free will," having the power to choose between good and evil. Jesus taught this doctrine when he exclaimed, "Whosoever will, may come." Again our Lord taught the doctrine of "free will" when He commanded His apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Because all were sinners, all have sinned. All needed redemption—salvation—not because all were born in sin, but because all, like Adam, had sinned. Calling on all to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, believe on the only begotten Son of God, as the only means of salvation, calling all the world to repentance, not a part of it, calling on all men to repent of their sins—not some of them. Why? Because all have sinned, do sin, are sinning. Not calling on some, but all. Why call if all cannot hear? Why die for all if all cannot be saved? Is not His blood sufficient? Is not the sacrifice of Christ ample?

Anything short of a full, free salvation from sin is anti-Christian, savors not of a loving, dying Christ, but smells of the slums of religion. Calling "all men to repent—everywhere." Anything short of this is beneath a loving God, and only finds place in the shallow mind of men. Believe and repent! Who? All men everywhere! Why? Because all men everywhere have sinned. And the call to all men everywhere reveals to us the loving nature—the unselfish nature of the Christ and God the Father. Faith in Christ, and repentance toward the Father, God. All come—great and small, rich and poor, all come—every man—everywhere. Come, the sacrifice is offered, the sword is removed before the gates of the spiritual Eden—the church. Come in every kindred, every tribe, every nation, come in! And yet there is room—room for all. Christ died for all. Jesus Christ tasted death for every man. Come on only devils—demons, would keep you back—keep you away.

Thus the Free Will Baptists have ever taught and ever believed salvation was free and all men could be saved, if they would be. The Free Will Baptists also believe and teach that Baptism follows on experience and grace, and that true, penitent believers are the only fit subjects for baptism. "Repent and be baptized" said Peter to the anxious, believing sinners on Pentecost, and as Baptists, we have ever taught.

Baptism, symbolizing the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. Only those who can repent and believe the Gospel are to be baptized—"Buried with Christ in Baptism."

It was the Catholic church that changed the rite of baptism to effusion or sprinkling, and the change was not sanctioned until 1351. The Free Will Baptists have not adopted the change—and will not.

The Lord's Supper, as the Free Will Baptists believe it, and teach it, was established by our Lord as a memorial supper of His death and sufferings on the cross—to be perpetuated until He comes again. It is the Lord's supper, therefore, not a Baptist supper—intended for the Lord's people only; and as it is impossible for the church to judge who are saved, the church has not any right to say who shall take it. Indeed, the Lord commands the church not to Judge—hence the Free Will Baptists exclude none from the Lord's supper who claim to be the Lord's people.

This is not a new doctrine—since our Lord taught us not to judge. John Bunyan wrote a book entitled "Baptism no Bar to the Communion" three centuries ago. There was no close or restricted communion until the year 339 A. D., when the Roman Catholic church adopted the Apostles' Creed and excommunicated all who did not subscribe to its teachings. The Baptists refused to do so and were excommunicated. In retaliation, some Baptists excluded all others—but it was not so taught by Christ and His apostles. Let a man examine himself and so let him eat, taught St. Paul. So the Free Will Baptists have not taught or practiced a restricted or close communion—since there is no divine authority for it, and as it is a Catholic doctrine we let Catholics have it. Like the baptism of babies, it belongs to Catholics. Why not let Catholics have her own? We do not go to Catholics for any of our doctrine, but to Christ and His apostles.

There is no Scriptural authority outside of the Catholic church for close communion. To us, the Free Will Baptist, the Catholic church is no authority at all. For over three hundred years there was no close or restricted communion. A Christian was a Christian, and entitled to all the privileges of a Christian. It was not until the days

of the Roman Catholic Apostacy 339 A. D., that restricted communion was introduced by that church. Not being Catholics, the Free Will Baptists have not adopted it. All Christians are welcome to the Lord's supper, when the Free Will Baptists observe it.

The Free Will Baptists also believe and practice washing the saints' feet, in connection with and immediately after the Lord's supper. They have always done it, and doubtless always will, since the Free Will Baptists are on the increase instead of being on the decrease. The Free Will Baptists, being a simple folk—have always accepted the New Testament as the only source of doctrine, adding nothing to it, and taking nothing from it. Being a simple people, and finding in the New Testament that the Christ washed His disciples' feet, after He instituted the Lord's supper, have continued the holy example.

They have been told by wise men, and men who were not wise, that it was not necessary to wash feet, yet being a simple people, they thought that Christ was right, and those wise and unwise men were wrong. The Free Will Baptists were told by their would-be instructors that feet-washing was not continued after the Pentecost. Being a simple folk, they searched the early history of the church, and found that the Christian fathers did not only practice feet-washing, but also wrote about it, so they had no faith in those would-be instructors, but let them and their teachings go, and held the closer to Christ and His plain, simple teachings.

Again, the Free Will Baptists found by searching diligently, that all the standard encyclopedias said that washing the saints' feet was a religious rite, practiced by the early Christians. So they naturally felt that those who opposed the holy example of humility were wrong and not so well-informed as they pretended. The Free Will Baptists found by historical research that in the

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days of John Bunyan, feet-washing was mentioned by that writer, as a practice among the English Baptists, and they found that in our own beloved country that the Calvinistic Baptists practiced feet-washing before that body split or slabbed off of one another. Before the anti-Missionary, anti-Masonry faction turned out—excluded and non-fellowshipped the Missionary faction in 1832, this discovery only strengthened the Free Will Baptists in their faith—so they continued to wash feet.

Then the Free Will Baptists were told that St. John was the only apostle that mentioned feet-washing in connection with the supper, and this was sufficient evidence that it was not to be continued. This was a hard hit. It hurt. Some nearly fainted by the way-side., but the more thoughtful investigated and found that St. John wrote the last of the Gospels. His Gospel in the year 66 A. D., after all the other apostles were dead—and St. John seeing what Saints Matthew, Mark and Luke had omitted—left out of their Gospels—inserted in his own Gospel—thus making it sure. St. John's Gospel has many things taught in it that cannot be found elsewhere in Gospels. But no sane Bible student would reject them because they are not taught elsewhere. If washing the saints' feet is to be rejected because St. John is the only apostle that mentions it, then the same rule will apply to all things mentioned in St. John's Gospel not found in the others. For example, we are not to wash feet in connection with the Lord's supper because St. John is the only one of the apostles that mentions it. Nonsense! It needs no comment! So the Free Will Baptist did not give it: none of the apostles condemned or opposed it; the Christ established it. There is no act of the Christ so minutely described in the Bible as this simple act. Nothing is omitted—every detail given—not even our Lord's baptism is so minutely described as the simple act of washing the

disciples' feet. Why so particular? There is a reason for it. It was a simple, oriental custom, and is today a household duty—made sacred and holy by the Master—placed in the church for a purpose—a duty—an example. Briefly let us examine it—let us see how minutely it is described. 1st, Finished supper. 2nd, Riseth up. 3rd, Takes a towel. 4th, Girds himself with it. 5th, Takes a basin. 6th, Poureth water. 7th, Begins to wash the disciples' feet. Why this minute description? Why this itemized statement of our Lord's actions if no importance is to be attached to the act? Remember too, this is inspiration: Why did not the apostles merely write "Supper over he washed their feet?" But this single action of Christ is singled out of all his actions and minutely described—because God in the form of man is teaching humility to his church. I have done it; so do you—it was not new, it was an old custom—with a new meaning—a spiritual meaning—an everyday household act—made a church act—given a spiritual meaning.

The unleavened bread used in the supper was not new. The Jews had eaten it for fifteen hundred years—once a year. It was not new; it was an old creation! Jesus took this old custom, placed it in His new church; gave this old custom of unleavened bread a new meaning; a spiritual meaning. "Eat it in remembrance of me; till I come again." The Jesus ate the unleavened bread in His own house—once a year. Christ took it and made it a custom in His house, the newly constituted church, and gave it another meaning—a spiritual meaning. Likewise, washing feet was an old custom among the Jews. Jesus takes this old custom; places it in His house—the church, and gives it a new spiritual meaning. "Ye ought to do it," he says, and they did do it, and as the apostles went from place to place establishing churches, they taught us also to wash the saints' feet, because the early

Christians practiced it in connection with and immediately after the Lord's supper." St. Jerome and St. Augustine both mention it. Christ established but little new things—but took the old customs and gave them new, spiritual meanings. His most instructive lessons were taught by old, familiar things. So long as man is vain, proud, boastful, he needs and will need a lesson of humility and brotherly love. Christ could not humble himself in a better way, if He could have He would have chosen the better way. Again, the Christ could not have chosen a better way to teach His disciples a lesson of humility and a life of service.

"The Son of Man is not come to be served, but to serve." There was no better way to teach this precept than by serving them, and He served. "Ye are servants, not masters: I have given you an example." I have taught you how to serve. The Christ, Master, Lord served. "Do ye also." The Free Will Baptists, a little people, a simple folk, knew no better than to follow the Master, accepting Him, the Blessed Christ their Saviour, Priest, King and Lawgiver.

They can not do otherwise than follow His teachings, and be true servants. The world must excuse them for their blind stubbornness in persisting in following and practicing this holy example of Christ. Having accepted Christ, the Free Will Baptists know no other authority for doctrine. Being a simple folk, others must excuse them for not accepting their free instructions—showing them that it is not necessary to do what Jesus says, "ye ought to do." The only true real reason the Free Will Baptists can give for washing feet is Jesus Christ said, "ye ought to do it." The only real, true authority the Free Will Baptists can give for washing feet is Jesus Christ.

The Free Will Baptists believe in the resurrection;



judgment, eternal life for the saved in Christ, eternal punishment for the unsaved out of Christ, home missions, Sunday Schools, and all good works which the God hath fore-ordained we should walk in, speak where the Bible speaks, silent when it is silent, accepting the New Testament as an infallible guide for faith and doctrine. The Free Will Baptists recognize no earthly head of the church—"Christ is the head of the church"—no earthly power has the right to dictate to the church. "My kingdom is not of this world"—church and state cannot mix.

The Free Will Baptists recognize God's word as supreme authority on all divine things.

Now reader, I have briefly stated what "Free Will Baptists Believe and Why." I have not worried you with book, chapter and verse, but can do so. It is yours now—all I ask is a fair, honest investigation, and you shall try us. We plead guilty to the charge of believing and preaching these things. You shall try us.

And, dear reader, all we ask is to be tried by the New Testament in all fairness. The Free Will Baptists are willing to be judged and condemned by the teachings of the Christ. So mote it be. This is a simple little affair. No claims are made for it except that it is a statement of facts believed and taught by Free Will Baptists.

"Not unto us, not unto us, Oh Lord, be the Glory, Honor and Power, but unto Thee. Amen."

