

Session 3: Article II - Free Will

Readings from the Book of Concord

- *Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will*
- *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article II, Free Will*

If you are using the *Concordia: A Reader's Version of the Book of Concord*, **Paul T. McCain** the contents for discussion can be found at the following:

- *Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will*, pp. 477-479
- *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article II, Free Will*, pp. 520-526.

Other foundational readings concerning the Article of *Free Will* can be found in the Lutheran Confessions at the following locations:

- Augsburg Confession, Article XVIII, (*The Concordia* pp. 40-41)
- Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article XVIII, (*The Concordia* pp. 197-198)

Brief Summary of Article II: Free Will

After the fall into sin and before spiritual regeneration the will of man is unable, by its own natural powers, to ...

understand, believe, accept, think, will, begin, effect, do, cooperate, or work toward its spiritual rebirth and renewal.

The Status of the Controversy and the Chief Question

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

1] *Since the will of man is found in **four unlike states**, namely:*

1. *before the Fall;*
2. *since the Fall;*
3. *after regeneration;*
4. *after the resurrection of the body,*

*the **chief question** is only concerning the will and ability of man **in the second state**,*

*namely, what powers in spiritual things he has of himself after the fall of our first parents and before regeneration, and **whether he is able by his own powers**, prior to and before his regeneration by God's Spirit, to dispose and prepare himself for God's grace, and to accept [and apprehend], or not, the grace offered through the Holy Ghost in the Word and holy [divinely instituted] Sacraments.*

The Four States of the Will

- before the Fall into sin
- since the Fall into sin and before regeneration
- after regeneration
- after the resurrection

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article II, Free Will

2] *For since man with [respect to] his free will is found and can be considered in **four distinct, dissimilar states**,*

***the question at present** is not what was the condition of the same before the Fall, or what he is able to do since the Fall and before his conversion in external things which pertain to this temporal life; also not what sort of a free will he will*

have in spiritual things after he has been regenerated and is controlled by God's Spirit, or when he rises from the dead.

*But the **principal question is only and alone**, what the intellect and will of the unregenerate man is able to do in his conversion and regeneration from his own powers remaining after the Fall; whether he is able, when the Word of God is preached, and the grace of God is offered us, to prepare himself for grace, accept the same, and assent thereto.*

This is the question upon which, for quite a number of years now, there has been a controversy among some theologians in the churches of the Augsburg Confession.

(after the Fall and before regeneration)

What is the intellect and will of man able to do in spiritual and divine matters?

The Third Article of the Creed

*I believe that **I cannot by my own reason or strength believe** in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith;*

even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will give to me and to all believers in Christ everlasting life.

This is most certainly true.

What does the Bible Say? We believe, teach and confess!

we are spiritually blind and foolish

Ephesians 4:18-19: "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

1 Corinthians 2:12-16: "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?"

But we have the mind of Christ.

Romans 1:18-23: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Psalm 19: The Natural and Revealed Knowledge of God

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

2] 1. Concerning this subject, our doctrine, faith, and confession is, that in spiritual things the understanding and reason of man are [altogether] blind, and by their own powers understand nothing, as it is written 1 Cor. 2:14: The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them when he is examined concerning spiritual things.

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article II, Free Will

the “foolishness” of human reason

natural knowledge of God and the revealed knowledge of God

9] For, first, although man's reason or natural intellect indeed has still a dim spark of the knowledge that there is a God, as also of the doctrine of the Law, Rom. 1:19ff, yet it is so ignorant, blind, and perverted that when even the most ingenious and learned men upon earth read or hear the Gospel of the Son of God and the promise of eternal salvation,

***they cannot from their own powers** perceive, apprehend, understand, or believe and regard it as true, but the more diligence and earnestness they employ, wishing to comprehend these spiritual things with their reason, the less they understand or believe, and before they become enlightened and are taught by the Holy Ghost, they regard all this only as foolishness or fictions.*

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list of Bible verses

(paragraph 10)

1 Corinthians 2:14: “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

1 Corinthians 1:21: “... but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles ...”

Ephesians 4:17-19: "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

Romans 3:11-12: "As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

Matthew 13: The Parable of the Sower and the Seed

we are spiritually dead

Ephesians 2:1-3: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Colossians 2:13: "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

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*Likewise, the Scriptures teach that man in sins is not only weak and sick, but defunct and **entirely dead**, Eph. 2:1. 5; Col. 2:13.*

11] Now, just as a man who is physically dead cannot of his own powers prepare or adapt himself to obtain temporal life again, so the man who is spiritually dead in sins cannot of his own strength adapt or apply himself to the acquisition of

spiritual and heavenly righteousness and life, unless he is delivered and quickened by the Son of God from the death of sin.

12] Therefore the Scriptures deny to the intellect, heart, and will of the natural man all aptness, skill, capacity, and ability to think, to understand, to be able to do, to begin, to will, to undertake, to act, to work or to concur in working anything good and right in spiritual things as of himself.

Psalm 119 and the Receptive Life

vita passiva

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*15] Here belong also all the prayers of the saints in which they pray that they may be taught, enlightened, and sanctified by God, and by this very act declare that they **cannot obtain** those things which they ask of God from their own natural powers; as, **in Ps. 119 alone** David prays more than ten times that God would impart to him understanding, that he might rightly comprehend and learn the divine doctrine. [Very many] similar prayers are in the writings of Paul, Eph. 1:17; Col. 1:9; Phil. 1:9.*

These prayers and passages concerning our ignorance and inability have been written for us, not for the purpose of rendering us idle and remiss in reading, hearing, and meditating upon God's Word, but, first, that we should thank God from the heart that by His Son He has delivered us from the darkness of ignorance and the captivity of sin and death, and through Baptism and the Holy Ghost regenerated and illumined us.

*16] And after God through the Holy Ghost in Baptism has kindled and effected a beginning of the true knowledge of God and faith, we should pray Him without ceasing that through the same spirit and His grace, **by means of the daily exercise of reading and practising God's Word**, He would preserve in us faith and His heavenly gifts, strengthen us from day to day, and keep us to the end. For unless God Himself be our schoolmaster, we can study and learn nothing that is acceptable to Him and salutary to ourselves and others.*

What does the Bible Say? We believe, teach and confess!

we not only are turned away from God

BUT ALSO

turned against God (enemy)

Genesis 6:5: “The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”

Genesis 8:21: “The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.”

Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”

Ezekiel 36:25-28: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Romans 5:9-10: “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Romans 7:18-23: “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing.

Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Romans 8:6-8: "The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Galatians 5:17: "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want."

Ephesians 2:1-10: Dead in sin but made alive in Jesus Christ

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

*3] 2. Likewise we believe, teach, and confess that the unregenerate will of man is not only **turned away from God**, but also has **become an enemy of God**, so that it only has an inclination and desire for that which is evil and contrary to God, as it is written Gen. 8:21: The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. Also Rom. 8:7: The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be. Yea, as little as a dead body can quicken itself to bodily, earthly life, so little can man, who by sin is spiritually dead, raise himself to spiritual life, as it is written Eph. 2:5: Even when we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ; 2 Cor. 3:5: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything good as of ourselves, but that we are sufficient is of God.*

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article II, Free Will

*25] Thirdly, in this manner, too, the Holy Scriptures ascribe conversion, faith in Christ, regeneration, renewal, and all that belongs to their efficacious beginning and completion, **not to the human powers** of the natural free will, neither entirely nor half, nor in any, even the least or most inconsiderable part, but in solidum, that is, entirely, solely, to the divine working and the Holy Ghost, as also the Apology teaches.*

26] Reason and free will are able to a certain extent to live an **outwardly decent life**; but to be born anew, and to obtain inwardly another heart, mind, and disposition, this only the Holy Ghost effects. He opens the understanding and heart to understand the Scriptures and to give heed to the Word

**List of Bible Verses
(paragraph 26)**

**Reference to the Confessions
(paragraph 29-43)**

AC, Art. XX (29-32,36)

Apology, Art. XVIII (70-73)

Smalcald Articles, Sin, III, I 5, 10,

Smalcald Articles, Redemption, III, III, 40

Large Catechism, II, (52-53)

Small Catechism, Third Article of the Creed

Small Catechism, Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer

Luther's *Bondage of the Will*

**What does the Bible Say?
We believe, teach and confess!**

**we are a servant and slave to sin
captives of the Devil**

John 8:34: "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin."

Ephesians 2:1-3: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

2 Timothy 2:25-26: ²"Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

Titus 3:3: "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another."

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*7] Namely, that in spiritual and divine things the intellect, heart, and will of the unregenerate man are **utterly unable, by their own natural powers**, to understand, believe, accept, think, will, begin, effect, do, work, or concur in working anything, but they are entirely dead to what is good, and corrupt, so that in man's nature since the Fall, before regeneration, there is **not the least spark of spiritual power** remaining, nor present, by which, of himself, he can prepare himself for God's grace, or accept the offered grace, nor be capable of it for and of himself, or apply or accommodate himself thereto, or by his own powers be able of himself, as of himself, to aid, do, work, or concur in working anything towards his conversion, either wholly, or half, or in any, even the least or most inconsiderable part; but that he is the servant [and slave] of sin, John 8:34, and a captive of the devil, by whom he is moved, Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:26.*

*Hence the natural free will according to its perverted disposition and nature is **strong and active only with respect to** what is displeasing and contrary to God.*

What does the Bible Say? We believe, teach and confess!

the Triune God works through means (against the teaching of the “Enthusiasts”)

Romans 1:16_17: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith.

Romans 10:13-17: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?"

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Psalms 95:8: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert ..."

Acts 16:14: "One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

John 15:5: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

1 Corinthians 1:27-31: "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

2 Corinthians 12:5: "I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses."

Jeremiah 9:23-24: "This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord , who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord .

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*4] 3. God the Holy Ghost, however, **does not effect conversion without means**, but uses for this purpose the preaching and hearing of God's Word, as it is written Rom. 1:16: The Gospel is the power of God 5] unto salvation to every one that believeth. Also Rom. 10:17: Faith cometh by hearing of the Word of God.*

And it is God's will that His Word should be heard, and that man's ears should not be closed. Ps. 95:8. With this Word the Holy Ghost is present, and opens hearts, so that they, as Lydia in Acts 16:14, are attentive to it, and are thus converted alone through the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, whose 6] work alone the conversion of man is.

For without His grace, and if He do not grant the increase, our willing and running, our planting, sowing, and watering, all are nothing, as Christ says John 15:5: Without Me ye can do nothing.

*With these brief words He **denies to the free will its powers**, and **ascribes everything to God's grace**, in order that no one may boast before God. 1 Cor. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:5; Jer. 9:23.*

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article II, Free Will

*48] For this reason we shall now relate, furthermore, from God's Word **how man is converted to God, how and through what means** (namely, through the oral Word and the holy Sacraments) the Holy Ghost wants to be efficacious in us, and*

to work and bestow in our hearts true repentance, faith, and new spiritual power and ability for good, and how we should conduct ourselves towards these means, and [how we should] use them.

**after conversion we cooperate with the Holy Spirit
but only in great weakness**

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article II, Free Will

*65] From this, then, it follows that as soon as the Holy Ghost, as has been said, through the Word and holy Sacraments, has begun in us this His work of regeneration and renewal, it is certain that through the power of the Holy Ghost **we can and should cooperate, although still in great weakness.***

But this [that we cooperate] does not occur from our carnal natural powers, but from the new powers and gifts which the Holy Ghost has begun in us in conversion, 66] as St. Paul expressly and earnestly exhorts that as workers together with Him we receive not the grace of God in vain, 2 Cor. 6:1.

But this is to be understood in no other way than that the converted man does good to such an extent and so long as God by His Holy Spirit rules, guides, and leads him, and that as soon as God would withdraw His gracious hand from him, he could not for a moment persevere in obedience to God.

the difference between baptized and unbaptized

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article II, Free Will

*67] Therefore there is a great difference between baptized and unbaptized men. For since, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, Gal. 3:27, all who have been baptized have put on Christ, and thus are truly regenerate, they have now arbitrium liberatum (**a liberated will**), that is, as Christ says, they have been made free again, John 8:36; whence they are able not only to hear the Word, but also to assent to it and accept it, although in great weakness.*

68] *For since we receive in this life only the first-fruits of the Spirit, and the new birth is not complete, **but only begun in us**, the combat and struggle of the flesh against the spirit remains even in the elect and truly regenerate men;*

for there is a great difference perceptible among Christians not only in this, that one is weak and another strong in the spirit, but each Christian, moreover, experiences in himself that at one time he is joyful in spirit, and at another fearful and alarmed; at one time ardent in love, strong in faith and hope, and at another cold and weak.

not rebaptized but converted again

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article II, Free Will

69] *But when the baptized have acted against their conscience, allowed sin to rule in them, and thus have grieved and lost the Holy Ghost in them, they need not be rebaptized, but must be converted again, as has been sufficiently said before.*

What Does the Bible Say? We reject and condemn!

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

7] *Accordingly, we reject and condemn all the following errors as contrary to the standard of God's Word:*

the Stoics and Manicheans the spiritual life determined by coercion (by “force” or “fatalism”)

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

8] 1. *The delirium [insane dogma] of philosophers who are called Stoics, as also of the Manicheans, who taught that everything that happens must so happen,*

and cannot happen otherwise, and that everything that man does, even in outward things, he does by compulsion, and that he is coerced to evil works and deeds, as in chastity, robbery, murder, theft, and the like.

the “gross” Pelagians

“man has the power to turn himself toward God”

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

9] 2. We reject also the error of the gross Pelagians, who taught that man by his own powers, without the grace of the Holy Ghost, can turn himself to God, believe the Gospel, be obedient from the heart to God's Law, and thus merit the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

the “semi” Pelagians

“man begins the work and God completes it”

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

10] 3. We reject also the error of the Semi-Pelagians, who teach that man by his own powers can make a beginning of his conversion, but without the grace of the Holy Ghost cannot complete it.

the Synergist

“God begins the work and man completes it”

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

11] 4. Also, when it is taught that, although man by his free will before regeneration is too weak to make a beginning, and by his own powers to turn himself to God, and from the heart to be obedient to God, yet, if the Holy Ghost by the preaching of the Word has made a beginning, and therein offered His grace, then the will of man from its own natural powers can add something, though

little and feebly, to this end, can help and cooperate, qualify and prepare itself for grace, and embrace and accept it, and believe the Gospel.

Perfectionism or Holiness Movement
“after the spiritual rebirth man is made righteous
by his perfect obedience”

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

12] 5. Also, that man, after he has been born again, can perfectly observe and completely fulfill God's Law, and that this fulfilling is our righteousness before God, by which we merit eternal life.

the “Enthusiasts”
“God works regeneration apart from means”

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

13] 6. Also, we reject and condemn the error of the Enthusiasts, who imagine that God without means, without the hearing of God's Word, also without the use of the holy Sacraments, draws men to Himself, and enlightens, justifies, and saves them. (Enthusiasts we call those who expect the heavenly illumination of the Spirit [celestial revelations] without the preaching of God's Word.)

The substance and essence of the Old Adam is destroyed
and a new substance and essence is created

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

14] 7. Also, that in conversion and regeneration God entirely exterminates the substance and essence of the old Adam, and especially the rational soul, and in conversion and regeneration creates a new essence of the soul out of nothing.

false and misleading phrases

“the Holy Spirit is given to those who resist Him intentionally”
“God draws, but He draws the willing”

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

15] 8. Also, when the following expressions are employed without explanation, namely, that the will of man before, in, and after conversion resists the Holy Ghost, and that the Holy Ghost is given to those who resist Him intentionally and persistently; for, as Augustine says, in conversion God makes willing persons out of the unwilling and dwells in the willing.

16] As to the expressions of ancient and modern teachers of the Church, when it is said: *Deus trahit, sed volentem trahit, i. e., God draws, but He draws the willing; likewise, Hominis voluntas in conversione non est otiosa, sed agit aliquid, i. e., In conversion the will of man is not idle, but also effects something, we maintain that, inasmuch as these expressions have been introduced for confirming [the false opinion concerning] the powers of the natural free will in man's conversion, against the doctrine of God's grace, they do not conform to the form of sound doctrine, and therefore, when we speak of conversion to God, justly ought to be avoided.*

correct and helpful phrases

“God makes out of unwilling men, willing ones”
“the regenerate will of man is not idle, but cooperates with the Spirit”

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

17] But, on the other hand, it is correctly said that in conversion God, through the drawing of the Holy Ghost, makes out of stubborn and unwilling men willing ones, and that after such conversion in the daily exercise of repentance the regenerate will of man is not idle, but also cooperates in all the works of the Holy Ghost, which He performs through us.

18] 9. Also what Dr. Luther has written, namely, that man's will in his conversion is pure passive, that is, that it does nothing whatever, is to be understood *respectu divinae gratiae in accendendis novis motibus*, that is, when God's Spirit, through the Word heard or the use of the holy Sacraments, lays hold upon man's will, and works [in man] the new birth and conversion. For when [after] the Holy Ghost has wrought and accomplished this, and man's will has been changed and renewed by His divine power and working alone, then the new will of man is an instrument and organ of God the Holy Ghost, so that he not only accepts grace, but also cooperates with the Holy Ghost in the works which follow.

the two “efficient causes” of conversion

the Holy Spirit and the Word of God

NOT the will of man

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II, Free Will

19] Therefore, before the conversion of man there are **only two efficient causes**, namely, the Holy Ghost and the Word of God, as the instrument of the Holy Ghost, by which He works conversion. This Word man is [indeed] to hear; however, it is not by his own powers, but only through the grace and working of the Holy Ghost that he can yield faith to it and accept it.

The Third Article of the Creed

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith;

even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will give to me and to all believers in Christ everlasting life. This is most certainly true.