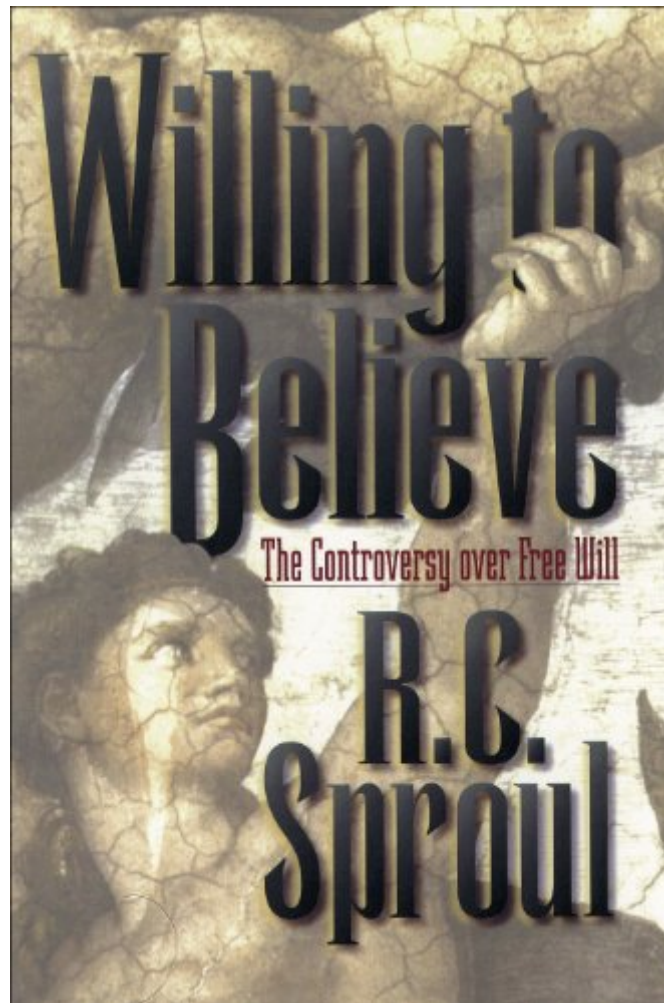




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Willing To Believe: The Controversy Over Free Will



Synopsis

What is the role of the will in believing the good news of the gospel? Why is there so much controversy over free will throughout church history? R. C. Sproul finds that Christians have often been influenced by pagan views of the human will that deny the effects of Adam's fall. In *Willing to Believe*, Sproul traces the free-will controversy from its formal beginning in the fifth century, with the writings of Augustine and Pelagius, to the present. Readers will gain understanding into the nuances separating the views of Protestants and Catholics, Calvinists and Arminians, and Reformed and Dispensationalists. This book, like Sproul's *Faith Alone*, is a major work on an essential evangelical tenet.

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Customer Reviews

Sproul's book "*Willing to Believe*" is different from his other books that expound on, and defend, Calvinism such as *Chosen by God* and *Grace Unknown*. In this book he focuses primarily on the nature of the human will as it has been defined by prominent thinkers throughout Church history, especially as it is related to the topics of sin and salvation (regeneration primarily). As Sproul shows,

the Calvinistic understanding of the human will has its roots in Augustine and the distinction between freedom (defined as "the ability to choose w/o external constraint") and liberty (defined as "the ability to choose righteousness"). Liberty is lost because of the Adamic Fall; however, freedom as defined above is not. The two terms, liberty and freedom, are not considered synonymous as they are for many today which is one of the reasons for misunderstanding from critics. Also, Augustine isn't consistent in his use of terminology, as Sproul mildly points out, and therefore at times "seems to deny all freedom to the will of fallen man" (pg. 63). This inconsistency is seen, for example, in Sproul's quote on pages 63 - 64 from the Enchiridion where Augustine states that man, by the evil use of his "free-will" destroyed both it and himself. Later in the same quote Augustine uses the term "true liberty" in reference to freedom from sin thereby implying that "liberty" is synonymous with "free will" with the only difference being the adjectival term "true". One must understand that Sproul "helps" Augustine be consistent. What Augustine calls "true liberty" Sproul simply calls "liberty" in contrast to "freedom" in general in accordance with the above definitions. Now, notice the definition given for "freedom."

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