

What does Orthodoxy teach about “free will”?

Free will is man's unrestricted ability to decide from reason, which leads to doing good and evil. This reason was complete in its perfection during the state of man's innocence (before the Fall), but became damaged on account of sin. However, although the will remained inclined to evil (after the Fall) it is still nevertheless able to choose to do good. St. Basil the Great: "From one's intention and free will anyone can be holy or the opposite." And in the Gospel of St. John: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). If this were not the case (use of free will) it would not be possible for St. Paul to write of "the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds" (Rom. 2: 5-6). How could we be judged by God by according to our deeds if our will is incapable of choosing between good and evil?