

3. Relationship to Salvation

- a. Man's Fallen State ("total depravity")
"moral inability" (man's fallen condition in which he cannot please God or exercise saving faith) is not a lack of human freedom or natural ability but a lack of inclination or desire; man is still responsible for his choices (our sinful condition produces our most compelling spiritual desires that are against God) ("Bondage of the Will" – Luther)
- b. God's Supernatural Work ("irresistible grace")
Regeneration/Conversion – God's sovereign work of grace in overcoming our rebellion and creating new desires by which we willingly (freely) believe in Christ (e.g., Acts 16:14)

4. Biblical Evidence

"Text after text in Scripture indicate situations in which human beings do precisely what they most want to do, they are both free and responsible for their actions. But at the very same time, what those humans freely choose to do, in turn, accomplishes precisely what God has ordained and determined that they do." (Bruce Ware, *God's Greater Glory*, p. 82)

- Genesis 50:19-20 – Joseph
- Exodus 4:21-23 – Pharaoh (see also Deut. 2:30; Josh. 11:20; Ps. 105:25)
- Proverbs 16:9
- Judges 4:14; 1 Samuel 2:25; 2 Samuel 24:1; 1 Kings 12:15
- Isaiah 10:5-19 – Assyria
- Acts 4:27-28 – death of Jesus

Suggested Reading:

- *What About Free Will?* (Scott Christensen)
- *God Greater Glory*, Ch. 3 (Bruce Ware)
- *Willing to Believe* (R.C. Sproul)
- *Chosen By God*, Ch. 3 (R.C. Sproul)
- *On the Freedom of the Will* (Jonathan Edwards)

Sunday School:

What is Reformed Theology?

February 12, 2017

Week 9: Free Will

Introduction

1. What is at stake in this issue is the sovereignty of God's grace in salvation (the heart of the Reformer's theology)
2. Problem or Perceived Tension – God's sovereignty in some sense over all things and human beings moral responsibility for their free choices.
3. General Definition of "Free Will" – *the idea that humans are designed by God with the capacity for freely making choices for which they are responsible*

Background: Views of the Sovereignty of God

A. Reformed View

1. *Divine Determinism* – God meticulously determines all events that transpire, including human choices ("God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass:" *The Westminster Confession of Faith*)
2. *Compatibilism* – the belief that divine determinism is compatible with human free will (a dual explanation for every choice humans make)

B. Arminian View

1. *Non-determinism* – God limits His sovereign control so that He does not causally determine human actions (He has exhaustive foreknowledge and limits choices)
2. *Libertarianism* – the view that free will is incompatible with divine determinism (determinism undermines human freedom and moral responsibility)

Libertarian Freedom (Arminian View)

1. Two Fundamental Ideas:
 - a. The Power of Contrary Choice – at the very moment of choice, we are free in making that choice if (and only if) in choosing what we do, we could have chosen otherwise
 - b. Self-Determining Choice -- the ability of the will to choose without any prior causation, determinism or inclination (“the liberty of indifference”); internal or external influences are not sufficient to determine our choices
2. Relationship to God’s Sovereignty
 - a. God is sovereign in bestowing this freedom, but in so doing he cannot, by definition, control what we do with our freedom; God can exert His strong persuasion and influence but these can be resisted
 - b. This freedom is said to be necessary in order to make possible genuine love and goodness (“not robots”); also used to explain the origin of evil and sin
3. Problems with Libertarian Freedom
 - a. Our choices are reduced to arbitrariness or randomness (no explanation), which destroys any notion of virtue or vice
 - b. God is made contingent upon man’s will; He cannot be said to have ordained any human action or act to guarantee any action involving human choices
 - c. The dilemma of “foreknowledge” – God cannot infallibly foreknow man’s free choices in this view of freedom (foreknowledge renders choices certain); God cannot intervene to prevent evil or respond to our choices based on His foreknowledge since if He infallibly foreknows a thing, that thing will occur
 - d. Does not account for man in his redeemed, glorified state – absolutely free and not able to sin

Compatibilist Freedom (Reformed View)

1. *Freedom of Inclination*: freedom consists in the power to choose according to what we are most inclined to do; we are free when we choose to do what we want (voluntary action)
 - a. The will is always caused – “the will always chooses according to its strongest inclination at the moment” (J. Edwards, *On the Freedom of the Will*); our choices are determined by our desires which are produced by a confluence of multiple factors both external and internal
 - b. Man’s responsibility and accountability is grounded in his ability to freely choose according to his desires; his choices are “self-determined” and therefore accountable; (“free agents” not “free will”)
 - c. Lack of liberty/freedom – if we lack natural ability to do what we desire (restraint) or we are forced or coerced to act in ways contrary to our desire (constraint)
2. Relationship to God’s Sovereignty
 - a. *Concurrence* – God directs and works through the distinctive properties of each created thing, so that these themselves bring about the result which God has determined; God is the *ultimate* cause, we are the *proximate* cause (two wills – dual explanation for every action)
 - b. God, in the mystery of his providence, is able to be involved in the vast number of influences upon us which produce our desires, yet, since we choose according to our greatest inclinations, we act freely (no violence is done to our liberty; no coercion)
 - c. We freely choose to do what God has ordained and determined (predestined) to occur