

“Am I Really Free or Has God Determined Everything?”

The relationship between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility is a difficult issue to reconcile from the Scripture. We are going to examine two extreme options and then look at the Scripture for some biblical balance.

Battle of wills

I. God’s choice

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world ... In love, he predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us.”

—Ephesians 1:3-6

“To those who reside as aliens scattered throughout [Asia Minor], who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”

—1 Peter 1:1-2

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

—Jeremiah 1:5

“Though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls.”

—Romans 9:11

“For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak ... to shame the ... strong.”

—1 Cor. 1:26-29

II. Man’s Responsibility

“But as many as received him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

—John 1:12-13

“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed ... work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

—Phil. 2:12-13

“So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?’”

—Romans 9:18-19

“Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

—Romans 10

A. Arminian position

B. Calvinist position

T - U - L - I - P

C. Balanced position

How determinative is god?

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good ... For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son ... and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

—Romans 8:28-30

How free/resistant is man?

The “imperative or ... wishes, by which is signified, not what we can do, or do do ... but what we ought to do, and what is required of us, so that our impotence may be made known to us and the know-ledge of sin may be given to us.”

—Luther

“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

—Romans 6:17-18

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us."

—1 John 1:8-9

"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

—Ezekiel 36:26-27

"We ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body."

—Romans 8:23

"This man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."

—Acts 2:23

"Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God."

—2 Peter 3:11-12

III. Together in use

A. Rest secure

"That which we have turned into a puzzle to our minds was originally intended to be a pillow for our hearts."

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."

—1 John 5:13

B. Revere god

"Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How un-searchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"

—Rom 11:33

C. Reach lost

"I endure all things for ... those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain salvation."

—2 Tim 2:10