

Workshop: Free Will vs. Predestination

Calvinism	Arminianism
John Calvin (1509-1564), French	Jacob Arminius (1560-1609), Dutch
<p>1. Total Depravity Every aspect of humanity is tainted by sin; therefore, human beings are unable to come to God on their own accord. [Romans 3:11-12] [John 6:44,65]</p>	<p>1. Partial Depravity Every aspect of humanity is tainted by sin, but not to the extent that humans are unable to place faith in God of their own accord. [John 12:32; 16:8]</p>
<p>2. Unconditional Election God elects individuals to salvation based entirely on His will alone, not on anything inherent in the individual. [Ephesians 1:4-5] [1 Peter 2:8] [Romans 9:16, 18, 22-24]</p>	<p>2. Conditional Election God elects individuals to salvation based on His foreknowledge of who will believe in Christ unto salvation. [Ephesians 1:13] [Romans 4:4-5, 8:29] [Galatians 2:16] [1 Peter 1:1-2]</p>
<p>3. Limited Atonement The belief that Jesus only died for the elect (the people chosen by God to be saved). [Matthew 1:21] [John 10:11,15, 26-27; 15:13] [Acts 20:28]</p>	<p>3. Universal Atonement The belief that Jesus died for all, but that His death is not effectual until a person believes. Christ's atonement is therefore <i>sufficient</i> for all people, but <i>effective</i> only for those who believe. [John 1:29] [1 John 2:2] [2 Corinthians 5:19] [1 Tim. 4:10] [Hebrews 2:9]</p>
<p>4. Irresistible Grace When God calls a person to salvation, that person will inevitably come to salvation. [Romans 9:16] [John 6:37, 44, 65; 15:16]</p>	<p>4. Resistible Grace God calls all to salvation, but that many people resist and reject this call. [Matthew 23:37] [Hebrews 4:2] [Luke 7:29-30]</p>
<p>5. Perseverance of the Saints A person who is elected by God will persevere in faith and will never deny Christ or turn away from Him. ("Once saved, always saved") [2 Peter 1:10] [Hebrews 3:6, 14] [Colossians 1:23]</p>	<p>5. Falling from Grace A believer in Christ can, of his/her own free will, turn away from Christ and thereby lose salvation. [Hebrews 3:12; 6:4-6; 10:26-27]</p>

Implications for Evangelism	Implications for Evangelism
<p><i>Positive:</i> “Since Christ has elected people to salvation, I can persevere in witnessing with the confidence that I will be fruitful.”</p>	<p><i>Positive:</i> “I am motivated to share my faith because I know that more will be saved if I am faithful as Christ's ambassador. Evangelism is both a privilege and a responsibility.”</p>
<p><i>Negative:</i> “If God has already decided who will be saved and irresistibly calls them, does it really matter whether I witness or not?”</p>	<p><i>Negative:</i> “Evangelism is a heavy burden since my friend's salvation depends on my witness.”</p>

Divine Sovereignty versus Free Will¹

The Christian faith presents us with a dilemma. On the one hand, we believe that *God made us morally responsible beings with the ability to make meaningful moral decisions*. If we were not able to make meaningful decisions, then why would Scripture exhort us to turn from evil things or to lead godly lives? If we were not responsible for freely choosing our actions, then how could God justly reward or punish us for them?

On the other hand, Christians also believe that *God has sovereign control over all earthly affairs*. He is the Lord of history and the Lord of our lives. We go to bed each night with the assurance that everything that occurs fits into his all-encompassing, preordained plan. Nothing can thwart God’s plan; all that occurs is in keeping with his will.

The dilemma becomes clear. Can both of these basic Christian beliefs be true? If we are really able to make meaningful moral decisions, then must we not be able to act against God's will? If this is so, then how can we maintain that all that occurs is in keeping with his will? If humans are free, how can God be sovereign? On the other hand, if God is in control, how can human choices be real? In what sense can we be held responsible for actions if God is responsible for everything? Can we be free and yet predestined?

While most Christians tend to believe in both divine sovereignty and free will, we tend to emphasize one to the exclusion of the other.

- Nuclear arms race
- Missionary candidate
- Christian college

There is a tendency to switch back and forth as we face different issues.

- Family member dies, “God chose to take him home,” *yet* start exercise program
- Begin trip with prayerful assurance that their safety is in God’s hands, *yet* still make sure tires are in good shape and seatbelts are worn

Case Study: Mary, nurse or doctor?

¹ John S. Feinberg, David Basinger, and Randall Basinger, *Predestination & Free Will : Four Views of Divine Sovereignty & Human Freedom* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986).