

Peace Adult Sunday School

Chosen by God - R.C. Sproul

Session 4 – Predestination and Free Will, Part 1

Discussion: What comes to mind when you hear the term “free will”?

“Predestination seems to cast a shadow on the very heart of human freedom. If God has decided our destinies from all eternity, it strongly suggests that our free choices are but charades, empty exercises in predetermined playacting. It is as though God wrote the script for us in concrete and we are merely carrying out his scenario.” (Sproul, 37)

So are we all just puppets in God’s millenia-long play?

The Bible clearly teaches that man has free will:

- Proverbs 16:9
- Joshua 24:15
- Deuteronomy 30:19-20
- James 1:13-16
- Mark 8:34
- Matthew 15:19

So the question becomes: How much free will do we have? Can we choose anything at any time, or is our free will limited? If it’s limited, is it truly “free will”?

Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 9

Views of Free Will

1. The Neutral-Will View: Choices are made with no prior bias.
2. The Edwards View: Choices are made in accordance with our greatest desire at the moment.

Which of these views is taught in Scripture?

Problems with the “Neutral-Will View:

- Choices are completely meaningless.
- Impossible to make a choice from a position of complete neutrality.

Edward’s view says that our mind is actively involved in our choices. They are neither arbitrary or meaningless. You look at multiple options, analyze the pros and cons of each, and make a decision based on your values. Sproul says:

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“According to Edwards a human being is not only free to choose what he desires but he *must* choose what he desires to be able to choose at all. What I call *Edward’s Law of Choice*” is this: ‘The will always chooses according to its strongest inclination at the moment.’ This means that every choice is free *and* every choice is determined.” (Sproul, 40)

Why did you come here this morning instead of staying home? Why did you choose to wear the clothing you have on this morning instead of the article of clothing next to it your closet? Why are you sitting in the second row today and not the third row? Because you chose according to your strongest inclination or desire at the moment. But those are “simple choices”? What about the more difficult choices? If a gunman says to give him your money or else, what do you choose? You obviously don’t “want” to give him your money, but if you do, does that mean your free will was violated? Were you coerced into doing something completely against your desires?

Moral and Natural Ability

Humans have various God-given natural abilities: our five senses, ability to talk, ability to walk, ability to make choices. But even those abilities are limited. We are not able to run 100 miles per hour. And there are certain things we cannot do on our own, such as flying. That is how God created us.

But are we limited in our God-given natural ability to make choices? Can we choose anything at any time? To get right at my point, is anyone able to choose to believe in Christ at any time?

To answer this question, we must look at what Scripture says about original sin and total depravity.

- Romans 5:12-19
- Ephesians 2:1
- Psalm 51:5

Our relationship to Adam in the Garden of Eden will be discussed more in depth later in two weeks, but it needed to be mentioned here. What we see from these passages (amongst many) is that due to our sin nature, we are corrupted to such an extent that we are morally unable to choose Christ unless a change happens in our hearts, and that is a change we cannot do ourselves. When we sin, it is because that is our greatest desire at the moment. And before our hearts are changed, we will always choose to sin because of our moral corruption in Adam. But our will is not being violated, we are freely choosing what we want.

The good news of the Gospel is that God freely and lovingly changes people’s hearts so they will choose to repent and place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and his work on the cross. Thanks be to God!