

FREE WILL: WHAT IT IS

- Free Will is the theological concept that God has given *free will* to human beings, allowing them to make moral, spiritual, and physical decisions of their own accord.
- In Salvation, free will involves the *ability* to hear the Gospel and receive the gift God offers within it.
- In morality, free will involves the personal responsibility to choose that which honors the Creator.
- In the physical realm, free will involves the ability to “eat, drink, and be merry” in whatever manner a person chooses to do so. Humanity can choose to get up or stay in bed, to go to work or reject work, to live here or live there, etc. The matters of physical life are not mandated by God.

FREE WILL: WHAT IT IS NOT

- Free Will is not the *ability* to save yourself, or to meet God half-way in Salvation. Free will give no spiritual, moral, or physical merit whatsoever in salvation. One cannot “free will” himself into Salvation.
- Free Will is not the *ability* to change the plans of God. Job 42:2
 - It does recognize that within the plans of God there are many areas of personal flexibility.
- Free Will is not binding God to obligation.
 - Luther said that *either man has free will and God is bound, or else God is free, and man has a bound will.*
 - Is it not possible for God to freely give man free will, at will?
 - Any obligation God has is of His own free will. He has obligated Himself to Abraham and his descendants, to the one who places trust in the completed work of Jesus Christ, etc.
 - It does not follow that God’s gift of free will means that God is responsible for evil (though the opposite position does require that God is responsible, for a man with no free will is not responsible for that which he is pre-programmed to do).

DOES FREE WILL HAVE A BIBLICAL BASIS?

- Man was given dominion of the earth (Genesis 1:26).
 - Either this was a true dominion or a farce.
- Man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

- While we do not know the full ramifications of being in His image, it is hard to imagine that this means that we are robotically controlled by God.

THE ATTACK ON FREE WILL

- Determinism is the opposite of free will.
- Determinism is not taught in the Scripture but is developed by certain theologians as the theological underpinning of their work.
 - John Piper: “How much of our daily life is sovereignly directed by God?” — is *all of it*, down to the tying of your shoelaces and the brushing of your teeth”¹
 - Kevin DeYoung: “There are no accidents in your life. Nothing has been left to chance. Every economic downturn, every phone call in the middle of the night, every oncology report has been sent to us from the God who sees all things, plans all things, and loves us more than we know.”²
- Calvinism wholly rejects the concept of free will, and free will is untenable with the Calvinistic system of predestination.
- Calvinistic creeds and catechisms teach that all things are mandated by God, who mandates them (good and evil) for His glory.

WHAT ABOUT ALL THOSE PASSAGES THAT TEACH DETERMINISM?

- Matthew 10:29 – it is about sparrows and God’s knowledge, not free will
- James 4:13-17 – this passage teaches that God can suddenly change circumstances, but does not prohibit free will.
- Proverbs 16:9 (what of Proverbs 21:29-31, which use the same Hebrew?)
- Proverbs 19:21 (see “Free Will: What it is Not”)
- Proverbs 20:24 (teaches that a man should understand the full picture of God’s work to fully understand the world, but does not negate free will)

THE PROBLEM THAT ARRISSES WITH FREE WILL

- Opponents of free will have developed a two-fold problem with free will:
 - Does God know the future?
 - Does man save himself?
- Both of these problems are *forced* from theological persuasion.
- Is God *sovereign* and *mature* enough to:
 - Know what man will do with the future *and* allow that to happen?
 - “He shouldn’t allow that” is to say, “He should determine the future” is to say, “He determined the present evil.”
 - To allow men, women, boys and girls a free-will opportunity to receive the gift of salvation?

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/does-god-direct-all-the-details-of-my-life>

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/all-things-in-fact/>