

Scriptures and Doctrine :: RE: Predestination - Freewill

RE: Predestination - Freewill - posted by rlms84, on: 2009/12/2 12:27

This is a struggle shared by many. Some to the point that they reject God because they cannot reconcile the fact that many people will face eternal punishment.

If you truly believe that all are predestined to their fate and you can do nothing about it then I can see the dilemma you face. Any theology that trips you up in this way needs to be thoroughly examined.

My way of looking at predestination vs. freewill is summed up in Matt 11:27,28

In verse 27 we see Jesus talking about predest.

"All things have been given to me by my Father; and no one has knowledge of the Son, but the Father; and no one has knowledge of the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will make it clear."

Then in verse 28 total freewill is taught

"Come to me, all you who are troubled and weighted down with care, and I will give you rest."

The Bible speaks of total predestination and total freewill in many other places.

I take by faith that the Word of God is true.

Therefore I believe in both.

This antithesis or impossibility to the mind of human reasoning is an actuality in the nature of God. Something that we will never understand in our present finite capability.

That said, it is my belief that only those who have rejected God's plan will suffer with those demons who rebelled against God.

The danger of only believing total predestination is that prayer has no meaning. No matter what you do a person will be saved or lost, including yourself.

This means that all the admonition to pray are useless exercises:

Ac 2:21 And whoever makes his prayer to the Lord will have salvation.

Mt 21:22 And all things, whatever you make request for in prayer, having faith, you will get.

Mt 24:20 And say a prayer that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

Now that is interesting, in that, if everything is predestined how come Jesus is telling the Jews to pray to change the season and the day of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Lu 10:2 And he said to them, There is much grain ready to be cut, but not enough workers: so make prayer to the Lord of the grain-fields that he will send workers to get in the grain.

We can also change God's mind concerning how many workers are sent to the fields through prayer.

There is much more, but, if we want to argue human wisdom in this matter, this is sufficient to show that prayer does change and influence the course of fate. In our pristine world of total predestination this would be illogical and the words of Jesus would only be a deception.

The flip side to this is total freewill, to the point that God will not change the mind of a person. I once stopped going to prayer meeting with a person because they kept telling me this to the point they were shaking my faith as I was praying for salvation for people in the community.

My point is that you can pray for a person and God will intervene on their behalf. If you doubt this read Charles Finney's autobiography. But, this puts the pressure on the Church to pray and share the gospel. I have seen people that left the way many times come back through the sheer force of being prayed for by groups of people who had faith.

Satan loves both extremes because it robs Christians of the faith that makes their prayers effective when praying for the lost.

As soldiers in the Kingdom of God it is our duty to follow the orders given us by Jesus, not to try and figure out things we will not understand until we are in his presence.

When our logic leads us to question a God who would sacrifice so much for us, just so we could be in fellowship with him, means that we have probably followed a faulty logic trail.

This is the answer that God gave me after similar questions, hope it helps.

Re: - posted by Leo_Grace, on: 2009/12/2 12:36

Welcome to the forum, rlms84. I appreciate your post. It stands on faith in God's holiness and truth, not on human reasoning or logic. Thank you.

Quote:
-----As soldiers in the Kingdom of God it is our duty to follow the orders given us by Jesus, not to try and figure out things we will not understand until we are in his presence. When our logic leads us to question a God who would sacrifice so much for us, just so we could be in fellowship with him, means that we have probably followed a faulty logic trail. This is the answer that God gave me after similar questions, hope it helps.

:-)

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2009/12/2 12:52

Welcome to SI!

Balance is indeed key.

I have heard Spurgeon, MacArthur, Ryle, Piper, etc... all stress man's responsibility as well as God's sovereignty.

You go to heaven because of God.

You go to hell because of you.

Don't try to figure it out, just accept it as the truth it is.

Re: - posted by makrothumia (), on: 2009/12/2 14:08

Hi Tj,

I once read where Spurgeon was asked, "How do you reconcile God's sovereignty and man's free will." His answer was wonderful. He said,
"You don't need to reconcile friends."

Re: - posted by Jimotheus, on: 2009/12/3 18:37

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus.

This may come as a surprise to many because of certain theological presuppositions. There is no "struggle" concerning God's sovereignty and man's free will in the Holy Bible. The struggle is with the Calvinistic version of Divine sovereignty and man's free will. If you are a disciple of John Calvin, I understand why you may have difficulties in trying to reconcile the sovereignty of God and free will that God Himself gave unto men. One of the things I found amusing is the Calvinistic understanding of what it means to be spiritually dead. Let me relate what I mean by this. I heard a sermon preached by one of Sermonindex's most popular preachers wherein he compared in pure Calvinistic terms a spiritually dead person to a cadaver. I could not help but imagine this precious individual at a coroner's office inside the back freezer screaming at a dead person to prove his Calvinistic understanding of what it means to be spiritually dead. Astounding!! If the Calvinist want to scream at dead people to "prove" what Calvin believed about the spiritually dead is solely their enterprise if they so choose, but I hold to the Divine record of the Holy Bible as to how we should understand the sovereignty of God, and the free will He gave to all men.

Re: Predestination vs. fate - posted by savannah, on: 2009/12/3 23:07

rlms84,

You say, "If you truly believe that all are predestined to their fate and you can do nothing about it then I can see the dilemma you face."

No Dilemma. Consider the following:

PREDESTINATION

Is the decree of God, whereby he hath for his own glory fore-ordained whatever comes to pass. The verb predestinate is of Latin original (praedestino,) and signifies in that tongue to deliberate before-hand with one's self how one shall act, and, in consequence of such deliberation, to constitute, fore-ordain, and predetermine, where, when, how, and by whom any thing shall be done, and to what end it shall be done. So the Greek word which exactly answers to the English word predestinate, and is rendered by it, signifies to resolve before-hand with one's self what shall be done, and before the thing resolved on is actually effected; to appoint it to some certain use, and direct it to some determinate end. This doctrine has been the occasion of considerable disputes and controversies among divines. On the one side it has been observed, that it is impossible to reconcile it with our ideas of the justice and goodness of God, that it makes God to be the author of sin, destroys moral distinction, and renders all our efforts useless. Predestinarians deny these consequences, and endeavour to prove this doctrine from the consideration of the perfections of the divine nature, and from Scripture testimony. If his knowledge, say they, be infinite and unchangeable, he must have known every thing from eternity. If we allow the attribute of prescience, the idea of a decree must certainly be believed also, for how can an action that is really to come to pass be foreseen, if it be not determined? God knew every thing from the beginning; but this he could not have known if he had not so determined it. If, also, God be infinitely wise, it cannot be conceived that he would leave things at random, and have no plan. He is a God of order, and this order he observes as strictly in the moral as in the natural world, however conceived otherwise of God, is to degrade him, and is an insult to his perfections. If he, then, be wise and unchangeable, no new idea or purpose can arise in his mind; no alteration of his plan can take place, upon condition of his creatures acting in this or that way. To say that this doctrine makes him the author of sin, is not justifiable. We all allow omnipotence to be an attribute of Deity, and that by this attribute he could have prevented sin from entering into the world, had he chosen it; yet we see he did not. Now he is no more the author of sin in one case than the other. May we not ask, Why does he suffer those inequalities of Providence? Why permit whole nations to lie in idolatry or ages? Why leave men to the most cruel barbarities? Why punish the sins of the fathers in the children? In a word, Why permit the world at large to be subject to pains, crosses, losses, evils of every kind, and that for so many thousands of years? And, yet, will any dare call the Deity unjust? The fact is, our finite minds know but little of the nature of divine justice, or any other of his attributes. But, supposing there are difficulties in this subject (and what subject is without it?) the Scripture abounds with passages which at once prove the doctrine, Matt. 25:34. Rom. 8:29,30. Eph. 1:3,6,11. 2 Tim. 1:9. 2 Thess. 2:13. 1 Pet. 1:1,2. John 6:37. John 17:2-24. Rev. 13:8. Rev. 17:8. Dan. 4:35. 1 Thess. 5:19. Matt. 11:26. Exod. 4:21. Prov. 16:4. Acts 13:48. the moral uses of this doctrine are these. 1. It hides pride from man.--2. Excludes the idea of chance.--3. Exalts the grace of God.--4. Renders salvation certain.--5. Affords believers great consolation. (From BTD)

And relative to predestination would be the:

DECREES OF GOD

Are his settled purposes, whereby he foreordains whatsoever comes to pass, Dan. iv. 24. Acts xv. 18. Eph. i. 11. This doctrine is the subject of one of the most perplexing controversies that has occurred among mankind; it is not, however, as some think, a novel doctrine. The opinion, that whatever occurs in the world at large, or in the lot of private individuals, is the result of a previous and unalterable arrangement by that Supreme Power which presides over Nature, has always been held by many of the vulgar, and has been believed by speculative men. The ancient stoics, Zeno and Chrysippus, whom the Jewish Essenes seem to have followed, asserted the existence of a Deity, that, acting wisely but necessarily, contrived the general system of the world; from which, by a series of causes, whatever is now done in it unavoidable result. Mahomet introduced into his Kiran the doctrine of absolute predestination of the course of human affairs. He represented life and death, prosperity and adversity, and every event that befalls a man in this world, as the result of a previous determination of the one God who rules over all. Augustine and the whole of the earliest reformers, but especially Calvin, favoured this doctrine. It was generally asserted, and publicly owned, in most of the confessions of faith of the reformed churches, and particularly in the church of England; and to this, we may add, that it was maintained by a great number of divines in the last two centuries.

As to the nature of these decrees, it must be observed that they are not the result of deliberation, or the Almighty's debating matters within himself, reasoning in his own mind about the expediency or in expediency of things, as creatures do; nor are they merely ideas of things future, but settled determinations founded on his sovereign will and pleasure, Isa. xl. 14. They are to be considered as eternal: this is evident; for if God be eternal, consequently his purposes must be of equal duration with himself: to suppose otherwise, would be to suppose that there was a time when he was undetermined and mutable; whereas no new determinations or after thoughts can arise in his mind, Job xxiii. 13,14.--2. They are free, without any compulsion, and not excited by any motive out of himself, Rom ix. 15.--3. They are infinitely wise, displaying his glory, and promoting the general good, Rom. xi. 33.--4. They are immutable, for this is the result of his being infinitely perfect; for if there were the least change in God's understanding, it would be an instance of imperfection, Mal. iii. 6.--5. They are extensive or universal, relating to all creatures and things in heaven, earth, and hell, Eph. i. 11. Prov. xvi.4.--6. They are secret, or at least cannot be known till he be pleased to discover them. It is therefore presumption for any to attempt to enter into or judge of what he has not revealed, Deut. xxix. 29. Nor is an unknown or supposed decree at any time to be the rule of our conduct. His revealed will alone, must be considered as the rule by which we are to judge of the event of things, as well as of our conduct at large, Rom. xi. 34.--7. Lastly, they are effectual; for as he is infinitely wise to plan, so he is infinitely powerful to perform: his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, Isa. xli. 10.

This doctrine should teach us, 1. Admiration. "He is the rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he," Deut. xxxii. 4.--2. Reverence. "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain," Jer. x. 7.--3. Humility. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!--how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. xi. 33.--4. Submission. "For he doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Dan. iv. 35.--5. Desire for heaven. "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter," John xiii. 7. (From BTB)

And finally the relative:

NECESSITY

Whatever is done by a cause or power that is irresistible, in which sense it is opposed to freedom. Man is a necessary agent, if all his actions be so determined by the causes preceding each action, that not one past action could possibly not have come to pass, or have been otherwise than it hath been, nor one future action can possibly not come to pass, or be otherwise than it shall be. On the other hand, it is asserted, that he is a free agent, if he be able at any time, under the causes and circumstances he then is, to do different things; or, in other words, if he be not unavoidably determined in every point of time by the circumstances he is in, and the causes he is under, to do any one thing he does, and not possibly to do any other thing. Whether man is a necessary or a free agent, is a question which has been debated by writers of the first eminence, Hobbes, Collins, Hume, Leibnitz, Kaimes, Hartley, Priestley, Edwards, Crombie, Toplady, and Belsham, have written on the side of necessity; while Clarke, King, Law, Reid, Butler, Price, Bryant, Wollaston, Horsley, Beattie, Gregory, and Butterworth, have written against it. To state all their arguments in this place, would take up too much room; suffice it to say, that the Anti-necessarians suppose that the doctrine of necessity charges God as the author of sin; that it takes away the freedom of the will, renders man unaccountable, makes sin to be no evil, or morality or virtue to be no good; precludes the use of means, and is of the most gloomy tendency. The Necessarians deny these to be legitimate consequences, and observe that the Deity acts no more immorally in decreeing vicious actions, than in permitting all those irregularities which he could so easily have prevented. The difficulty is the same on each hypothesis. All necessity, say they, doth not take away freedom. The actions of a man may be at one and the same time free and necessary too. It

was infallibly certain that Judas would betray Christ, yet he did it voluntarily. Jesus Christ necessarily became man, and died, yet he acted freely. A good man doth naturally and necessarily love his children, yet voluntarily. It is part of the happiness of the blessed to love God unchangeably, yet freely, for it would not be their happiness if done by compulsion. Nor does it, says the Necessarian, render man unaccountable, since the Divine Being does no injuries to his rational faculties; and man, as his creature, is answerable to him; besides he has a right to do what he will with his own. That necessity doth not render actions less morally good, is evident; for if necessary virtue be neither moral nor praise-worthy, it will follow that God himself is not a moral being, because he is a necessary one; and the obedience of Christ cannot be good because it was necessary. Farther, say they, necessity does not preclude the use of means; for means are no less appointed than the end. It was ordained that Christ should be delivered up to death; but he could not have been betrayed without a betrayer, nor crucified without crucifiers. That it is not a gloomy doctrine, they allege, because nothing can be more consolatory than to believe that all things are under the direction of an all-wise Being; that his kingdom ruleth over all, and that he doth all things well. So far from its being inimical to happiness, they suppose there can be no solid true happiness without the belief of it; that happiness without the belief of it; that it inspires gratitude, excites confidence, teaches resignation, produces humility, and draws the soul to God. It is also observed, that to deny necessity is to deny the foreknowledge of God, and to wrest the sceptre from the hand of the Creator, and to place that capricious and undefinable principle.--The self-determining power of man, upon the throne of the universe. Beside, say they, the Scripture places the doctrine beyond all doubt, Job xxiii. 13, 14. Job xxxiv. 29. Prov. xvi. 4. Is. xlv. 7. Acts xiii. 48. Eph. i. 11. 1 Thess. iii. 3. Matt. x. 29, 30. Matt. xviii. 7. Luke xxiv. 26. John vi. 37. (BTD)

Fatalism is unrelated:

FATALISM

Fatalism is first the belief that all things come inevitably upon the human race by blind destiny, with no God to send, direct or avert them. Second, the belief that there is a power(fate) above the gods to which the gods themselves are subject. And third, that all things come by pure chance.

The teaching of fatalism(fate) is that all events are predetermined by impersonal forces regardless of means, so that no matter what a person does, the same outcome will result.

"Fatalism as a doctrine, system of philosophy, or religious belief, originated among those nations of antiquity that knew not God; hence it is of purely heathen origin. The idea of fate must have been evolved in the following manner. Observing men of all nations, and especially the shrewd, intellectual, ever watchful Greeks and Romans, discovered in the vicissitudes of every day life, both of individuals and of nations, things of great import transpire over which kings and sages had no control. They saw plagues, pestilence and famine consume and waste men, as winter cold blights, withers and scatters the leaves of the summer forest; they saw storms and earthquakes do their work of wholesale destruction, sweeping away men as grasshoppers, and swallowing up cities as ant hills; they saw the weak perish before the strong, as the morning mists melt away before the advancing sun; they saw the overthrow of kingdoms, the downfall of nations, the laying waste of empires. Against all such things they found themselves utterly powerless, and in their helplessness were swept away in the bosom of destruction. In the midst of distress they resorted to their temples, they sacrificed to their gods, they invoked their patron deities, but all in vain; no help came, no deliverance from their dire distresses. Under such circumstances it was perfectly natural for men to conclude that there are either no gods, or that the gods themselves had no power to help and protect them. Some came to the conclusion that there are no gods, and that all events come upon men inevitably by a blind destiny. This is original Fatalism. Others who could not give up their traditional deities, and the charms of a delusive worship, were driven to the conclusion that there is a power above the gods, to which the gods themselves are subject. This is the secondary phase of original Fatalism." (Curry)

Re: - posted by rlms84, on: 2009/12/4 4:57

Quote:

-----No Dilemma. Consider the following:

To Savannah: I was writing this in answer to someone who was struggling with the thought that men would go to hell and that believed God predestined this.

Being a newbie, I inadvertently started a new thread.

I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts on this matter.