

Note: this document is not yet finalized. 2022-04-27

Resolving God's Predestination and Mans Free Agency & Responsibility

February – April 2022

Undeniably, when one first hears of the doctrine of predestination, a tension arises in the minds of men between God's sovereignty and mans responsibility. The Bible clearly teaches that God has predestined some to salvation. By implication then, those not predestined to salvation and eternal life in the presence of Christ face another, differing eternal reality nonetheless predestined. Admittedly, a struggle ensues when man asks the question; if God predestines every mans eternity/eternal destination, then how can man still be held accountable for the actions that lead one down a certain path? What follows is the biblical resolution to the doctrine of God's predestination and mans free agency and responsibility.

Consider the following paragraph written by Jeremy Peters. "No doctrine is more despised by the natural mind than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. Human pride loathes the suggestion that God orders everything, controls everything, and rules over everything. The carnal mind, burning with enmity against God, abhors the biblical teaching that nothing comes to pass except according to His eternal decrees. Most of all, flesh hates the notion that salvation is entirely God's work. If God chose who would be saved, and if His choice was settled before the foundation of the world, then believers deserve no credit for any aspect of their salvation. The only thing we contribute to our redemption is the sin that made redemption necessary."

In weighing the ongoing debate of God's sovereignty vs. mans "free-will," it is important to understand that individual doctrines do not operate in isolation of one another. When one teaching is examined, realize that other doctrines will of necessity be implicated. Such is the case with the doctrine of predestination. As Dr. Nathan Busenitz observes, the three pillars in church history – the Scriptures, the Savior, and Salvation, or Bibliology, Christology, and Soteriology – are inextricably linked. To misconceive any one doctrine automatically brings distortion to each of the other two pillars. Similarly, to misconceive the doctrine of predestination implicates one's understanding of, Bibliology, Christology, Soteriology, Anthropology, Hamartiology, to name a few.

- As with any Christian doctrine, the biblical truth, and not the feelings and/or emotions generated by that truth, needs to be mans compass
- We believe in the doctrine of predestination because it's biblical

1. One would, from reading the Scriptures, arrive at double predestination

2. Just as is the doctrine of mans free agency & responsibility

- Often the concept of “free–will” surfaces in debates pertaining to predestination
 - A proper understanding of mans free agency & responsibility is vital to our soteriology (study of salvation)
 - “free will”
 - Term doesn’t appear in the Bible
 - not the most helpful of terms because of the various ways people define the concept

➤ IS GOD SOVEREIGN TO CHOOSE INDIVIDUALS?

➤ In John 15:16, Jesus tells His disciples, “*You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.*”

1. ἐξελέξασθε (2nd pl) & ἐξελεξάμην (1st sg) AMI to choose

- to make a choice in accordance with significant preference, to select someone for oneself
 - middle voice (indirect use)
 - describes the **subject performing the action** on the direct object while **emphasizing the participation** of the subject
 - the **contrasting “but”** *I choose you* – emphasizes it was Jesus’ act of choosing of them that result in being set apart for the purpose of bearing fruit
 - at the same time, emphasizing that the disciples were not (negated) the one’s who chose Jesus Christ
- one should understand this *choosing* to be salvific sense and according to the predetermined will of God, the disciples were selected for salvation, to be set apart, then appointed/tasked, in order to bear fruit for the kingdom

➤ John 13:18

1. *"I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.'* Ps 41:9

- Jesus distinguishes b/t those chosen and Judas, one not chosen
- Judas nonetheless still is predestined by God, OT prophesy describe his actions

➤ John 17:12

1. *While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.*

- describes the result of the choosing in 13:18 and 15:16
- δέδωκάς – entrust someone to another's care
- υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας – the son destined to destruction
 - the destruction that one experiences, annihilation both complete and in process, ruin – to the complete physical & spiritual ruin of the person
 - eschatological damnation

➤ Judas' character aligns with his ongoing and final destiny, even as in this world he simply gave himself voluntarily over to making decisions according to his self-will

1. Scripture makes this connection for us

- Matt 7:13
 - *"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.*
- 1 Tim 6:9
 - *But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.*
- 2 Peter 3:16
 - *as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

- Destruction – Acts 8:20; Phil 3:19; Rom 9:22
2. the son of perdition - for what purpose?
- that Scripture would be fulfilled = divine purpose, a predetermined plan
 - which Scripture?
 - Ps 41:9 – friend, close associate
 - *Even my close friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up his heel against me.*
 - Ps 109:8 – of an accuser
 - *Let his days be few;
Let another take his office.*
 - Isa 57:1–4
 - ¹ *The righteous man perishes, and no man takes it to heart;*
 - *And devout men are taken away, while no one understands.*
 - *For the righteous man is taken away from evil,*
 - ² *He enters into peace;*
 - *They rest in their beds,*
 - *Each one who walked in his upright way.*
 - ³ *“But come here, you sons of a sorceress,
Offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute.*
 - ⁴ *“Against whom do you jest?
Against whom do you open wide your mouth
And stick out your tongue?
Are you not children of rebellion,
Offspring of deceit,*
- Don't miss the language of John 17 either
1. **v. 2** *You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.*
 2. **v. 6** *“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.*

3. **v. 9** *I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;*
4. **v. 12** *While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.*
5. **v. 24** *Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

➤ John 6:37

1. *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.*
 - This giving of souls to Christ is directly related to God's predestining some to salvation through Christ

➤ John 6:44

1. *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*
 - ἐλκύση – used metaphorically – to draw, lead, impel, compel
 - **with implication that the object being moved is incapable of propelling itself or, in the case of person, is unwilling to do so voluntarily, in either case with implication of exertion on the part of the mover** BDAG
 - a work attributed to God the Father
 - illustration – does water *draw* itself from a well?
2. How does this occur?
 - *v. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.*
 - God compels belief
 - Immediately after regeneration together with faith and repentance

➤ **WHERE IS "PREDESTINATION" FOUND IN THE BIBLE?**

➤ Romans 8:28–30

1. ²⁸ *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.*
2. ²⁹ *Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers;*
3. ³⁰ *and those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified.*

- Each action – foreknew, predestined (to become conformed), called, justified, glorified – display God is the subject performing the action
- Foreknew the person, not some detail about the person's life
- ²⁸ Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσι τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν. ²⁹ ὅτι οὖς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς. ³⁰ οὖς δὲ προώρισεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν· καὶ οὖς ἐκάλεσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν· οὖς δὲ ἐδικαίωσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδόξασεν.

- the verbs highlighted in red are aorist tense indicating a whole, big–picture past action is being described without providing further detail in how that action was accomplished. [OR *looks at an action as a whole, while not indicating the precise nature or process of the action* – Mounce's pocket guide

https://www.amazon.ca/Biblical-Greek-William-D-Mounce/dp/0310326060/ref=sr_1_7?adgrpid=1362295332156509&hvadid=85143643488259&hvbmt=bp&hvdev=c&hvlocphy=4996&hvnetw=o&hvqmt=p&hvtargid=kwd-85143690675476%3Aloc-32&hydadcr=15264_10846035&keywords=biblical+greek+mounce&qid=1651081455&sr=8-7]

- because of past action, it must be irrespective of personal merit
 - consider Romans 9:11
 - *for 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,*
 - consider Romans 9:16

- ²⁷ *For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,*
- ²⁸ *to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.*

2. 1 Corinthians 2:7

- *but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden [wisdom] which God predestined before the ages to our glory;*
 - decided upon beforehand – before all time/ages
 - a plan to save mankind before time – should provoke awe & wonder
 - we cannot fathom
 - the substance of what Paul speaks is the previously hidden wisdom now revealed through the person and work of Jesus Christ
 - for which the prophets searched for 1 Peter 1:10–12
 - the salvation of sinners or their own glory Romans 9:23

3. Eph 1:4–5, 9, 11

- ⁴ *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love,*
- ⁵ *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,*
- ⁹ *He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him*
- ¹¹ *also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,*
 - To adoption into the family of God
 - In kindness
 - His sovereign will making this certain to occur
 - decreative by nature
 - decrees indicate those things which come to pass
 - Resulting in inheritance – eternal life
 - Intentional, purposed

➤ **God displays individual choice both positive and negative.**

➤ Romans 9:10–14

1. 10 *And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac;*
2. 11 *for 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,*
3. 12 *it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."*
4. 13 *Just as it is written, "**Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.**"*
5. 14 *What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!*
 - In v. 12 quoting from Genesis
 - In v. 13 quoting from Malachi 1
 - Malachi's purpose – to call the Jews who returned from exile to repentance over their complacency towards God's faithful love and His Law, evidenced by their mixed marriages, their withholding of tithes, and social injustice. Yet Malachi also reminds them that God's covenant promises remain true.
 - Esau (individual) = Edom (national)
 - was complacent in not valuing his birthright – something given him freely from God – despised it
 - Led to Esau's descendants following after idolatry while causing trouble for Israel (Herod – an Edomite)
 - Jacob's lineage, would ultimately lead to the remnant and the Messiah

➤ 1 Corinthians 1:26–28

1. 26 *For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;*
2. 27 *but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,*
3. 28 *and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,*

➤ 2 Thessalonians 2:13

1. *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.*

- Beginning - *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*

➤ Chosen

1. To be the recipients of the riches of His mercy
2. Love
3. Kindness
4. Attention
5. To manifest the mystery of His will
 - Not according to fairness by human standards
 - But for the purpose of displaying His own glory

➤ **PREDESTINATION DEFINED**

- generally, God's eternal, uninfluenced determination of all things; specifically, God's eternal choice of those who will be saved and those who will be passed over and condemned for their sin. *Biblical Doctrine* – John F. MacArthur & Richard L. Mayhue
- another term for "election" in Reformed theology generally, this is a broader term that includes not only election (for believers), but also reprobation (for nonbelievers). *Systematic Theology* – Wayne Grudem
- God's actions in willing something to a specific result; indicating God's eternal decree by which all creatures are foreordained to eternal life or death; also used synonymously with "election" indicating God's gracious initiation of salvation for those who believe in Jesus Christ. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (DK McKim, 1996)
- the biblical doctrine that God in His sovereignty chooses certain individuals to be saved. <https://www.gotquestions.org/predestination.html>
- The Westminster Confession
 1. Chapter III – Of God's Eternal Decree

- I. God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeable ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.
- II. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions; yet has He **not decreed anything because He foresaw it** as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.
- III. **By the decree** of God, for the manifestation of His glory, **some men and angels are predestinated** unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.
- IV. These angels and men, thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their **number so certain and definite**, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.
- V. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, **before the foundation of the world** was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.
- VI. As God has appointed the elect unto glory, so has He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, **foreordained all the means** thereunto. Wherefore, **they who are elected**, being fallen in Adam, are **redeemed** by Christ, are **effectually called** unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are **justified, adopted, sanctified**, and **kept** by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.
- VII. **The rest** of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extends or **withholds mercy**, as He pleases, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; and **to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin**, to the praised of His glorious justice.
 - http://files1.wts.edu/uploads/pdf/about/WCF_30.pdf

2. **Single** predestination– God predestines/elects some to salvation by means of positive decree while those who are not saved condemn themselves because of their sin meaning the unsaved are “passed over” in that they remain in their sin.
 3. **Double** predestination – God predestines/elects some to salvation and condemns others to damnation, both by eternal decrees meaning election and reprobation are positive and coordinate decrees.
- Understanding the relationship between divine foreknowledge and predestination with the salvation of man is not a new theological debate
- **Foreknowledge**
1. God’s intimate and intentional knowledge of all things before they become actual in time and space.
 - Proof – predictive prophesy illustrates the comprehensive foreknowledge of God
 - Isaiah 40–48
 - Isaiah 41:21–29
 - emphasizes that knowledge of future events is characteristic of deity.
 - Isaiah 42:8
 - God’s comprehensive foreknowledge testifies to His glory Isa
 - God has purposed the future for His glory
 - Isa 43:11–12
 - God’s role as Savior in accordance with His foreknowledge
 - God purposefully orchestrates future events is to display His being the deliverer
 - Isaiah 44:24–28
 - prophesies the complexity of God’s orchestration in using “innumerable future free choices and actions” with total precision

- Cyrus – approx. 150 years prior to his arrival
- Isaiah 46:10
 - Declaring the end from the beginning
- Isaiah 40–48
 - Is God vindicating Himself through His word.

➤ **Foreknowledge** [as it relates to salvation]

1. God's perfectly purposed relational knowledge of everyone who is in his redemptive plan before they exist in time and space
 - Romans 8:29
 - *Because those whom **He foreknew**, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers;*
 - 1 Peter 1:1–3
 - *To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are **chosen** 2 **according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.*
 - PROBLEM: if the foreknowledge of God means Him looking down the tunnel of time in order to display His knowing how we will respond as the basis of our salvation, how does this reduce/diminish God's sovereign ability in the act of salvation? Does the act of salvation then move man to the primary position (man-centered)? Is the divine will then waiting upon or dependent upon the human will?

➤ **Election:** the free and sovereign choice of God,

1. made in eternity past,
 - the choice to place His love on certain individuals,
 - not based on anything in themselves but solely based
 - so unconditional
 - on the good pleasure of God's will to choose the elect
 - (–) to be saved from sin and damnation
 - (+) and inherit/receive blessings of eternal life
 - through the work of Christ on their behalf
2. is unconditional,

- meaning it's **independent of mans actions, decision-making** (therefore a grace gift stemming from God's unmerited, undeserved favor extended to the sinner), and solely dependent upon the exercise/extension of God's grace.
3. In His sovereignty, God is absolutely free to elect.

➤ **Reprobation**

1. predestination **extends** also **to God's decision not to elect others** and thus **to leave them to the destruction** that their sins deserve.
 - Just as God has determined the eternal destiny of those sinners who will eventually be saved, so also has **he determined the destiny of those sinners** who will eventually be **lost**.

The Doctrine of Reprobation: in God's sovereignty, He decreed in eternity past that some of mankind would be saved. It is a simple and logical conclusion then to conclude that while some are recipients of grace and saved unto eternal life, the remainder of mankind receives justice, and is not saved unto eternal damnation.

"These are referred to as the reprobates – those who are passed over in their sinfulness by God and do not receive salvation" (*Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*).

The verses within their immediate context point to the work of God in calling both Jews and Gentiles (v. 24) into a reconciled relationship with Himself. But two other groups are referenced here as well: those being 1) lump for common use/vessels of wrath/ (vv. 21, 22) and 2) lump for honorable use/vessels of mercy (vv. 21, 23).

Verses 19–20 display mankind's questioning attitude towards God and His sovereignty; an attitude of blame shifting which God endures.

¹⁹ You will say to me then,
 ↑ "Why does He still find fault?
 For who resists His will?"

↓²⁰ On the contrary,
 who are you, O man, who answers back to God?

The thing molded will not say to the molder,
 ↑ "Why did you make me like this," will it?

Then verse 21 provides a rhetorical question to fix the reader's mind on the sovereignty of God in using the whole of His human creation according to His divine will.

²¹ Or does not the potter have a right

↑ over the clay,
to make

↑ from the same lump

↑ one vessel

↑ for honorable use

and

another

↑ for common use?

It seems that the main idea in the pericope is an assertion framed within the conditional clause *What if **God**, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, **endured** with much patience **vessels** of wrath prepared for destruction?* To simplify, God endured vessels – subject–main verb–object. Interestingly, in the Greek, verses 22–24 together form the question.

22 εἰ δὲ θέλων ὁ θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι τὴν ὀργὴν καὶ γνωρίσαι τὸ δυνατόν αὐτοῦ ἤνεγκεν ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ σκεύη ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν,

What if God, wanting to demonstrate wrath and make known His power, endured with much patience vessels of wrath [having been] prepared for destruction,

↓ ²² What if
God,
↑ although willing to demonstrate His wrath

and
to make His power known,

endured

↑ with much patience

vessels

↑ of wrath
| prepared for destruction?

➤ κατηρτισμένα

1. to prepare for a purpose, *prepare, make, create, outfit* BDAG
2. parsing (Perfect-passive-participle-plural-accusative-neuter)

- **perfect** tense – is used to indicate an action completed in the past and yet has a resulting and ongoing state because of the completed action
- **passive** voice – describes an action where the subject [vessels] is the recipient of the action. Note, the subject is not performing the action, but receiving the action
- **participle** – a verbal adjective that helps to further describe the verb it relates to. Perfect participles indicate antecedent time with reference to the main verb [*God*] *endured* - a thing or event that existed before or logically precedes another. In other words, God endured after having prepared. This answers the question, *when?*
- **plural** number – indicates a group of people are in view
- **accusative** case – connects the participle to the accusative in the sentence, namely *vessels*
- **neuter** gender – not referring to specifically masculine nor feminine, but both

- Based on the parsing, we can conclude that the vessels which God endured are described as those upon whom God's wrath remains, having been prepared prior to His enduring and remaining in that same state (as vessels of wrath). The passive voice indicates that the vessels of wrath are the recipients of the preparing. How so? Knowing that mankind is conceived in sin, and enters into the world already corrupted through-and-through according to the sin nature, they are on the receiving end of being passed over by God's special grace. They are essentially left unchanged in their sinful state as a result of the continuation of sin passed down through the generations since the moment of original sin. God leaves them in their already fallen condition. To pass over some is God's free and sovereign choice. Given this understanding then, it is much easier to view the vessels of wrath under God's decree as well. Of course, this is applying the concept of reprobation to an

➤ **QUESTIONS RELATING TO GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN SALVATION**

1. Is God sovereign and able to choose to save some sinners?
2. Is saving some sinners His design in salvation?
3. Is God able to know the complete list of those He will save?
4. If He knows the number of those saved, does He know the number of those who will not be saved?
5. Or are names and numbers of the redeemed in flux; being added to and subtracted from within God's perfect foreknowledge?
6. Is His perfect foreknowledge, His understanding fixed or does His understanding change?
7. If God is able to choose the sinner to salvation, is He then able to effectually save the sinner?
 - How? By what design?
 - Is this what God intended for the cross to accomplish?
8. If God is able to effectually save the sinner, is Christ's sacrifice able to secure that sinner's salvation?
9. Does the nature of Christ's finished work on the cross actually accomplish the salvation of the sinner?
10. Did Christ know by name, each of those who would be saved through His sacrifice even as He hung on the cross and died?
11. Did God the Son know you by name before His incarnation?
12. If Christ's death is able to secure salvation, then is the Holy Spirit able to effectually apply Christ's sacrifice to the sinner's account.
13. Is God the Spirit able to apply salvation to the extent that all those who Christ knew He was dying for are and will be saved?
14. Is God the Spirit able to apply salvation to the extent that all those are saved for whom the Father by design intended Christ's accomplishment to atone for?

15. Does God possess a perfect foreknowledge?
16. Is God able to predestine sinners unto salvation that His grace would bring Him glory?
17. Why would God save even one sinner? Never mind an unfathomable number?
18. Is God able to predestine sinners unto damnation that His justice would bring Him glory?
19. Is God able to justify sinners through the cross of Christ?
20. Can or Will anything stand in God's way in accomplishing His plan?

Jeremy Peters. "No doctrine is more despised by the natural mind than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. Human pride loathes the suggestion that God orders everything, controls everything, and rules over everything. The carnal mind, burning with enmity against God, abhors the biblical teaching that nothing comes to pass except according to His eternal decrees. Most of all, flesh hates the notion that salvation is entirely God's work. If God chose who would be saved, and if His choice was settled before the foundation of the world, then believers deserve no credit for any aspect of their salvation. The only thing we contribute to our redemption is the sin that made redemption necessary."

AN OBSERVATION in the form of a question

Have you noticed that when the knowledge of God requires serious self-examination and extra mental and meditational exertion because the truth seems hard to digest, because it goes outside of a person's comfort zone or outside of a person's sense of fairness, that the response is to make less of God, to reduce Him in some way?

American Gospel: Christ Crucified

https://www.watchagtv.com/videos/american-gospel-christ-crucified?fbclid=IwAR1AUrFUWoiVKoyB6FgD_Re-VkfE1DhZvXQcffljoGRUr1rEYhnpdiP7zQ4

- sadly and tragically, Rob Bell, Bart Campolo, Tony Jones, The De-Constructionists – all fashion a god suited more to their own liking – progressive Christianity – the residue of the emergent church movement
- **Listen to quotes from an author who holds a contrary view**

1. **“God allows his perfect will to be thwarted by his human creatures whom he loves and respects enough not to control them.” Pg. 100**
2. **“Due to God’s voluntary self-limitation he is sovereign by right, but not yet sovereign in actuality.” Pg. 100**
3. **This is not to say, of course, that God is not actually sovereign now at all; it only says that God is allowing his sovereignty to be challenged and his will to be partially thwarted until then. Pg. 100**
 - Genesis 18:14 when Yahweh told Abraham that Sarah laughed at the news of her bearing children
 - *Is anything too difficult for the Yahweh?*
 - Job 42:1–6
 - *“I know that You can do all things,*
 - *And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.*
 - *3 ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’*
 - *Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand,*
 - *Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.”*
 - *4 ‘Hear, now, and I will speak;*
 - *I will ask You, and You instruct me.’*
 - *5 “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;*
 - *But now my eye sees You;*
 - *6 Therefore I retract,*
 - *And I repent in dust and ashes.”*
 - Dan 4:35
 - *“All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,*
 - *But He does according to His will in the host of heaven*
 - *And among the inhabitants of earth;*
 - *And no one can ward off His hand*
 - *Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’*
 - Psalm 135:6
 - *Whatever the Lord pleases, He does,*
 - *In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.*
 - Isaiah 14:24, 27
 - *Re: Judgment on Assyria – 24 The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, “Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, 25 to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder.*

26 This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. 27 For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"

- Isaiah 46:9–11
 - *"Remember the former things long past,*
 - *For I am God, and there is no other;*
 - *I am God, and there is no one like Me,*
 - *10 Declaring the end from the beginning,*
 - *And from ancient times things which have not been done,*
 - *Saying, 'My purpose will be established,*
 - *And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';*
 - *11 Calling a bird of prey from the east,*
 - *The man of My purpose from a far country.*
 - *Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass.*
 - *I have planned it, surely I will do it.*
- Matt 28:18
 - *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*
- Eph 1:11
 - *also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,*

4. I believe this so-called double predestination of individual's by God is inconsistent with his love, and the teaching makes it difficult to tell the difference between God and the devil." Pg. 104

- **We hold differing views/definitions on divine sovereignty and divine will and we have a different view of man**
- **NOT A NEW DEBATE**
- Augustine (AD 354-430) vs. Pelagius (AD 354–415)
- Pelagius – British monk who visited Rome
 1. His concern
 - Christians were living worldly lives, displaying indifference
 2. Read Augustine's prayer

- “Command what You will, and give what You command.”
 - Attacked Augustine’s notion of grace
 - Argued Christians could live sinless lives by means of their “natural endowments”

3. Pelagius’ views

- Adam was created with free will (“the real image of God”)
 - Not inclined to good or bad, but neutral
 - = with the ability to then choose
- Adam’s fall made only himself a sinner
 - but not depraved
- All children are born as Adam was before the fall
 - no original sin
- The human race does not die in consequence of Adam's fall
- denied the noetic effect of sin.
- The law as well as the gospel leads to heaven
 - salvation by works.

4. His views led to

- promoted humanity is basically good
- man born sinless
- sin is entered into by free choice

5. result

- Pelagianism
 - attacked the primacy and sufficiency of God’s grace in salvation
 - Man–centered approach
 - denied total depravity
 - elevated free will above divine sovereignty

6. famous battle b/t Augustine & Pelagius ensued

➤ Augustine’s response

1. *On the Spirit and the Letter* – 412

2. *On Nature and Grace* – 415

- Man’s nature, indeed, was created at first faultless and without any sin; but that nature of man in which everyone is born from Adam, now wants the Physician, because it is not sound. All good qualities, no doubt, which it still possesses in its make, life, senses, intellect, it has of the Most High God, its Creator and Maker. But the flaw, which darkens and weakens all those natural goods, so that it has need of illumination

and healing, it has not contracted from its blameless Creator—but from that original sin, which it committed by free will. Accordingly, criminal nature has its part in most righteous punishment. For, if we are now newly created in Christ, we were, for all that, children of wrath, even as others, “but God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by whose grace we were saved.” (*On Nature and Grace, against Pelagius*, chapter 3)

3. *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin* – 418

4. *On Grace and Free Will* – 427

5. *On the Predestination of the Saints* – 429

6. *Confessions*

- Great are You, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Your power, and of Your wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Your creation, desires to praise You, man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that You “resist the proud,” —yet man, this part of Your creation, desires to praise You. You move us to delight in praising You; for You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You Lord. . . . And those who seek the Lord shall praise Him. For those who seek shall find Him, and those who find Him shall praise Him. Let me seek You, Lord, in calling on You, and call on You in believing in You; for You have been preached unto us. O Lord, my faith calls on You,—that faith which You have imparted to me, which You have breathed into me through the incarnation of Your Son, through the ministry of Your preacher (*Confessions*, 1.1)

- 1 commentator – to Augustine, “the battle for omnipotent grace was not theoretical or academic; it was practical and pressing.” [Piper]
- His view of God’s sovereignty dominated his thinking
 1. To a friend, Augustine said when ask why he battled Pelagian, “**First and foremost because no subject gives me greater pleasure. For what ought to be more attractive to us sick men, than grace, grace by which we are healed; for us lazy men, than grace, grace by which we are stirred up; for us men longing to act, than grace, by which we are helped?**”
 2. Predestination was not according to merit or worth, but purely out of grace, not on account of faith but to faith

- Included those not yet believing or not yet born
 - 3. Predestination an act of grace
 - 4. Reprobation an act of justice
- Why is Pelagianism considered heretical?
1. **Results in works-based gospel**; a different gospel than the gospel of God
 2. **Those who preach** another gospel are **not true Christians**
 - Galatians 1:8–9
 - ⁸ *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*
 - ⁹ *As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*
 - 2 John 10–11
 - *10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;*
 - *11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.*
 3. Pelagius – motivated by a concern to **elevate human free will over divine sovereignty**
 - **distorts divine grace** in an attempt to reconcile human responsibility with divine sovereignty
 4. **denial of original sin & mans fallenness**
 - denied that Adam's sin resulted in any guilt or corruption to the rest of the human race
 - What do you do with Genesis 5:3; Romans 5:12?
 - Seth fathered in Adam's sinful image and likeness
 - *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—*
 - Worse yet, what do you do with Romans 8:7–8?
 - ⁷ *because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,*
 - ⁸ *and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*
 - As Jeremiah 13:23 says,

- *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin
Or the leopard his spots?
Then you also can do good
Who are accustomed to doing evil.*

- Conclusions on Pelagius’ heresy
 1. if man was not free (neither inclined to good or evil), then man not responsible for their actions – God then viewed as unjust for holding the sinner accountable
 2. Result – works–based salvation
 - SO, denial of our need for God’s grace
 - A different gospel
 - Incompatible with Christian doctrine
- For these reasons
 1. Pelagianism was condemned as heretical at the Council of Ephesus 431
- But Pelagianism didn’t die altogether
- **Semi-Pelagianism** – ultimately condemned at Council of Orange 529
 1. Started in France – John Cassian
 2. Softened middle **position b/t Pelagianism & Augustine**
 - Agreed with Augustine on humanity’s fallenness
 - **Not spiritually dead, but sick**
 - & sinners could not become Christian or do good without the help of God’s grace
 - A person’s salvation is under the power of human free will
 - For us to will and God to complete
 - Salvation, although initially prompted by God’s grace, was still dependent upon the effect of human cooperation
 - Through crying out
 - Salvation then is synergistic – a joint effort
- It’s important – Augustine wrote the Semi-Pelagians
 1. Viewed Pelagianism as blasphemously heretical
 2. But semi–Pelagianism as being in error
 - Later neo-Pelagianism – William of Ockham (1285–1349)

- Salvation the fruit of human free will and not the fruit of God's grace

➤ Summary

1. **Augustinianism** – emphasized the depravity of human nature due to the sin of Adam, the necessity of divine predestination, and the priority of faith over reason.
2. **Pelagianism** – emphasized human ability and free will rather than depravity and sinfulness, even the possibility of living without sin. The effects of Adam's sin upon his descendants was simply that of a bad example.
3. **Semi-Pelagianism** – seeks to exalt man as basically good, diminishes our fallenness, tries to absolve God from any accusations/charges of not being fair, being arbitrary, or even unrighteous
 - a middle position emphasizing that faith begins independently of God's grace, although such grace is subsequently necessary for salvation. A position including Catholics and Arminianism. The view was set forth in the 5th and 6th centuries and the name coined in the 16th century.

➤ **Martin Luther 1483 – 1546** – Augustinian monk

1. There can be no free-will in man
2. Luther's antidote – pay careful attention to and trust in the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - By nature – you are a child of wrath
 - Guilty to condemnation and eternal death
 - Unable to save yourself
 - But then you grasp God's promise
 - Believing He is the only Son & sent Christ
 - Able to render satisfaction for your sin
 - To give you His innocent life & righteousness
 - Redeem you from death
 - & then belong to the flock of the elect
3. Believed in unconditional election
 - According the council of God's own will
 - Ordains the person to receive & partake of mercy
 - Human free will amounts to nothing

- Not the idea that God foreknew who would have faith in Christ and then elects on the basis of that
 - **Faith then is the result of divine election, not the basis for it**

➤ **John Calvin (1509–64)**

1. **“called predestination – God’s eternal decree, by which He compacted with Himself what He willed to become of each person. For not all are created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him predestined to life or to death.”**

2. Taught predestination as

- **biblical** and not simply by building upon logical implications
- part of God’s eternal unchanging decree
 - Set before creation
- based on God’s gracious & free decision
 - Not based on either merit or demerit of the elect or reprobate
 - So, unconditional
 - Individual, not corporate
 - Double
 - Either chosen to election
 - Or condemnation
 - Not a simple passing over – single
 - Not based on divine foreknowledge of a person’s worthiness or unworthiness
 - Couldn’t be b/c set before foundation of the world Eph 1
- Based on God’s good pleasure
 - To set apart
 - For fruit-bearing

➤ We need to understand this not merely as a foreknowledge that sees things as certain, although they certainly do occur,

1. but to go further,

- God determines all things
 - Acts 2:22–24
 - *22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and*

wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—

- *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.*
- *24 But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.*

2. Specifically with reprobation, Calvin taught
 - Given over to depravity, they are raised up by the just, inscrutable judgment of God to manifest His glory in their condemnation
- Calvin warned against 2 errors of those who which serve us well
1. **Careless speculation** – who is who?
 2. Remaining silent on predestination
 - Go to the Scriptures – “the school of the Holy Spirit”
- **Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1545–63)** – a gentler semi–Pelagianism and man–centered, works–based salvation
1. **CANON I. If any one shall say, that man may be justified before God by his own works...without divine grace through Jesus Christ; let him be anathema. (Council of Trent, 1851)**
 - Note the wording order – allows for both grace and works
 2. **CANON IX. If any one shall say, that by faith alone the impious is justified; ... let him be anathema. (Council of Trent)**
 3. **CANON XI. If any one shall say, that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the righteousness of Christ, ... or even that the grace, by which we are justified, is only the favour of God; let him be anathema. (Council of Trent)**
 4. **CANON XX. If any one shall say, that a man who is justified and how perfect soever, is not bound to the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, ... let him be anathema. (Council of Trent)**
 5. **CANON XXIV. If any one shall say, that the justice received is not preserved, and also increased in the sight of God through works; ... let him be anathema. (Council of Trent)**

6. CANON XXXII. If any one shall say, ... that the said justified, by the good works which are performed by him through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, ... does not truly merit increase of grace, ... let him be anathema. (Council of Trent)
7. CANON XXIX. If any one shall say, that he, who has fallen after baptism, is not able by the grace of God to rise again; ...without the sacrament of penance, contrary to what the holy Roman and universal Church, instructed by Christ and his apostles, has hitherto professed, observed and taught; let him be anathema. (Council of Trent)
8. CANON XXX. If any one shall say, that after the grace of justification received, unto every penitent sinner the guilt is so remitted, and the penalty of eternal punishment so blotted out, that there remains not any penalty of temporal punishment, to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be laid open; let him be anathema. (Council of Trent)
9. **Jan 13, 1547 – If anyone says that a man who is born again and justified is bound by faith to believe that he is assuredly in the number of the predestined, let him be anathema**
 - No rash presumption – anyone claiming to be of the elect is damned
10. Grace not irresistible
 - Able to accept or reject the ministry of the Holy Spirit
11. Rome firmly rejected Augustine's doctrine
12. Rejected teaching that the grace of justification is only attained by those predestined to life

➤ **Jacob Arminius 1560–1609**

1. Affirmed election,
 - although conditional on human faith
 - **Based on the foreknowledge** of God **of those who will believe** in Christ
 - **and remain** believers throughout their lifetime
 - Their choice to believe **not the result** of God's **monergistic**, efficacious grace
 - Rather **synergistic** cooperation between **human & divine wills**
 - Importance of understanding the others definition
 - Arminius on supralapsarianism

- Supra – before, lapsis – decrees creation and permits the fall
 - **“God by an eternal and immutable decree has predestined from among men (whom he did not consider as being then created, much less being fallen) certain individuals to everlasting life, and others to eternal destruction, without any regard whatever to righteousness or sin, to obedience or disobedience, but purely of His own good pleasure, to demonstrate the glory of His justice and mercy”** *The Writings of Jacob Arminius*
 - Arminius’ explanation is superb even though he rejected it
 - Did not deny natural deadness & impotence of human will
 - Indeed man was enslaved to sin
 - But God’s grace had supernaturally restored a measure of liberty to the fallen will
 - To enable the will of a man to repent and believe if it so chose to
 - Prevenient grace – universal enabling or sufficient grace
 - Summed his doctrine up in 4 parts
 - God purposed to save people through Jesus Christ
 - He decreed to receive into favor those who repent and believe (penitent and believing), but to leave in sin the impenitent person and unbelieving (repentance being an exercise of human will)
 - Means of effecting the two decrees
 - Decree rooted in the divine foreknowledge, knowing from all eternity those who would through prevenient grace believe and persevere by grace
- A theological manifesto – **the Remonstrance 1610** – rejected Reformed Orthodoxy
1. *5 articles – Needham’s paraphrase*
 1. In the decree of election, God has purposed to save those He foreknows will believe and persevere in faith to the end.
 2. Christ by His death has purchased salvation equally for all, but this salvation is only through faith.

3. Fallen human beings are enslaved to sin, and have no innate power to think, will, or do anything spiritually good, unless they are first regenerated by the Holy Spirit.
4. Divine grace alone enables fallen sinners to think, will, or do anything good; yet this grace is always able to be resisted. The difference between the righteous and the unrighteous is that the former cooperate with grace, but the latter resist it.
5. Believers are given all the help of grace to persevere to the end; but whether the true believer can reject this grace, return to his sin, and be forever lost, is a question requiring further investigation from Scripture.

➤ The **Synod of Dort 1617** affirmed election and reprobation, countering the Remonstrance

1. Predestination is God's eternal purpose to give saving faith to some sinners out of the mass of fallen humanity. It's unconditional – not based on God's foreknowledge of anything in those chosen. (note: the infralapsarian articulation, says nothing of the reprobate)
2. The death of Christ is sufficient to save the whole of humanity, but by God's sovereign will it is effective in actually saving the elect, by enlivening them to a true, justifying, sanctifying, persevering faith.
3. The synod agreed with the Remonstrance 3rd point – with regards to the spiritual inability of the fallen human will apart from divine grace. However...
4. The synod rejected the Remonstrance view that grace is always resistible. On the contrary, the grace that regenerates is sovereignly efficacious.
5. This grace also ensures that the elect will persevere to the end and enter glory at last. True saving faith can never be entirely lost; and a person can attain an assurance that he or she has this faith, and will therefore persevere.

➤ TULIP = total depravity; unconditional election; limited atonement; irresistible grace; perseverance/preservation of the saints

➤ A **proper understanding of election** in predestination has **benefits**

1. **Magnifies the grace of God**
2. **Prompts humility** in the believer,
 - that God be exalted in salvation
3. **Increases confidence** in our hope
 - It's not focused on me

- But in Christ alone
2. Is **comfortable with the existence of mystery** within the decretive will – secrets remain with God that we need not pursue
 - Some go to far – seeking a fortune-teller, etc...
 - Sproul – as we contemplate the high and holy mystery of predestination, we should be moved to reverence by it, even though our initial reaction to that doctrine may have been negative and even hostile
- We've already seen the sovereignty of God expressed in the verses read earlier
- Consider also God as planner
1. All creation bears witness to organization, order, design. Look through a telescope, you'll see order, intentional planning, wonderful design
 2. On the other hand, look into a microscope, you'll see clear order, structure, purposeful function
 - NO MAVERICK MOLECULE
 - NO SPECK OF DUST OUTSIDE OF ITS ORDAINED ORBIT
 3. Does it stand to reason that when all is sovereignly ordered and sustained by God, that He would choose to let go of His sovereignty over salvation? That that would be left to the creatures devises?
 - Psalm 139:16
 - *Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;*
 - *And in Your book were all written*
 - *The days that were ordained for me,*
 - *When as yet there was not one of them.*
 - 2 Timothy 1:8-12
 - *8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 **who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, 10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 for which I was **appointed a preacher and an*****

apostle and a teacher. *12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.*

- Scripture testifies to an **unchanging plan**, a plan that knows the future plans and actions on man, a plan that includes things we would view as fortunate and/or by chance (Matthias chosen by lot), fixed events and therefore certain, even mans sinful actions used for God's good purposes
 1. God is involved in the details

- God **works providentially**, these are **not miracles** – unexplainable except via the supernatural, NO these are the things that upon reflection one understands that God works thousands of strands together to any moment in time
 1. This gathering today will likely never be replicated, it's designed
 2. He has ordained the ends and the means
 - Remember Acts 2:23
 - *this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God*
 - the incarnate Christ placed into one of the most complex ages/moments in human history
 - Isaiah 46:10
 - *10 Declaring the end from the beginning,*
 - *And from ancient times things which have not been done,*
 - *Saying, 'My purpose will be established,*
 - *And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';*
 3. We're not deists
 - God didn't set things in motion and then removed Himself

- God has perfect foreknowledge – He has always known this day, its participants and events altogether
 1. How does He know?
 - b/c He has decreed
 - its by the decision of God, made in eternity, that renders certain all that occurs in time
 - all that God decides will occur/ will come to pass

- And if this is the way one views God, a high view, then this real knowledge should impact our thinking – our worldview

- **HOW DOES PREDESTINATION RELATE TO THE CONCEPT OF MANS FREE WILL?**

- I submit to you that the free agency of man together with his moral responsibility, are realities necessary and consistent within God’s predestination and divine foreknowledge

- **IS THE BIBLE FULL OF EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE ACKNOWLEDGING AND ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN ACTIONS?**
 1. examples?
 - Adam & Eve – yes, but when confronted, well....
 - David in his sin with Bathsheba
 - Judas – I have sinned – betrayed innocent blood
 2. The Bible speaks to us in ways that assumes our being responsible for our decisions
 - Positive commands and prohibitions
 - Assumes as rational creatures we face options

- Non-biblical worldview
 1. Unbiblical anthropology
 - Modern psychology & sociology
 - Skinner – behavior reflective of environment
 - Marxism – man becomes that which outside influences (structures/systems, forces) shape him into

- Do human beings possess free will?
 1. We need begin with a biblical anthropology
 - b/c the term “free will” is not found in the Bible

- Genesis 1:26–28
 1. **created:** ²⁶ Then God said, “**Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, so that they will have dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

2. ²⁷ And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
3. **tasked:** ²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over** the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over **every living thing** that creeps on the earth."

➤ What is the image and likeness of God?

1. Personhood

- **an entity, existent with self consciousness, self identity, a mind, rational thought, where the entity possesses a nature and possesses a sense of its own nature, a sense of its own thoughts, emotions, love and a capacity for relations and volition (will). At its very core, personhood possesses the components of personality intellect, emotions, and will.** [Dr. Kevin Zuber – TMS]

2. nature

- a "nature" may be divine, (deity = only the Godhead), angelic (angels and demons), or human: (one might speak of an "animal nature" but again, this is only instinct)
- a 'nature' is the **set of properties** (intellect, emotions, will) which inheres in-and-with a "subsistence," . . . **that suits it for the "environment" it occupies.** In the (present) case of humans, this "subsistence" is in a physical body in the environment of the temporal earth(ly)—{this will undergo a change . . .}; in the case of angels, this "subsistence" is in "spirit" in the environment of the "spiritual" (heaven, for instance); in the case of God this "subsistence" is sui generis (like no other; Psalm 86:8; Jeremiah 10:6), in spirit (cf. WSC Q4; cf. John 4:24) in the environment of the infinite, immutable, eternity and holiness.
Zuber-Theology 2 TMS

➤ **Will**

1. that faculty of the soul whereby we freely choose or refuse things.
 - Crudem's Dictionary of Bible Terms (1962)
2. It's the process of decision making involving the whole person

➤ **Free will**

1. the term seeks to describe the free choice of the will which all persons possess. Theological debates have arisen over the ways by which the extent to

which sin has affected the power to choose good over evil, and hence one's "free will."

➤ **Free choice** (related)

1. the capacity of the human will to be free from any external constraint or imposed necessity.
 - *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (DK McKim, 1996)

➤ **The real question is not whether the will of the person is free but if the person is free when formulating decisions?**

1. Ability to make decisions is an aspect of personhood rooted in the image of God

➤ **Augustine – writing against Pelagius**

1. *posse non peccare* – able not to sin – created good
 - Adam and Eve before the fall
 - Existing in a state of integrity
 - Able to do good, do the right thing, true not perfect freedom
2. *non posse non peccare* – not able not to sin
OR
3. *posse peccare* – able to sin – moral inability
 - true freedom lost with original sin
 - lost not the capacity to make decisions, but lost the ability to serve God without sin
 - with true freedom gone came slavery – to sin
 - unable to independently do all that God approves of or requires (meeting the requirements of the Law)
 - cannot change from self-focus to loving God
 - together with a total inability to change
 - **Luther – I wish the word "free will" had never been invented. It is not in the Scriptures, and it were better to call it "self-will," which profiteth not.**
4. **Salvation returns us to the *posse non peccare* condition – able not to sin**

- **Romans 5:12, 14, 18; 6:1-7**
- drawn
- Requires a drawing or compelling on the part of God
- Not dragged kicking and screaming, but by the Holy Spirit's changing our will before we came

5. *non posse peccare* – not able to sin

- God cannot sin (Hab. 1:13; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18)
- Believers when glorified

- In predestination
 1. Freedom and responsibility are left fully intact/preserved
- While God's foreknowledge is certain and election and reprobation determined
 1. Human liberty/freedom has been ordained by God
- Calvin
 1. Predestination
 - Defined according to the Scriptures
 - That free and unfettered counsel of God by which He rules all mankind
 - And all men and things,
 - And also all parts and particles of the world by His wisdom and incomprehensible justice
- Involved in predestination is God's providence, whereby He cares for creation, preserving its existence, meticulously guiding it to His intended ends
 1. Not fatalism, natural and mechanical
 - But preserved by love, mercy, holiness, justice, wisdom....
- If mans actions are foreordained from eternity, how can he be a free agent and held responsible?
- If God has foreknowledge of any event or any individual, then all occurrences are certain and according to that which He has foreordained/predestined.

Bibliography [most of these are in the GraceLife Church library]

Gregg R. Allison. *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. (2011).

Herman Bavink. *Reformed Dogmatics* [4 volumes]. (2004). see vol. 2 on the Divine Council

Loraine Boettner. *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*. (1932).

Earle E. Carins. *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*. (1981).

David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson. *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*. (2013).

Anthony A. Hoekema. *Created in God's Image*. (1986).

Wayne A. Grudem. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (1995).

John MacArthur & Richard Mayhue. *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (2017).

Nick Needham. *2000 Years of Christ's Power* [4 volumes]. (2016).

Peter Sammons. *Reprobation and God's Sovereignty: Recovering a Biblical Doctrine*. (2022).

R. C. Sproul. *Truths We Confess: A Systematic Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*. (2019).

Kevin D. Zuber. *The Essential Scriptures: A Handbook of the Biblical Texts for Key Doctrines* (2021).