

Why is this study important?

- Evangelism
- Order of salvation
- Right thinking
- Ministry strategy
- Prayer
- Sanctification
- Trust God's providence

Before we begin, we need to clearly

and fairly define the main terms and arguments used  
so that we can understand the 2 main sides

- Burning straw-men helps no one
- This conversation usually gives off more heat than light

Know from the beginning

that MOST Christians you know, talk to, and listen to  
will affirm free will

- You will be hard pressed to get a clear definition of what they mean by that
- I want to find them and share them with you as best as I can

The 2 main views we will discuss are

libertarianism

and compatibilism

- Libertarianism is the view held by Open Theists and Arminians

- Compatibilist is the view held by Calvinists

- There is a 3rd view called hard determinism, and it is held by hyper-calvinists

- This is rare enough that we won't discuss it

# What do you mean by “Free-Will”?

## Libertarians

- They say “free will” exists when we have the ability to choose contrary to any prior factors that influence our choices, including external circumstances, our motives, desires, character, and nature, and God
- If the prior influences decisively determine choices, then the freedom and responsibility if those choices are hindered
- We will call this a freedom of contrary choice
- DON'T MISS THIS NUANCE
  - A person can choose to do what they want to do, but they can EQUALLY choose what they do not want
  - If they can't, then they didn't really “choose” what they “chose”
- For them, our choices CANNOT be determined by anything
  - A self-determining choice is not sufficiently caused by anything prior to the agent who makes a choice
- For them, we are always in total control
  - Nothing inside or outside of us can determine our choice

## **Compatibilists**

- How they define free-will
- People have “free will” because they voluntarily choose what they most want to choose
- Our choices proceed from the most compelling motives and desires we have, which in turn is conditioned on our base nature, whether good or evil
- They have a freedom of inclination
- This leaves room for a dual explanation for all things
- God determines the choices of every person AND every person freely makes his/her choices

## **Three Main Arguments For Libertarians**

- I want to spend the next 3 weeks going over these 3 arguments
- I want to explain and respond to each one from a compatibilist point of view
- After we deal with these, we will begin to make a positive case for what the Bible DOES teach about free-will
- FIRST - Their definition of free will establishes a meaningful relationship with God
- SECOND - Their definition free will undergirds moral responsibility
- THIRD - Their definition of free will rescues God from being culpable for evil

Let's dive in...

**Libertarians say  
that free will establishes  
a meaningful relationship with God**

Their argument:

- They say only if we are free to accept or reject God can we have a meaningful relationship with him
- They see Calvinism as an attack on a personal relationship
- If our love for God is determined, this must mean that we are programmed or coerced against our will
- Greg Boyd, an open theist, muses, “If love is the goal [of creation], what are its conditions? . . . The first condition of love [is] that it must be freely chosen. It cannot be coerced. Agents must possess the capacity and opportunity to reject love if they are to possess the genuine capacity and ability to engage in love.”
- Compare this to what we studied last week
- What does he say is the purpose of everything...

## **Evaluation:**

- This argument is problematic
  
- Let's assume someone is compelled by God to say to God, "I love you."
  
- This could be compelled by 1 of 3 reasons
  
- FIRST - Mechanistic Programming
  - We would be like Woody when he says "There's a snake in my boots"
  - He only says it because his string is pulled
  - I had a Pee Wee Herman doll that did this
  - This is an automatic function with no real meaning to it
  
- SECOND - Divine Coercion
  - This person is forced by God, against their will, to say, "I love you"
  
- THIRD - A Powerful Heart Desire
  - This person says, "I love you", because of a strong internal affection for God that he or she cannot fathom acting in any other way
  
- NOTICE that in all 3 situations, the person is compelled to say, "I love you"

- We agree with libertarians that the first 2 are illegitimate

responses for a truly meaningful relationship with God

- The 3rd view is not the same though

- This person voluntarily loves and does so without coercion,

but this person is still caused to do this by their heart

- Libertarians reject this because they believe we must be free,

even from our own hearts

- Do you see now why how your understanding of the heart

affects other things?!?!?

- Remember last quarter?!?!?

- In regeneration, God softens our hearts and leads us to repentance
- Ezk. 36; Jer. 25
- This produces a compelling inner desire to love Him
- Though this is a necessary result of God's determination, it is in no way a forced response against our will
- No Christian has ever said they love God against their will
- No non-Christian has ever rejected Christ against their will
- The action is made meaningful if it is voluntary, not the possibility of acting differently
- Again, your definition of free-will matters

# **Is there proof in the Bible that love can be genuine even when it is impossible to NOT love???**

## **Heavenly Love**

- Rom. 8 - Golden chain
- Glorified means perfected
- It will be impossible for us to NOT love God
  - Does that mean it isn't genuine???

## **Trinitarian Love**

- John 17:22-26
  - The love between the Father and Son is obvious and real
- One basic truth we must all confess is that God the Father and his Son, Jesus, do not have the freedom to hate each other
  - Scott. C. "They love each other necessarily because their nature and character compel them to do no other. Both willingly love with irresistible intentions, and that is precisely what makes their relationship significant."
- It is this love that gives us insight into how God loves us
  - John 6:37
    - All believers are love gifts from the Father to the Son
  - Behind your decision to come to the Son is the Father's decision to give you to the Son
    - Though you REALLY did want to come, that desire really was determined by the Father

- Thaddeus Williams, “Once it sinks in that our belief in Jesus originates because of the Father’s love for His Son, we can never again think of the Trinity as some kind of abstract, black-and-white, strange math equation where three somehow equals one. Rather, the doctrine becomes something precious and practical. It bursts with color. It becomes a cool ocean to plunge into after we have followed John’s map upstream from our rivers of faith and discovered their ultimate source in the Triune God of love. Non-Calvinism [libertarians] cannot lead us to this ocean. Non-Calvinism [libertarians] reverses John’s verbs. All who come (present) to the Son [with their autonomous free power] will be given (future) by the Father. For John, however, we do not believe to become love-gifts; we believe because we are gifts. “All” the Father gives will come to the Son. For John it lies beyond the scope of possibility that anyone the Father wants to give His Son as a living, conscious, worshipping “I love you” would not, in fact, come to the Son.”
- The Father’s love for the Son is really genuine

- It is this love that explains why Jesus embraced the cross
  - John 14:31
  - The Son's love for the Father is really genuine
- Thaddeus Williams, "The atonement is effective because intra-trinitarian love is not defective. Why is grace irresistible? Because if we could shun the Father's grace as He draws us to worship His Son, then we have the power to thwart God's expression of love within the Trinity. Grace cannot be resisted because His Trinitarian love cannot be frustrated. . . . The saints are preserved because the Divine Persons perfectly fulfill one another's will."
- All of this comes from a genuine love that the Father and Son have for one another
  - Libertarians say this love can't be genuine because they don't have the ability to NOT love one another
  - And our love for God can't be genuine if He guarded our coming by giving us to the Son and causing us to be born-again

This makes sense if you use a biblical definition of free-will though

- The Father's love for the Son is genuine because He WANTS to love the Son
- The Son's love for the Father is genuine because He WANTS to love the Father
- The Christian's love for the God is genuine because you WANT to love God
- None of these things are genuine because of the power of contrary choice

So now that we have been through this first argument

That lib. free-will is required to have genuine love

What about the next argument?

That lib. free-will is required for accountability???

We will deal with this one next week

As you prepare your mind for it

Try to come up with some biblical solution to this problem

How can God be sovereign and GUARANTEE all His purposes will come to pass

AND

Man be held accountable for what He sovereignly decreed would come to pass???

Is man responsible if God is sovereign???

Next Week...