



GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY & HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

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Did you choose God or did God choose you?

Book Recommendations:

- **Chosen but Free, by Norman Geisler**
- Four Views on Divine Providence
- Predestination & Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty & Human Freedom
- Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views
- Four Views on Eternal Security

Three Views:

1. Extreme Sovereignty / Hyper-Calvinist / 5-Point Calvinist / Deterministic / Reformed
2. Extreme Free Will / Extreme Arminianism / Open Theism
3. Balanced / Moderate View

TULIP:

TULIP is an acronym summarizing the five points of Calvinism. Each letter stands for a key theological concept:

- Total Depravity
- Unconditional Election
- Limited Atonement
- Irresistible Grace
- Perseverance of the Saints

Six Topics:

1. God's Control
2. God's Foreknowledge
3. God's Predestination
4. Human's Fallen State
5. God's Grace
6. Human's Free Choice

TOTAL DEPRAVITY vs. PARTIAL DEPRAVITY

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

For extreme Calvinists, total depravity does not mean that human beings are as depraved as they could be or that they cannot do any social or domestic ("horizontal") good to others, but they are incapable of any spiritual ("vertical") good. They are totally incapable of initiating, attaining, or ever receiving the gift of salvation without the grace of God. They believe that totally depraved people are spiritually dead resulting in the elimination of all human ability to understand or respond to God. Their natures are totally corrupt that sin is an unavoidable necessity, and whereas the faculty of will is present, the ability to choose to follow God is destroyed.

Gen 6:5 The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

Jn 6:65 He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them."

Rm 3:10-11 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.

Rm 8:7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Rm 9:15-16 "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

Eph 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins (ie: Lazarus)

Col 2:13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,

Titus 1:15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

PARTIAL DEPRAVITY

Humanity is depraved but still able to seek God. We are fallen and tainted by sin but not to the extent that we cannot choose to come to God and accept salvation, with the help of prevenient grace from God. Given such grace, human will is free and has the power to yield to the influence of the Spirit.

Dt 30:19-20 This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.

Rm 10:9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Acts 17:27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION vs. CONDITIONAL ELECTION

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

The second premise of extreme Calvinism is unconditional election, by which is meant that there are absolutely no conditions for God's electing some to salvation. Election is grace - unearned, undeserved, unmerited favor.

Eph 1:4-5 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

Rm 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters

Mt 11:27 All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

2 Thes 2:13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as first fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

Jn 1:12-13 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

CONDITIONAL ELECTION

God only "chooses" those whom He knows will choose to believe. No one is predetermined for either heaven or hell.

1 Tim 2:3-4 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

2 Pt 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

LIMITED ATONEMENT vs. UNLIMITED ATONEMENT

LIMITED ATONEMENT

Extreme Calvinists argue that limited atonement is supported by the fact that the objects of Christ's death are always believers, not unbelievers. If Christ paid the price for the salvation of all unbelievers, then all would be saved. In other words, they argue that rejection of limited atonement leads to universalism.

Mt 1:21 She [the Virgin Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Mk 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jn 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends

Eph 5:25 Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

Titus 2:14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good

Heb 9:28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

UNLIMITED ATONEMENT

Jesus died for everyone, even those who are not chosen and will not believe. Jesus' death was for all of humanity, and anyone can be saved by belief in Him.

Jn 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

Jn 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

1 Jn 2:2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Heb 2:9 But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

2 Cor 5:14-15 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE vs. RESISTIBLE GRACE

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

The doctrine of irresistible grace refers to the biblical truth that whatever God decrees to happen will inevitably come to pass, even in the salvation of individuals. If God wishes/desires/wills to save someone one and they reject Him, is God still God – the omnipotent one?

Rm 9:15 I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

Ex 7:3 But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in Egypt.

Acts 16:14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

2 Cor 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Rm 9:19 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?"

Rm 9:21-22 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use? What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction?

Jn 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day

RESISTIBLE GRACE

God's call to be saved can be resisted and/or rejected. We can resist God's pull toward salvation if we choose to.

Ex 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the Lord had said

Jn 5:39-40 You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Acts 7:51 You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles

2 Thes 2:10 and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS vs. CONDITIONAL SALVATION

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

All Calvinists believe that all the elect will persevere in their faith and be saved. That is, all the regenerated are elect, and all the elect will be in heaven. In popular language, Calvinists of all varieties believe “once saved, always saved.” They hasten to point out, however, that “the perseverance of the saints depends on the preservation of God.” If you do nothing to earn your salvation, then you can do nothing to lose your salvation.

Jn 3:5-6 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Jn 5:24 I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

Jn 6:39-40 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Jn 10:27-28 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.

Jn 17:12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

Eph 1:13-14 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

Phil 1:6 Being confident of this, that he [God] who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Rm 8:30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified

1 Jn 2:19 They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged us.

CONDITIONAL SALVATION

Christians can lose their salvation if they actively reject the Holy Spirit.

Mt 7:21 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Jn 15:5-6 I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned

Heb 6:4-6 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Heb 10:26-27 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

1 Tim 4:1 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

SIX TOPICS

1. GOD'S CONTROL

X-Sov: Strong sense of divine control over and determination of the entire universe and of all actions in it. God is in complete charge of all that happens and will happen, including all free choices of His creatures. Nothing we can do can change His fixed plan, which He preordained from all eternity. The future is not open to being "helped" in its formation by our free actions.

Gen 50:20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Is 46:10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

Pr 16:9 In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps

Pr 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

Eph 1:11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

X-FW: God does not have rigid control of the universe; He gave away some of His sovereignty to His creatures when He gave them free choice. God does not determine human free acts; He reacts to them as He becomes aware of them. The future is not fixed—it's open to our free choices to help determine it. What we decide can change the future.

Dt 30:19 This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live

Jer 18:7-10 If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

Mt 23:37 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

BMV: God is in "control" of the universe of free creatures by His foreknowledge. He does not force anyone's freedom, but He knows in advance from all eternity exactly what everyone is going to freely do and how much persuasion will be needed for them to do it. Further, God was free to create or not create, to create free creatures or not create them. Knowing exactly what would happen in every possible world, He freely chose to create this one to achieve the greatest good. His omniscient foreknowledge assures that it's going to come out exactly as He knew it would.

2. GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE

X-Sov: God knows with certainty everything that will happen in the future, including all free actions. Nothing can change this; it is fixed and immutable. Since God is omniscient, He cannot be wrong about anything. Hence, if He knows what's going to happen—and He knows everything that's going to happen—then it must happen exactly as He foreknew it would happen.

Ps 139:1-4, 16 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

X-FW: God knows with certainty only what flows from a necessary order of causes. Since our free actions are not necessary but based on choices, God cannot know them for sure. The future is not immutable. Omniscience is limited to what is possible for God to know, and it is not possible for God to know future free choices that free creatures will make. Since His knowledge about the future is not infallible, He can make predictions that do not come to pass; what He foretells can only have relative degrees of probability. Nonetheless, because of His great knowledge, God is highly accurate in His forecasting.

Gen 22:12 “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

Jonah 3:10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

BMV: God knows with certainty what flows from a necessary order of causes. But He also knows for certain what free choices we will make. So, in advance, He infallibly knows the entire future of the universe; it must come to pass as He knew it would, otherwise, He would have been wrong, and an omniscient mind cannot be wrong. Since God's knowledge about the future is infallible, His predictions must come to pass—they are not “probably forecasts.” The future (including free choices) is determined from the standpoint of God's foreknowledge but free from the vantage of our free will.

3. GOD'S PREDESITNATION

X-Sov: God has predetermined from all eternity every event in the universe, including the salvation of the elect and the damnation of the non-elect. Predestination is not based on His foreknowledge; His election of some to salvation is a free choice of His mercy, based only on His will. This is an unconditional election for some to salvation and of leaving others for damnation. (See Unconditional Election)

X-FW: God has not predetermined individuals to heaven or hell. Election is corporate, not individual; each individual must choose his own salvation. God has predestined the bus (Christ) for heaven—people can get on (salvation) or off (reprobation) by their own free choice. Predestination is based on God's foreknowledge of those who will choose Him and who will not. Hence, His election is conditional—it is conditioned on our accepting or rejecting Him. (See Conditional Election)

BMV: God has predetermined some individuals to heaven. Election is not merely corporate; it is individual. Election of an individual is based on (or else according to) God's foreknowledge of their free choices. He never predestines anyone contrary to their free will but elects only those He foreknew would accept His saving grace. There are no conditions for God giving the gift of salvation, but there is one condition for getting it—one must receive it by faith.

4. HUMAN'S FALLEN STATE

X-Sov: Fallen human beings, dead in sin, do not have the ability to receive the gift of salvation unless God first works in them by His Spirit and gives them the faith to believe in Him. Thus, regeneration comes before faith, and only the regenerate can believe. The rest are dead and incapable of belief. (See Total Depravity)

X-FW: Fallen human beings are spiritually dead in that they have no spiritual life. However, God's image is still present in them. As such, they are able to hear His voice and respond to His offer of salvation, and they must believe before they are regenerated. All people are capable of this belief that brings salvation. (See Partial Depravity)

BMV: Fallen human beings are spiritually dead in that they have no spiritual life. However, God's image is still present in them; hence, they're able to hear His voice and respond to His offer of salvation. They must believe as a condition for being regenerated, and everyone is capable of exercising this belief that brings salvation. But no one ever believes who has not been persuaded by God's grace to do so.

5. GOD'S GRACE

X-Sov: Human will plays no part in our salvation; we are saved by God's will and God's will alone. Salvation cannot be sought, attained, or even received as a gift—it is wholly and completely of God, whose saving love is a voluntary act of mercy. Because of man's sinful state, God did not have to save anyone, but out of sheer grace He decided from all eternity to save some. These, and these alone, are the ones for whom Christ died. Only these are operated on by God's irresistible grace and brought to ultimate salvation. (See Limited Atonement & Irresistible Grace)

X-FW: God's saving love is for all people. Christ died for all humankind, and God is trying to save everyone. His grace, however, is not irresistible: Some accept and are saved, while some reject it and are lost. We cannot work for our salvation, but we must work from it. Those who do not perform the proper good works can lose their salvation, for if salvation can be gained by a free choice, it likewise can be lost. (See Unlimited Atonement & Resistible Grace)

BMV: God's saving love is for all people. Christ died for all humankind, and God is trying to save everyone. His grace, however, is not irresistible; it is persuasive but not coercive. Those who accept Christ are saved, and those who reject Him are lost. We cannot work for our salvation, but we must work from it.

6. HUMAN FREE CHOICE

X-Sov: What we call "free choice" actually is determined by God; we cannot act contrary to His sovereign will. Even those who "freely" reject God do so in accordance with His sovereign will. Hence, the elect are predestined by God to heaven and the non-elect to hell (or, at least, were not chosen by God for heaven). True freedom is not freedom to do good or evil but only to do good. God is free and cannot do evil. Therefore, the ultimate freedom (attained only in heaven) is freedom from evil, not freedom to do evil. Fallen humans have no free will in the sense of having a self-determined choice to accept God's gift of salvation.

X-FW: Free will means the ability to do otherwise. Humans are truly free, having the power of contrary choice. God's choice of some to salvation is based on His foreknowledge that they would believe in Him. True freedom here on earth is the freedom to do good or evil. Only in heaven will there be freedom from evil; here we are free to reject God and His gift of heaven. Indeed, the free choice to accept salvation can later be used to reject and lose it.

BMV: Free choice in this life means "the ability to do otherwise." Humans are truly free. True freedom here on earth is the freedom to accept or reject God's offer of salvation. In heaven we will be free from evil; here we are free to do evil.