

Predestination and Free Will

Do humans have free will, or does God predestine everything?

- Those seem like a contradiction, right? If God predestines everything, how could humans really have free will?
 - I'm going to attempt to thoroughly demonstrate how both these ideas can be true without contradicting each other, and not only that they *could* be true, but they both *are* true.

God predestines everything

- Acts 2:22-23, 4:27-28; Proverbs 16:33; Matthew 10:29; Ephesians 1:11

What I mean by predestines

- For everything that ever happens, God either knew that it would happen and decided that He would not prevent it from happening even though He could, or He intervened to cause it to happen. In this way, no matter what happens ever, God has pre-decided that it would happen.
 - I don't mean that everything that happens was caused by God
 - I don't mean that God puppets people's choices for them, or forces them to choose the things they choose

God's predestining what we choose is far different from puppeting

- If God has pre-decided everything that ever happens, than mean everything, including every human choice that's ever made. And someone may ask, "well how do you know that He's not forcing our decisions upon us, and that it's mostly Him allowing what would naturally happen?" Well, I can show it from Scripture that God's pre-deciding what we choose is not Him forcing our decisions upon us.
- The Bible clearly implies what I call "natural course" (Exodus 13:17; Luke 10:13; 2 Corinthians 12:7)
 - The very fact that natural course exists and can be clearly seen in the Scriptures proves that God isn't just making our decisions for us as if we were robots
- "From the Lord" vs. "Not from the Lord" (Judges 14:1-4; Isaiah 54:13-15)
 - Another reason I say that sometimes God intervenes to make things happens and other times He just lets them take their natural course is because according to the Bible, some events are "From the Lord" and some are "not from the Lord" and both events are predestined

Humans have free will

Humans have will

- Every human has a will because God has a will and every human is made in God's image. Just like His will, our wills have the ability to move about on their own, without being pushed, caused to, or forced.

Human will is free

- In general, each person's will does not get forced by anything or anyone outside of themselves
- There are basically only two limitations on human will
 - 1) Our wills cannot escape the influence of our nature
 - 2) God has the ability to restrict or force our will

Our wills cannot escape the influence of our nature

- We have sinful natures, and our wills cannot escape the evil influence of our sinful natures (Jeremiah 17:9; John 8:34; Romans 7:18) But that influence is not coming from outside of ourselves. Those sinful natures are part of who we are as people.
- Sinners are as free to love God and submit to Him as an apple tree is free to produce acorns
 - But I want to point out that apple trees are free to produce acorns, they just won't
 - And sinners really truly are free to love and choose God, they just won't, not without a change in their nature

- How do fallen humans still do good deeds and avoid sin?
 - The reason sinners are able to do some good deeds and avoid sin is because God, by His supernatural power, is protecting people's wills from the evil influence of their natures. He isn't completely protecting them from it, but He restrains it. He puts a limit on it. (Romans 1:21-31; Psalm 81:11-13; Acts 7:39-43)
- We need more than God restraining us, we need a brand-new heart (John 3:3; Ezekiel 36:26)
 - We can't do this for ourselves, we need God to do it for us (John 1:11-13)

God has the ability to force our wills, but He rarely, if ever, does so (11m 1147-1158)

- He is all powerful, which necessitates that He has the ability to force our wills
- He rarely does so (2 Corinthians 12:7; Exodus 13:17; John 11:14-15)
- What about God hardening people's hearts?
 - Personally, I think that God hardening people's hearts is just a diminishing or a removing of the protection that He gives people's wills from the evil influence of their own sinful nature
 - God doesn't tempt people (James 1:13-15)
 - Because each person's sinful nature is already entirely corrupt, there is no need to add anything to it. The diminishing or removing of God's protection over a person's heart would be sufficient to accomplish the purpose of hardening, if that's what He purposes.
 - But when God does harden someone's heart, He's not tempting them, nor is He forcing their will, He's just lessening or removing His gracious protection, which He does not owe them.

Summary

- What we've covered so far
 - The idea of "natural course"
 - How some events are "from the Lord" while others aren't
 - How evil our sin nature is, and how God is constantly protecting us from it
 - That to harden a person's heart, all God would have to do is stop protecting them so much from the evilness of their own sin nature
 - The fact that there are multiple examples in the Scriptures of God working in someone's life to cause a change that He desires, and we can see Him doing so without forcing their wills
- When you understand those five ideas and consider them together, it starts to make a lot of sense how God could predestine everything that ever happens ever, including for some people to receive the gospel and for some people to reject it, and yet do so without ever forcing anyone's will.

Appendix: Where did evil come from?

God has never forced anyone to sin, and He will (James 1:13). God made morally neutral creatures that chose of their own free will to sin. And since we know Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan, let's narrow this down to explaining how angels could choose evil. It's reasonable to think that angels were created with morally neutral natures, free will, and the knowledge of good and evil. And out of all the angels He made, some did choose to sin. But think about it statistically. If God makes millions of angels that are truly morally neutral, with free will, and the knowledge of good and evil, if they're truly morally neutral in their nature, odds are at least a few of them are going to choose to sin.

God made a world where creatures could sin, and He also knew some would, but He chose to allow it for the sake of His glory. He's fine with allowing it, but He wouldn't be fine with forcing it because that wouldn't be glorious

Conclusion

- God's predestination of all things is a deciding what to intervene in and what to leave be based on His foreknowledge and His sovereign will. It is not a puppeting of humanity. Humans really do have free will.
- God made morally neutral creatures that chose of their own free will to do evil, and He knew they would, and He pre-decided to allowed it for His glory. And I know that at face value, that sounds pretty unloving, but next week I'm going to explain how it isn't