

Free Will Part Two

John R Gavazzoni

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Thousand Oaks, CA

I have been afforded an opportunity to further clarify the nature of free will by addressing the remarks of a Christian brother who has taken issue with my thesis. His first point of disagreement was as follows, "Just because God allows something to happen, does not mean that He decided it would happen." Really? Hmmm, that's a very interesting, though hardly original conclusion. That nonsense has been around for a long time and can be traced back to a theological reaction to the pagan concept of two contradistinctive gods, one who rules the realm of spirit, light and goodness and the other who rules the material world of darkness and evil.

Of course, that was hardly acceptable to early Christian thinkers who felt that they had to offer an alternative that would preserve the unity of Deity while offering an explanation for the existence of evil. So, gradually there emerged the idea of, not two gods, each responsible for their own realms, but one god whose will was divided into that which he directed and that which he permitted; in short, the directive will of God and the permissive will of God.

They did insist, to their credit, that God, as omniscient, not only knows all things, but foreknew all things. They asserted that He, of course, knew what He had predetermined by His will, and they could not deny that He knew before hand what would be caused by the decisions of men by the supposed exercise of their "free will"; AND He knew what would be the consequences of such exercise, since what those consequences would be, were predetermined by Him.

As we proceed further into this philosophical maze, we are confronted with the hypothesis that, knowing the mess that men would make of things, God, nevertheless, decided to go ahead with this plan to divide His sovereignty between Himself and men, whatever the cost to His creatures. But these thinkers, these guardians of truth, had to

explain why God would do such a thing. Why would He? Well, here's their rationale:

God, desired fellowship with men, a fellowship of mutual love, and, they reasoned that, in order to bring about this most highly valued goal, it was necessary for God to give man a capacity to accept or reject such a relationship, for if they didn't do it of their own "free will" it wouldn't constitute a genuine response by men to God's overtures of love to them.

They adamantly asserted that God would never force men to love and obey Him; it had to be their decision to do so. So God was willing to give man "free will," in spite of the fact that He knew that it would result in the eternal damnation of the great majority of mankind, in order to get a comparatively few people who would "freely" love Him.

At the very earliest stages of this emerging concept, the beloved Apostle John enters the scene quite uniquely, as per his God given mandate to bring the people of God back to the very basic, underlying truth regarding God's relationship with men and declares that "we love Him, because He first loved us" (I John 4:19). This was no new, novel notion. It is a pristine understanding and reaffirmation of that great promise found with varying nuances in all of the old testament prophets, that God would do a new thing in the earth by putting His Spirit in men, replacing their heart of stone (brought about by God Himself exposing them to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil) with a heart of flesh and would thereby CAUSE them to walk in His statutes (Ezek. 36:26-27) .

They would love Him BECAUSE He first loved them. His Spirit in them would be His love in action in them, to them, and through them, causing them to love Him in return. Did you get that? They would not love Him because they chose to, they would love Him because He first loved them. The choice involved would be God's choice at work in them, "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). It would be the action of the God, "Who works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). That's causation, plain and simple. That is God freely doing what He set out to do without any creaturely capacity to thwart OR CONTRIBUTE TO His purpose.

Will men, all men, finally love God as God desired that they do? Why yes, of course, any child can see the logic in it. God loves everyone, and BECAUSE He loves everyone, everyone will love Him in return, as His love frees them from the DELUSION THAT THERE IS ANY OTHER POSSIBILITY. Come on now, let me help you get it by rephrasing the quote, yet maintaining the purity of what was said: "Because God first loved us, we love Him." Any time a person loves God, it is because God first loved them. The "because," the causation, is predetermined by the reality of God's perfect love for all men. We love Him because He first loved us, thus, since He loves us, we will love Him. One produces the other, FREELY.

Our brother's second protest is in the form of his question, "What exactly are we to be judged for, if we do not have a free will?" This question assumes that God's posture in judgment is that of confronting man with the possibility that he, man, could have acted differently, but did not, and so he must be punished. But man must face the REASON why he acted as he did, not seek an EXCUSE for why he did. The reason lies in God. But if I dare to accept that the reason is entirely God's matter and God's responsibility, then I must give up any hope of pleasing God by a choice that has its initiative in me and give up any expectation of being rewarded for the same.

Deluded into thinking that the answer lay in some measure of independent choice and action of his own and in that delusion of grandeur, hoping to receive some appropriate credit and commendation, he chose, he acted. Now he's stuck. He can't accept the reason, so he needs an excuse. But he's "without excuse" as Romans tells us. He did what he'll always do unless God takes over completely.

As long as he labors under the delusion that he should and could and still can reach down into himself as an independent self and find the wherewithal to obey God, then he will need an excuse for why he did not. God declares that there is no EXCUSE, there is only the REASON, HIS REASON: THIS WAS ALL PART OF HIS LOVING PURPOSE.

But let me remind the reader that my original thesis did not deny that man could have a free will, but that freedom of will was the primal

possession of God alone and could be only enjoyed by participation in the nature of God. As is true of all good things that God gives, it is a gift of grace which functions in communion with God, a communion that God FREELY grants by grace, not a communion that man brings about by his decision. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has set you free" (Gal. 5:1). What kind of freedom is that, the freedom to sin? No, the freedom to live righteously. Should we stand fast in the liberty that capacitates us to sin, or stand fast in the liberty that has freed us from the law of sin and death?

Freedom was never given to provide an option to sin; it is given to deliver men from sin. Bondage, in the form of man's innocence being subjected to an overpowering, adversarial mentality (the serpent), was introduced by God, transitionally, into His penultimate plan to bring about sin and death. Sin and death are a necessary transitional element in the purpose of God to show the glory of His grace.

Bondage results in sin, death and turmoil and perpetuates the same. Freedom results in righteousness, life and peace and perpetuates the same. Those who refuse to accept the whole revelation of scripture in regard to sin and death, never really deal honestly with the passages that teach that it was God who subjected all creation to futility, not of its own will (the creature's will) (Rom. 8:19-20), that He consigned all to disobedience that He might have mercy upon all (Rom. 11:32), and that God creates good and evil and the Waster to destroy (Isa. 45:7; 54:16).

So, to repeat, what are we to be judged for if we do not have a "free will" in the sense of having the capacity to hinder and/or thwart the will of God? We are judged, first to expose and demonstrate, that left to ourselves, we succumb to deception and second, to correct that situation by the light of God inherent in His judgment. So many just can't get it through their heads that God's judgments are not vindictive retaliation for our sins, but unavoidable, correctional confrontation by "Him, with whom we have to do" (Isa. 26:9; Heb. 4:13).

His judgments always amount to God saying, "My will must be done, and left to yourself, you haven't done it and you won't do it, so I'm stepping in and making it happen by putting my Spirit in you and making you like Me." That's the new covenant, pure and simple.

Have you not noticed, dear reader, that the verse in the Book of Acts does NOT say, "For there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we MAY be saved." It says, "...whereby we MUST be saved" (Acts 4:12). Whatever MUST BE in the purpose of God WILL BE, and that's what judgment is finally all about.

Lastly, our brother agreed that we don't have the ability to frustrate the will of God, given our finite earthiness, UNLESS, he says, God allows us to some extent. This view of the sovereignty of God has, at its roots, the idea that there is an essential difference between what God desires and what God wills. It holds that God really desires the very best for all His creatures, and in that sense, He wills to have all be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4); but, He won't actually be able to completely fulfill His holy desire. He desires it to be so; it would please Him for it to be so, but man's will, will supersede His so as to deny God His full desire and pleasure. Oh, good grief! Helloooooo. Do all you paganized Christians out there really believe that crap? Do you know how great is the passion of God's love, what an eternal Fire of desire burns in His heart? Are you really prepared, because of your determination to get some credit and glory for using your "free will" properly, to brazenly declare that the thing of greatest value to God will be lost to Him?

You want to talk about judgment? Here is judgment; "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:21).

When you subscribe to this corruption of God, you do not honor God as God, you reduce Him to a no-god whose sovereignty is a pathetic joke so that you may be able to claim that your destiny, in the final analysis, is your choice, and not His. This insanity insists that, "If I end up separated from God in eternal torment, at least I can say that it was my choice, but if I make it to heaven, although Jesus was the

One who MADE IT POSSIBLE, it was my decision that MADE IT SO."

Oh, believe me, I believe in the judgment of God. I believe that God, in His judgment, will expose this brazen infamy for what it is; the shameful, speculative imaginations of a darkened mind in bondage to the lie that God is not God.

"Judgment is begun at the house of God" (I Peter 4:17)