

Free Will

Free will is the power of acting without the constraint of necessity or fate; the ability to act at one's own discretion, to choose among alternatives, or to act in certain situations independently. Of course, one does not have the free will to choose what cannot be physically accomplished; one cannot choose to grow taller. Having free will implies also that the one making the choice will be responsible for any repercussions.

1. The Bible does not address free will as though it were a debatable idea, but rather assumes that the reader understands that free will is a part of reality.
 - a. The Bible enjoins the reader or hearer to make choices. The concepts of faith, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding all depend on the recipient making choices between competing ideas.
 - b. The Bible enjoins the reader or hearer to change behaviors. For example, exhortations to repent by many prophets called for a change in behavior.
 - c. Liberty, a pervasive topic in the New Testament, assumes free will, since, without free will, liberty cannot exist.
 - d. Redemption would not be needed if people could not make real choices.
2. Many propose that free will does not exist, rather that which we perceive as choices are illusions imposed by a higher power or by the irresistible forces of nature.
 - a. Greek mythology included the Fates, three beings who wove the fabric of each person's life.
 - b. Some believe in destiny. An example is the manifest destiny that the fledgling United States would stretch across the continent. Many describe certain people as destined to greatness or ignominy or some other end.
 - c. Calvinism proposes that all things are the result of actions by God, including birth, death, events in life, and salvation. The decisions of humans are not real. However, this makes God responsible for sin and presents God as deceptive.
 - d. A variation on Calvinism is that all things happen either by the direct will of God or by the permissive will of God. This avoids making God responsible for all sin, but deciding which events fall in which category is in the eye of the beholder. For example, James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." Deciding which gifts are good is a choice, but that flaw in the argument generally is overlooked. Typically, the not-good gifts are assigned to Satan so that people still make no real choices, they are just driven along by the constant war between good and evil, which is much closer to Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism than to the Bible.
 - e. Modern translations have begun to replace the Old English, Jehovah, with Sovereign Lord as a means of bolstering the belief that God causes all things to happen. However, this is the reverse of God's intention. In the burning bush scene, when Moses asked God His name, "I Am" was the reply (Exodus 3:14). Later (Exodus 6:4), God repeated that He no longer wanted to be known as the God of All Power, Sovereign Lord, but rather as I Am or Jehovah or Yahweh (which are all the same).
 - f. The "will of God" has been announced to be something that cannot be resisted or overcome. Hence, anything described with that phrase is deemed unchangeable. However, looking up all the places where that phrase is used shows that the "will of

God” is “the desire of God.” As in 1 Timothy 2:4, it is the will of God that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. Obviously, that will not happen.

3. Free will leads to the following conclusions:
 - a. The future is not knowable. Each person makes many choices every day. Each decision changes the future not only for the decision maker, but also for an unknown number of others who might be affected by that decision. Every instant of the future is in constant flux because of the uncountable number of decisions being made by interconnected people. Therefore, the future does not exist until it becomes the present. As a side note, the fluidity of the future makes time travel impossible. Only a true Calvinist could invent a time machine.
 - b. We are responsible for our own choices, which is the essence of liberty and of justice. If we do not have free will, then we are not responsible, rather just puppets in a play. People would have no debt to justice since they could not be held accountable if they could not choose (John 9:41).
 - c. During the time when Satan had access to the earth, people could only be tempted, not overtaken against their will.
 - d. Without free will, creation has no purpose. God built the universe as an incubator for faith with the terminal objective of developing those who trust Him into a family that will last. Without choice, there is no faith. Without faith, there is no purpose. Instead, we are all puppets acting out a play with no declared plot.