

Doctrine of Sovereignty

Is God Sovereign or Man?

1. Tension exists between God's sovereignty and man's free will. How can they co-exist? If they are two parallel lines then they never converge in understanding.
2. If there is a God who has expressed Himself in nature, and Sacred Scripture, then the Bible teaches God's sovereignty, and that man has a will.
3. The sovereignty of God is established in Scripture.
 - *Isaiah 46:9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.*
4. The limitation of man's will is established in Scripture.
 - *Lamentations 3:37 Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?*
5. Those who believe in God do so with their will. Those who do not believe in God do so with their own will.
6. Just because God decrees an act does not mean individuals cannot decree the same act. The God who decree that a person believe, does not negate that the person freely choosing to believe.

Question.

If God decreed something and you have no choice in the matter, would you not be aware of the fact that you had no choice in the matter? The truth of the matter is that God works in such a way that individuals choose what He wants. Their free choice is consist with His sovereign will. Options can be limited, of course, but there is always an option.

7. Free will is defined as being faced with a possibility. Which possibility is chosen depends on what is the greasiest self-interest.
8. Jesus declared that no man can come to Him less the Father draw him. How is free will consistent with this?
 - *John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

9. Is the ability of a person limited? If so, how is there free will?
10. The answer is this. Once a person chooses something, it is impossible for them not to choose something else.

A man who chooses to enter into a formal debate with an opponent, finds it is utterly impossible to choose not to debate. In this manner every choice is limited.

11. When Jesus says to an unconverted person, “choose Christ” or, “do not choose Christ”, He is saying that an unconverted person who is dead in trespasses in sin, hates the truth, hates the light, hates God, hates Jesus Christ, and will have nothing to do with Him.

While the unbeliever grasps with his mind that Christ commands him to repent and believe, and even knows with his mind that he should believe, but is repelled by the thought of becoming humble and embracing Christ.

The thought of rejecting Christ is stronger than the thought of receiving him. The thought of unbelief is irresistibly more attractive to his mind than faith in Jesus. It can be said that it is utterly impossible for that person to choose Christ, of his own free will, because he freely chooses the darkness which he loves.

12. It is impossible for a person to do anything they did not prefer to do. A person may be reluctant to do something but in the end every person always acts in a manner they believe is most consistent with their own free will.
13. A person will always choose what they desire the most at the moment. A person desires according to their strongest inclination in the immediate circumstance.

No one is ever like the donkey caught between two bales of hay. As the story goes, a donkey caught between two bales of hay died of starvation because he could not make a decision on which bale of hay to eat and live. While there may be hesitation and reluctance, in the end, there is always something preferable to the others and that which is most preferable is what guides our choice.

Nature will choose what is preferable.

The nature of the unbeliever is to not believe.

The nature of the believer is to love God and obey Him.

14. Not only do we choose what is most desirable at that moment, it is impossible not to make that choice. Otherwise, you would be choosing what you are not inclined to and nobody does that.

15. Christians believe there are limits to the will. Luther wrote about the Bondage of the Will. The Bible teaches that people are slaves to sin. How can a person be free and a slave at the same time?
16. The answer is that a person is free to operate within the sphere for which they are designed. A bird is free to fly in the air. A fish is free to swim in the ocean. An unbeliever is free to sin. But only Christ can set a person free from sin and give them a new will to love God and serve Him. The unbeliever will freely and consistently choose not to believe. One who is born of God will, by nature, by the free chose of that new nature, choose to love God.

Special Note.

The bondage Luther felt is the damnation as a consequence of his action. People want to do evil but not endure the consequences of it.

17. How can a person be held accountable for sin if they are born that way?
18. The Bible teaches that in Adam all fell into sin.
 - *Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*
19. To be able to exercise one's own will is to carry out God's decree willingly and consistently.
20. When a person sins they confront God's will but they do not change God's decrees. God commands a person to repent and believe and a person does not repent. They do not repent because they will not repent because they do not want to repent. Individuals deliberately choose that which brings their own damnation.
21. Only by becoming a lover of good can a person be saved. That requires a new nature. Only God can make a person a new creature. The unbeliever can seek the Lord. He can ask God to make him over again.