

Through The Bible
November 3, 2004
Session #43

Two basic positions we'll look at:

Predestination (closed view of God)
Free Will (open view of God)

Predestination or Closed View of
God

"God is completely aware of the creaturely
world and is intimately involved in the
course of events."

"God is completely aware of the
creaturely world and is intimately
involved in the course of events."

There is nothing God does not know and
God is directly involved in everything

All events are either decreed by God or
God knows they're going to happen as a
part of a divine plan

"God is completely aware of the
creaturely world and is intimately
involved in the course of events."

Are accidents such as car accidents really
accidents then?

Is God then responsible for evil?

"God is utterly changeless in all
aspects of God's being, including
the knowledge of the world."

If God were to change, then things change
in only one of two ways: better or worse.

“God is utterly changeless in all aspects of God’s being, including the knowledge of the world.”

If things get better, has God somehow learned more and become better than God was before?

Or if things get worse, God has made a mistake?

“God is utterly changeless in all aspects of God’s being, including the knowledge of the world.”

See Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17 on changelessness of God.

The changelessness of God is a Calvinistic viewpoint. Calvin believed sin and suffering were part of God’s divine plan.

Predestination is a discussion of God’s foreknowledge

“God in his omniscience (all knowing) has foreseen how all individuals will respond to the offer of the gospel and has predestined to eternal life those whom he has foreseen responding in faith and obedience.”

Predestination is a discussion of God’s foreknowledge

Augustine’s thought also has influenced the defining of predestination. Augustine thought that individuals left to themselves are so lost to sin and rebellion against God. Our fallen will is so corrupted that we cannot seek salvation. In that sense, humanity does not have any free will. So if there is to be salvation, it must come at God’s initiative.

Why then are some saved and some lost?

Augustine argues that it is God’s sovereign purpose, God’s eternal decree, that some are saved and some are lost in sin. The foundation of this purpose or decree is simply the good pleasure or will of God.

Attractions of this position:

The doctrine of human sin is fully developed in this position

The grace of God is magnified

Detractions of this position:

Reprobation doctrine: God, according to God's sovereign will, passes over some sinners leaving them in their sin and in the end condemns them of their sin.

Detractions of this position:

Many feel this paints too harsh a picture of God

Lutherans, who hold to the Formula of Concord, accept the positive side of this doctrine (saving people), but reject the negative side (the reprobation side)

Single Predestination

Those who reject reprobation are said to believe in single predestination.

T.U.L.I.P

Total depravity – we cannot save ourselves

Unconditional election – our chosenness is not based on merit or response, but based on God

Limited atonement – the atonement Christ offers is only for the elect

Irresistible grace – we cannot reject God's election

Perseverance of the saints – the true elect of God cannot fail

Double Predestination

Those who believe in double predestination (the saving side and the condemning side) argue that reprobation is biblical (see Romans 9:10-23).

It displays the justice of God, and it does not result in a fatalistic view since God has appointed preaching, evangelism, and the church to accomplish God's saving purposes

Closed View, Predestination, Double Predestination, TULIP

Is this consistent with your theology? Does this make the most sense to you?

What parts don't make sense?

Free Will

It is seen that a fundamental characteristic of human beings that they are capable of making decisions. It's part of the image of God we were created in

See Genesis 1:26

Free Will

How does this position apply to salvation?

Arminian view in response to TULIP

Total depravity – we cannot save ourselves

Conditional election – our salvation is based on our response to God's offer of grace. God doesn't plan who will accept and who will reject the offer of salvation.

Unlimited atonement – salvation and the atonement Jesus provides is available to all.

Arminian view in response to TULIP

Prevenient or resistible grace – restores the possibility of faith that TULIP's irresistible grace takes away.

Conditional perseverance – God is faithful but we are free to choose whether or not we'll be faithful.

More Aspects to Open View of God.

A more open view puts forth the idea that God experiences the world and the world's events in a different way.

God experiences the world in a different way.

God responds to events as they happen rather than dictating what will happen.

God's response is predictable because God knows how He will respond, but chooses not to know exactly what will happen.

God experiences the world in a different way.

God's character and existence are not affected even though God responds as events unfold. See Psalm 90:2.

See also Scripture references about God's personal qualities: faithfulness (1st Corinthians 1:9), righteous (Psalm 11:7), justice (Zephaniah 3:5), and mercy (Exodus 34:6-7).

God chooses not to know what will exactly happen, but God's response is consistently Godly.

God's response is consistent because:

God's knowledge of the past and present is complete.

There are no forgotten details as far as God is concerned.

Because God has not forgotten details, how God will respond is quite predictable.

Sometimes called, "a perfect anticipation of God's reaction."

What about the problem of evil?

If God has absolute foreknowledge, then God would be responsible for evil because: (a) God went ahead with creation knowing fully that evil would enter the universe; and (b) evil is simply the price of a universe where beings are genuinely free.

Free Will position on Evil

The free will position says that evil did not originate with God, but with decisions made by created beings. By misusing freedom, people rebelled against God's authority.

Free Will position on Evil

If God creates human beings with only the capability of disobeying (free will position) instead of the prescription to disobey (predestination position), then isn't the relationship between God and humanity much more genuine and valuable?

Free Will position on Evil

Illustration: on Valentine's Day, it is normal and expected that spouses send cards, flowers, etc. Suppose a spouse does the expected, but also sends cards, flowers, etc. periodically throughout the year? Wouldn't these 'surprise' and 'unexpected' responses be much more treasured than an 'expected' gift on Valentine's Day?

Discipling and Free Will

Matthew 28:19-20 – Jesus said to go and make disciples. Doesn't this fit into the open view better than the closed view of God?

Open View, Arminian View

Is this consistent with your theology? Does this make the most sense to you?

What parts don't make sense?