

Personal Choice within God's Sovereignty
Lesson 5– How Do We Put All This Together?
March 8 & 15, 2015

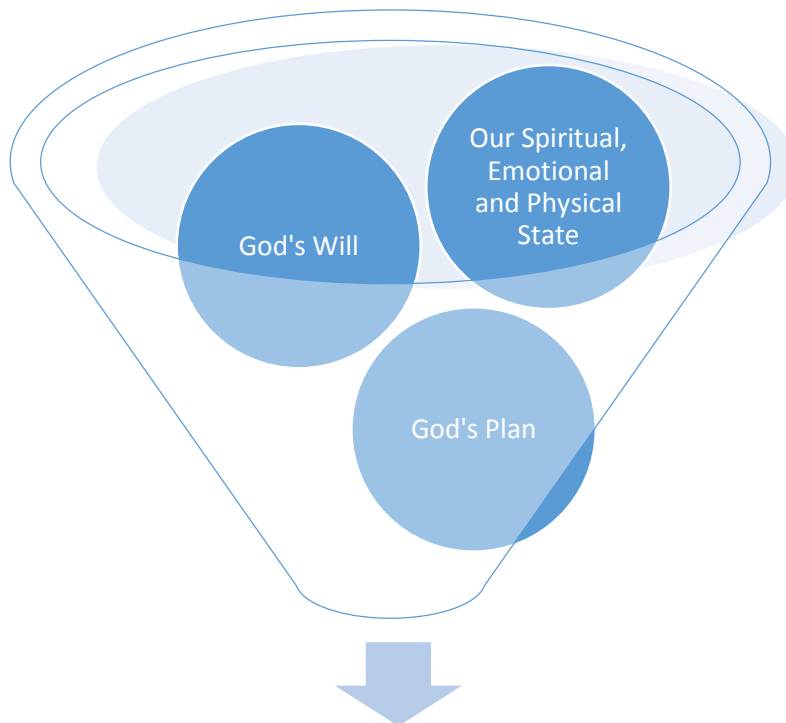
A. Main Scripture for Series:

Proverbs 16:1-9

1 To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the proper answer of the tongue. 2 All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord. 3 Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. 4 The Lord works out everything to its proper end—even the wicked for a day of disaster. 5 The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished. 6 Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the Lord evil is avoided. 7 When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them. 8 Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice. 9 In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.

Key questions at the start of our series:

- To what extent do we have “personal choices” in any given situation or is it totally directed by God through His plan?
- How does a person's decisions fit within God's direction and plans?
- Do your personal choices in life change or affect God's plan?
- How do we know “what we believe is a personal choice” verses God's will that He uses “influence or direct” us in a certain direction?



Personal Choice and Decisions

Our goal in the series was to challenge our thinking and understanding of God's Sovereignty and how our personal choices fit into God's plan. We prayed for God's enlightenment and wisdom.

B. God's Sovereignty:

God orders and controls all things, human actions among them in accordance with His own Will

Genesis 50:19-20, Proverbs 21:1-2, Matthew 10:29, Acts 9:27-28, Romans 9:19-21

God holds us responsible for our own actions and acts as judge, Penalized for unfaithfulness

Matthew 25:1-29, Romans 2:6-16, 1 Corinthians 9:16, 1 Corinthians 3:1-12

- God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility should be taught side by side as both being truths
- Man is a moral agent with a sin nature but not divinely controlled
- Each person is responsible for the way we respond, obedience and disobedience

C. God's Providence:

Definition of God's Providence:

God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he 1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them, 2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and 3) directs them to fulfill His purposes.

1. Preservation:

Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:17

- Christ keeps all things existing; God made and continues to sustain the universe

2. Concurrence:

God cooperates with created things in actions, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act:

- a) Inanimate Creation
- b) Animals
- c) Seemingly random or chance events
- d) Events fully caused by God
- e) The Affairs of nations
- f) All Aspects of our lives
- g) Verses Dealing with God and Evil
- h) Are we "free", do we have "free Will"

D. God's Will:

1. **There is His sovereign will.** This is His overall plan for the world. It will be done.

Isaiah 46:9-11, Revelation 10:4

2. **There is His moral will.** This is clearly spelled out in the Bible and in nature. It is His will for our behavior, even if we do not obey.

Romans 7:15, 1 Corinthians 11:31-32

3. **There is His personal will for all people.** This is God's desire for how we may serve Him.

Jeremiah 29:11

E. Personal Choice:

1. Personal Choice Model
2. Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 3:1-23, Revelations 17:17, Proverbs 3:1-8, Revelations 3:14-19

F. Putting It All Together

Integrating God's Sovereignty and Man's Choice and Responsibility

Interaction of these two truths; 1) Absolute sovereignty of God and 2) Man's freedom of choice and real accountability is expressed Biblically:

1. Man chooses to act (within his physical powers), making choices based on those items which guide his spirituality state, physical state, affections, thoughts of right/wrong, desires, joys, all of which come from stimuli reaching him (God's Will and Plan)
2. This is Man's freedom of choice which is truly both real and free
3. Understanding the use and various definitions of "Free Will" Are Important:
 - One viewpoint defines "free will" as the "faculty or power or principle...of choosing or choice without any prior prejudice, inclination or disposition." Man's will is choices made in a kind of vacuum with nothing influencing him. Otherwise we could say man possesses "free will," with free choices and being truly responsible
 - Other viewpoint depicts Mans choices in the context of God's Plan, God's influences and God's will in addition to our own spiritual, physical state. You have the freedom to choose, but not outside of the influence and direction of God
 - Classical "Free Will" assumes that your choices are made outside of influence, direction or control; this is different from the Freedom to Choose
4. God freely determines, what and which stimuli reach and touch each and every aspect of this world, including man (Job, Joseph, Pharaoh)
 - a) Based on His Sovereignty and Plan
 - b) Determines and knows all according to His free purpose and will. This is God's true and real sovereignty in all spheres of His created universe.
5. Combining the points above is how both **1)** man truly has freedom to choose - free and accountable - and at the same time, **2)** God's will is done both in heaven and on earth, not just foreknowing (although true), but ordaining everything which comes to pass for His glory.

Think of man receiving and choosing a given preference/choice between alternatives in the middle of their multi-stimulus world. Now think of God letting in and out life-experiences in our sphere. Man's preferences born out of the interaction of his life-experiences and God's will/influences. This, in short, is the interaction of man's choices within God's free Lordship of His world and its working. Man, determining his response influenced by what and where the stimuli touches him, and God's purpose determining as to how and who the stimuli reaches.

G. Questions for Small Group Discussion:

1. Can we know what is a “personal choice” verses God’s will that He uses to “influence or directly affect” in our lives?
2. Does God actually change or cause something to happen or does each person through choices drive the outcome?
3. Can your personal decisions through choice affect or change God’s Personal Will for You? Place your answers in the context of implications for God’s Sovereignty?
4. Do you believe “Free Will” exists whereby man is able to make decisions and choices outside of the influence of God?
5. Discuss how God can influence and direct within the process of Man making their “choices”. Lean back on our examples of Corinthian church, Joseph and Job to think through “personal choices made”, but yet God’s plan and will being accomplished
6. Can those that are saved be “removed” from God’s active plan and will on earth through poor choices? Compare your answers to Paul’s response to the Corinthians in verse 15.
7. Can you begin to spiritually discern how we can make a “personal choice”, yet it can still be made by God or directly influenced? While this seems to be mutually exclusive, are they symbiotically the same for a Christian?

Given time, the questions below are from the Small Group Questions of Lesson 4 – Personal Choice, which was cancelled due to bad weather:

1. As saved Christians, discuss how our “poor” personal choices affect our ability to understand God’s plan or “personal will” for our lives?
2. Discuss verses 1-4 and what this means relative to unity, strife or disagreements. Where are these prohibitive and allowed within the church?
3. In verses 12-15, discuss Paul’s use of the word “fire” and “burned up”, what do these refer too? Are they damnation and separation or referring to rewards due to our “tasks and decisions”? Remember that these verses are addressing saved Christians.
4. Can those that are saved be “removed” from God’s active plan and will on earth through poor choices? Compare your answers to Paul’s response to the Corinthians in verse 15.
5. With respect to Revelations 17:7, discuss how this is an example demonstrating God’s Sovereignty. How do you rationalize that the King’s decisions were sin and against God? Think back to our previous lessons on sin and evil within God’s will and plan.
6. Can you begin to spiritually discern how we can make a “personal choice”, yet it can still be made by God or directly influenced? While this seems to be mutually exclusive, are they symbiotically the same for a Christian?