

## 5. How do we hold together God's sovereignty and human responsibility?

### Bible basics...

We're responsible – e.g. Mark 1:14-15, Joshua 24:15, Hebrews 9:27

Our God is sovereign – e.g. Ephesians 1:11

### “Helps” from Scripture and Bavinck and Berkhof

#### We are not independent of God

“Scripture knows no independent creatures; this would be an oxymoron.” Bavinck

*Acts 17:28*, “In him we live and move and have our being.”

#### Second causes are real... AND are sustained by God's power

“The powers of nature do not work by themselves, that is, simply by their own inherent power.” Berkhof

The Lord sustains “the self-activity of the secondary causes, and these causes, sustained from beginning to end by God's power, work with a strength that is appropriate and natural to them.” Bavinck

*Philippians 2:13*, “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

#### Personal response = trust in our sovereign Father... and godly activity

“...the Christian has witnessed God's special providence at work in the cross of Christ & experienced it in the forgiving & regenerating work of God, which has come to one's own heart. And from the vantage point of this new & certain experience in one's own life, the Christian believer now surveys the whole of existence & the entire world & discovers in all things, not chance or fate, but the leading of God's fatherly hand.” Bavinck

“... to see God's counsel and hand and work in all things and simultaneously, indeed for that very reason, to develop all available energies and gifts to the highest level of activity – *that* is the glory of the Christian faith and the secret of the Christian life.” Bavinck

## Questions about predestination

### Discuss

Read Philippians 2:12-13... then discuss verse 13:

- What pleases God?
- From where do godly plans and actions come from?
- How should we *respond* to a verse like this?

### Recap: “Predestination”

*Definition*: “Before the foundation of the world God chose to save a fixed number of individuals. He chose them purely for his own glory, because of his loving mercy, and not because of their foreknown faith, good works, or perseverance.”

*Ephesians 1:3-5*, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will...”

### 1. What about God's “foreknowledge” in Romans 8:29-30?

“Bible words have Bible meanings”

“Knowledge” = personal relationship

- Eg. Gen 4:1, “Adam knew Eve his wife...”
- Eg. Gen 18:19 “I have chosen him” = “I have known him.”

God's “foreknowledge”

= His determination of personal relationship in advance

## 2. What about the “world” in John 3:16... how does this fit with God’s election?<sup>1</sup>

“world”: *kosmos* <sup>78x in John’s Gospel</sup> = quality not quantity

- (a) an evil and God-rejecting place, e.g. 3:19-20
- (b) the non-Jewish and Gentile world, see 12:19-23

B. B. Warfield: “[World] is not here a term of extension so much as a term of intensity. Its primary connotation is ethical, and the point of its employment is not to suggest that the world is so big that it takes a great deal of love to embrace it all, but that the world is so bad that it takes a great kind of love to love it at all, and much more to love it as God has loved it when he gave his Son for it.”

### **God loves freely:**

- Non-human creatures
- All his human creatures
- His redeemed human creatures

## 3. Why does God chose person A and not person B?

*Deuteronomy 29:29*, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.”

## 4. Don’t we have free will? Does predestination make us robots?

**Non-believing people reject Christ necessarily... but voluntarily**

Our plight – John 8:34

Our choice – John 8:44

e.g. Judas – Matthew 26:14-16, John 17:12

**Do we have free will? It depends what you mean...**

YES: Liberty of desire / liberty of spontaneity

= We always do what we want

NO: Libertarian free will / liberty of indifference

= Nothing determines our choices

Not even the Lord has this kind of freedom:

He can ONLY do what is good (e.g. Isaiah 6:1-3, Psalm 5:4)

**The born again person: given a FREED will**

*WCF IX.4*, “When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he frees him from his natural bondage under sin; and, by his grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so, as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he does not perfectly, or only, will that which is good, but does also will that which is evil.”

John 8:36, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

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<sup>1</sup> See short Ligonier article - [What Does “World” Mean in John 3:16?](#)