

DO YOU HAVE FREE WILL?

2/6/10

The initial question in this sermon is -- Do You Have Free Will?

In one sense, the question can be viewed as a theological or a philosophical question. Yet, the discussion of this subject can lead to evaluating some practical applications in your life.

Here are some examples.

1. How many of your actions are the result of your effort (your self-discipline)? -- And how many of your actions are the result of what God is doing in you? -- How much is Christ in you (Galatians 2:20)?
2. When you seek God's involvement in your decisions, how much should you do for yourself?
3. When something happens in your life, how do you know that God made it happen for you?

* ELEMENTS OF FREE WILL

Conceptions of the nature of human choice are often described within three categories.

1. INDETERMINISM -- An indeterminist views actions as being uncaused. Life is random and spontaneous.
2. DETERMINISM -- A determinist identifies actions being caused by another. Someone chooses for you.
3. SELF-DETERMINISM -- A self-determinist views actions as being self-caused. You make your choices.

* INDETERMINISM

A common view of indeterminists is that few (if any) human actions are caused. They conclude that events and action are contingent and spontaneous.

From page 262 of the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*: "Indeterminism makes the world irrational and science impossible. It is contrary to reason to affirm that things happen willy nilly without a cause. Hence, indeterminacy reduces to irrationalism. Both operation and origin sciences are dependent on the principle of causality. Simply because a free act is not caused by another does not mean that it is uncaused. It could be self-caused. . . .

"Indeterminism robs humans of their moral responsibility, since they are not the cause of these actions. If they are not, why should they be blamed for evil actions? Indeterminism, at least on a cosmic scale, is unacceptable from a biblical perspective, since God is causally related to the world as both originator (Genesis 1) and sustainer of all things (Col. 1:15-16)."

* DETERMINISM

There are 2 basic kinds of determinism -- naturalistic and theistic.

A common view of naturalistic determinism is that all human behavior is determined by genetic and behavioral factors. They conclude that humans simply act according to what has been programmed into them.

A common view of the theistic determinism is that God is sovereign, in control of all and so ultimately the cause of all.

* SELF-DETERMINISM

A common view of self-determinists is that a person's moral acts are not caused by another or uncaused, but are caused by oneself. They conclude that actions are morally self-determined -- acts freely chosen, without compulsion, in which one could have done otherwise.

* THE STORY OF PHARAOH

Exod. 3:19 God said -- I am sure that the king of Egypt will not
let you go
20 God said -- I will stretch out My hand and perform
wonders -- after that, he will let you go
Exod. 4:21 God said -- I will harden his heart, so that he will
not let you go
Exod. 7:3 God said -- I will harden Pharaoh's heart
13 He hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he did not listen
to them -- as God had said
14 God told Moses -- Pharaoh's heart is hardened
22 Pharaoh's heart was hardened -- as God had said
Exod. 8:15 he hardened his heart -- as God had said
19 Pharaoh's heart was hardened -- as God had said
32 Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also
Exod. 9:7 the heart of Pharaoh was hardened
12 God hardened the heart of Pharaoh
34 Pharaoh hardened his heart
35 the heart of Pharaoh was hardened
Exod. 10:1 God said -- go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his
heart
20 God hardened Pharaoh's heart
27 God hardened Pharaoh's heart
Exod. 11:10 God hardened Pharaoh's heart

Exod. 14:4 God said -- I will harden Pharaoh's heart
 8 God hardened the heart of Pharaoh
 17 God said -- I will harden the hearts of the
 Egyptians
 Rom. 9:15 Paul quoted a writing from Moses -- Exod. 33:19
 16 God is involved
 17 Paul referred to Exod. 9:16 -- which discussed
 God dealing with Pharaoh
 18 Paul wrote -- God can have mercy upon people or
 He can harden their heart
 19 someone could ask -- how can God find fault with
 us, if we behave as He wants us to behave?
 20 who are you to question God?
 21 vessels of honor -- vessels of dishonor

*IF GOD IS SOVEREIGN, MUST ALL ACTS BE DETERMINED BY HIM?

From page 197 of the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*:
 "It is important to distinguish two forms of determinism, hard and
 soft. . . ."

Hard Determinism

Soft Determinism

Act is caused by God
 God is the only cause

Act is not caused by God
 God is the primary cause; humans
 are the secondary
 cause

Totally free human choice
 is eliminated

Human free choice is compatible
 with sovereignty

Continuing on pages 197-198: "Soft determinism is sometimes called
compatibilism, since it is 'compatible' with free choice
 (self-determinism). Only hard determinism is incompatible with free
 choice or secondary causality of a human free agent. . . ."

"It is true that everything God knows must occur according to his will.
 If it did not, then God would be wrong in what he knew. For an
 omniscient Mind cannot be wrong in what it knows. However, it does
 not follow from this that all events are determined (i.e. caused by
 God). God could simply determine that we be self-determining beings
 in a moral sense. The fact that he knows for certain what free
 creatures will do with their freedom is enough to make the event
 determined. But the fact that God does not force them to choose, is
 enough to establish that human free acts are not determined (caused)
 by another but by oneself. God determined the *fact* of human freedom,
 but free creatures perform the *acts* of human freedom. . . ."

"If God is the cause of all human actions, then human beings are not
 morally responsible. One is only responsible for a choice if there
 was free will to avoid making it. All responsibility implies the
 ability to respond, either on one's own or by God's grace. Ought

implies can. But if God caused the action, then we could not have avoided it. Hence, we are not responsible. . . .

"Similarly, if God causes all human actions, then it makes no sense to praise human beings for doing good, nor to blame them for doing evil. For if the courageous really had no choice other than to show courage, why reward it? If the evil had no choice but to commit their crime, why punish them? Rewards and punishment for moral behavior makes sense only if the actions were not caused by another. . . .

"If everything is determined beyond our control, then why do good and avoid evil? Indeed, if determinism is right, evil is unavoidable. Determinism destroys the very motive to do good and shun evil. . . .

"If God must give the desire before one can perform an act, then God must have given Lucifer the desire to rebel against him. But this is impossible, for in that case God would be giving a desire against God. God would in effect be against himself, which is impossible."

From page 263 of the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*:
"It is sufficient to note that God sovereignly delegates free choice to some of his creatures. There was no necessity for him to do so; he exercised his free will. So human freedom is a sovereignly given power to make moral choices. Only absolute freedom would be contrary to God's absolute sovereignty. But human freedom is a limited freedom. Humans are not free to become God themselves. A contingent being cannot become a Necessary Being. For a Necessary Being cannot come to be. It must always be what it is. . . .

* Vessels of honor -- Vessels of dishonor

Rom. 9:21 vessel of honor -- vessel of dishonor
Jer. 50:11 Babylon was glad & rejoiced while being a tool of
correction against Judah
John 17:12 none was lost -- except the son of perdition (Judas
Iscariot) -- that the scripture might be
fulfilled

* Are the vessels of dishonor lost?

John 12:47-48 some not judged -- others judged
Rev. 22:11 unjust & filthy -- righteous & holy