

## Appendix to the Statement of Faith: If God Is THAT Sovereign, Do Actions & Decisions Matter?

*Previously taught by Eric as:  
Can a “Calvinist” Passionately Pray and Persuasively Witness?*

I’m using “Calvinist” here to represent people who believe that God ordains EVERYTHING that happens, including every sin and traumatic event and every person who will be saved. This refers to people like me (who came to believe these things simply by reading the Bible and was horrified when people told me I was a “Calvinist”), many other Godly believers (though this HAS become the minority position in modern America), like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield (of the Great Awakening), John Newton (slave-ship captain-turned-preacher who wrote “Amazing Grace”), Charles Spurgeon, Al Mohler, R.C. Sproul, John Piper, D. James Kennedy (who came up with a greatly used Evangelism program), and great missionaries like William Carey, Adoniram Judson, John Paton, etc.

“Calvinism” isn’t really my favorite term, because I believe that these same teachings can be traced long before Calvin, as I believe them to be what the Bible teaches, and Augustine and Luther and the other Reformers taught (that’s why this is also called “Reformed” teaching). All these teach/taught that people make real choices, choices that we are held accountable for. They ALSO taught that any who choose Christ ultimately chose Him because God first (before the world was ever created) chose to set His love on THEM. And that God, who cannot sin, is still the ULTIMATE will behind every sin and trauma that happens, and that He has DESIGNED every evil 1) for His glory and 2) for the good of those that love Him and are called according to His purpose. Not merely that God takes what our choices give Him and then makes from it something good, but that He INTENDS / DESIGNS / ORDAINS evil for His own good and wise purposes (Gen 50:20 is one great example, among many).

This paper flows out of statements and questions I’ve often heard. I’ve often been charged with (and convicted by) statements that someone who believes like me (I’ll use “Calvinist” from now on) cannot really cry out to God in prayer against evil, nor could we really witness strongly. That this type of thinking would just lead to fatalism (similar to in Islam). To the contrary, I believe this thinking is fully Biblical and can STRENGTHEN passionate praying and witnessing.

We’re to take everything we believe from Scripture, so I’ve put statements I’ve heard in quotes, followed by what I believe are Scriptural corrections to those statements. I hope we’ll be deeply convicted by the Biblical call to make passionate, persistent use of the means God has provided to achieve His will (like prayer, fasting, witnessing). And at the same time carefully examine how we think about and explain these things from Scripture.

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**“God is not interested in evil; Satan wills evil, not God.”**

*God is definitely “interested in evil,” but in a very different way than Satan is. Satan loves evil for evil’s sake, to “steal, kill, and destroy” (Jn 10:10). GOD hates evil for its own sake, and yet ORDAINS / WILLS it for the ultimate sake of His good and wise purposes. This is NOT fatalism, because it comes from our good and wise and caring Heavenly Father. Unlike in Islam (or Deism), with a very removed and distant “God.” Here’s why it is precious that GOD (not Satan) is*

49 *ultimately in charge even of evil – He INTENDS / DESIGNS it for 1) His glory (Eph 1:11-12) and*  
50 *2) the good of His people (Rom 8:28).*

51  
52 Genesis 50:20 (ESV) - As for you, you meant evil against me, **but God meant it for good**, to  
53 bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. *[note the language of*  
54 *intent / purpose / design – this is NOT “God took your evil choices and turned it into something good” –*  
55 *it’s much stronger than that!! Also see Gen 45:3-8, especially v 5, 7, 8 – “do not be distressed or angry*  
56 *with yourselves because you sold me here, for **God sent me...**” And if you wonder if Joseph was right*  
57 *about that, see the inspired comments in Psalm 105:17.]*

58  
59 Psalm 105:25 (ESV) - He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal craftily with his  
60 servants. *[This is God ordaining evil – God was clear (in His revealed will) that nations were to treat*  
61 *Israel well (Gen 12:3), and yet here He turns the hearts of the Egyptians to hate His ppl!]*

62  
63 Job 42:11 (ESV) - Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him  
64 before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and **comforted**  
65 **him for all the evil** *[or “calamity / disaster” – but it’s the same Hebrew word that’s also used for evil;*  
66 *the same Heb word as in Amos 5:15, where God tells His ppl to “hate evil, and love good”.] **that the***  
67 **LORD had brought upon him. ...**

68  
69 Proverbs 16:4 (ESV) - The LORD has made **everything for its purpose**, even the wicked for  
70 the day of trouble.

71  
72 2 Samuel 12:11–12 (ESV) - Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, **I will raise up evil against you** out  
73 of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your  
74 neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. <sup>12</sup> For you did it secretly, but  
75 I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.’ *[This is God to David, after he sinned*  
76 *with Bathsheba. And the punishment involves God “raising up evil”.]*

77  
78 Amos 3:6 (ESV) - Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? **Does disaster**  
79 **come to a city, unless the LORD has done it?**

80  
81 Lamentations 3:37–38 (ESV) - Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has  
82 commanded it? <sup>38</sup> **Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?**

83  
84 *In the following pairs of Scriptures, notice that Satan is significantly involved, but it is GOD who is*  
85 *the ULTIMATE / ORIGINAL / FIRST CAUSE (though He can’t be blamed since He is never the*  
86 *“immediate cause”; God is never the one actually sinning)... See 1 Chron 21:1,7 and 2 Sam*  
87 *24:1, 10. Lk 22:31 and 22:32. Job 1:8-22, 2:7, 2:10.*

88  
89 **“But this kind of thinking would make us robots and make God unfair.”**

90  
91 *This is exactly the kind of statement that God knows will come up after strong teaching on the*  
92 *sovereignty of God. So notice how He inspires Paul to address this...*

93  
94 Romans 9:14–23 (ESV) - What shall we say then? *[This is after some very strong teaching on*  
95 *how God chooses some and rejects others in order to display His sovereign right to choose...]* **Is**  
96 **there injustice on God’s part? By no means!** <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on  
97 whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” *[It’s not really an*  
98 *explanation of how this all works, just a statement that He’s God and He has a right to display mercy*  
99 *according to HIS sovereign will. It’s not fatalism or random (like it would be for us) – He’s all good and*

100 wise!] <sup>16</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.  
 101 [Human will is certainly involved, but is NOT the decisive factor – God’s will/choice is the decisive  
 102 factor!] <sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I  
 103 might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” [Note the  
 104 language of purpose and intent – God *PURPOSED* / *DESIGNED* to raise up this wicked ruler to  
 105 display His own power and glory. See also Prov 16:4] <sup>18</sup> So then he has mercy on whomever he  
 106 wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. <sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, “Why does he still find  
 107 fault? For who can resist his will?” [i.e., “If God is really this in charge, then how can He hold ppl  
 108 accountable??” And the answer basically is, “He’s God and you’re not, and you don’t get to ask that.”  
 109 See the humility Job learned in Job 42:1-6.] <sup>20</sup> But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?  
 110 Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” <sup>21</sup> Has the potter no  
 111 right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another  
 112 for dishonorable use? [Not a robot, but clay in the hands of the Potter! And we can’t agree with the  
 113 commentary that said ~ “God does the best He can with what He has available.” He’s the One who  
 114 makes and designs the “clay” He has available to Him! And there’s a holy purpose coming in the next  
 115 two verses...] <sup>22</sup> What if God, **desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power**,  
 116 has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> **in order to**  
 117 **make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy**, which he has prepared  
 118 beforehand for glory— [Again, God ultimately designs ALL THINGS for 1) His glory (“to show His  
 119 wrath and to make known His power”... “to make know the riches of His glory...”) and 2) for the good  
 120 of His ppl (“for vessels of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory”)!]  
 121

122 **“This can all be explained by the fact that God KNOWS the evil**  
 123 **that’s coming, but He doesn’t in any way cause it.”**  
 124 **(Like someone high on a hill can SEE an accident coming...)**  
 125

126 *First, the Bible never describes God as just WATCHING from far away. The Scriptures listed*  
 127 *above show a wise (so wise that we usually can’t fully follow what He’s up to), caring and good*  
 128 *Father. And, without being sinful Himself, He is MUCH more involved than simply KNOWING*  
 129 *what’s going to happen (by the way, even infallibly knowing what’s definitely going to happen is a*  
 130 *kind of determinism, and is why too many are moving towards believing God can’t even know for*  
 131 *sure what ppl will choose, because then their choices are fixed). The full Scriptural relationship*  
 132 *between God and evil is best understood by 1) remembering that God is the FIRST /*  
 133 *ORIGINAL / ULTIMATE cause for EVERYTHING (including evil), but that He uses*  
 134 *SECONDARY / IMMEDIATE (meaning close-up, the ones who actually sin) causes so that*  
 135 *He Himself is not sinful, though He ordains that evil be for His good purposes. The second*  
 136 *thing we should remember is that 2) Scriptures talk about “the will of God” in two different*  
 137 *ways. Most of the following comes from several VERY HELPFUL papers by John Piper, available for free at*  
 138 *[www.DesiringGod.org](http://www.DesiringGod.org), under these titles (I’m listing them from the most helpful on down, although they’re all pretty*  
 139 *great...) – “Are There Two Wills in God? Divine Election and God’s Desire for All to Be Saved”; “What Is the Will of*  
 140 *God and How Do We Know It?”; “Is God Less Glorious Because He Ordained that Evil Be?”; “How Can We Hate*  
 141 *What Is Evil If God Has Ordained It to Happen?”; “When God’s Will Is That His Will Not Be Done.” Any quotes below*  
 142 *come from one of these papers...*  
 143

144 1) God talks of His **Secret, Sovereign Will** (aka His “Ultimate Will” or “will of decree” or  
 145 “decretive will”). We don’t usually know what this will is until after it happens. If you want to know  
 146 what God’s Secret, Sovereign, Eternal Decrees were for my day today, ask me tomorrow –  
 147 everything that happened conforms to this Ultimate Will!  
 148

149 Ephesians 1:11 (ESV) - In him [*Christ*] we have obtained an inheritance, having been  
150 predestined according to the purpose of him [*God the Father*] **who works all things according**  
151 **to the counsel of his will**, [*“all things” – including evil*]

152  
153 Isaiah 45:7 (ESV) - I [*Yahweh God*] form light and create darkness, I make well-being and  
154 create calamity [*or “evil” in other translations*], I am the LORD, who does all these things.

155  
156 Psalm 115:3 (ESV) - Our God is in the heavens; **he does all that he pleases**. [*This includes*  
157 *stopping evil or permitting/ordaining it for His wise purposes. But I thought God couldn't sin? That's*  
158 *right, but He would never be “pleased” to sin – He does all He WANTS to, because His wanter/willer is*  
159 *perfect (like He'll make ours in heaven!)]*

160  
161 2) But God's **Revealed Will** (aka His “Will of Command” or “Preceptive Will” or “Moral Will”) is  
162 violated regularly! We have many Scriptures where God ordains something He has forbidden, or  
163 sovereignly (through sinful, secondary means) hinders something He has commanded. The only  
164 way to make sense of this is to realize God wills evil in ONE way (His Sovereign, Secret Will) and  
165 yet has expressed His will AGAINST that evil in a clear, Revealed way. From John Piper –

166 ... let me comment on how precious these two truths are. Both correspond to a deep need that we all have  
167 when we are deeply hurt or experience great loss. On the one hand, we need the assurance that God is in  
168 control and therefore is able to work all of my pain and loss together for my good and the good of all who  
169 love him. On the other hand, we need to know that God empathizes with us and does not delight in sin or  
170 pain in and of themselves. These two needs correspond to God's will of decree and his will of command.

171 For example, if you were badly abused as a child, and someone asks you, “Do you think that was the will  
172 of God?” you now have a way to make some biblical sense out of this, and give an answer that doesn't  
173 contradict the Bible. You may say, “No it was not God's will; because he commands that humans not be  
174 abusive, but love each other. The abuse broke his commandment and therefore moved his heart with anger  
175 and grief ([Mark 3:5](#)). But, in another sense, yes, it was God's will (his sovereign will), because there are a  
176 hundred ways he could have stopped it. But for reasons I don't yet fully understand, he didn't.”

177 And corresponding to these two wills are the two things you need in this situation: one is a God who is  
178 strong and sovereign enough to turn it for good [*ER's note: in light of Gen 50:20 & Rom 8:28, I think this*  
179 *should be stronger – “PLANNED IT” for good*]; and the other is a God who is able to empathize with you.  
180 On the one hand, Christ is a sovereign High King, and nothing happens apart from his will ([Matthew](#)  
181 [28:18](#)). On the other hand, Christ is a merciful High Priest and sympathizes with our weaknesses and pain  
182 ([Hebrews 4:15](#)). The Holy Spirit conquers us and our sins when he wills ([John 1:13](#); [Romans 9:15-16](#)), and  
183 allows himself to be quenched and grieved and angered when he wills ([Ephesians 4:30](#); [1 Thessalonians](#)  
184 [5:19](#)). His sovereign will is invincible, and his will of command can be grievously broken.

185 We need both these truths—both these understandings of the will of God—not only to make sense out of  
186 the Bible, but to hold fast to God in suffering.

**IMPORTANT REMINDER:**

Both “Calvinists” and non-Calvinists have to admit that God values SOMETHING more than His revealed will, because He so often at least allows it to be violated. [See Gen 20:6, Prov 21:1, Lam 3:37-38, Ps 105:25, Ezra 6:22. These texts remind us that God has the RIGHT and the ABILITY to stop someone from sinning or allowing them to sin, according to His good and wise purposes.] A **Calvinist** will say that what God values even more is the fulfillment of His Ultimate Will, which He has ordained before the foundations of the earth (including our sin and the sacrifice of His Son for that sin, etc).

A **non-Calvinist** will say that what God values most is our free choice, so He has to keep allowing ppl to choose righteousness or evil, loving Him or not loving Him, or that love wouldn’t be real. See the problems with this view later in this paper, but this view does NOT seem to fit the Scriptural data – what is most valued by God is His own glory, His own name, His own great purposes (see Deut 7:6-8, Rom 9:10-23, 2 Tim 1:9, among MANY others)... [See Grudem’s *Systematic Theology*, ch 32, p 684 for more like this...]

**A few examples of the “Two Wills of God”...**

God has REVEALED “you shall not murder” (Ex 20:13), yet He was pleased (for His greater purposes – see Isa 53:10) to crush His own Son, appointing every detail of His sinful murder (Acts 2:23, 4:27-28).

It’s God’s REVEALED will that governments do justice (Rom 13:1-4). Yet it is often His SOVEREIGN will that His people be abused for long-term, holy purposes (often know in detail only to God until eternity):

1 Peter 3:17 (ESV) - For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil. [So when Christians are persecuted, that is in God’s will, as He is teaching His church to rely totally on Him. And yet every time this happens, it involves evil!]

Jesus COMMANDED – “Matthew 11:28 (ESV) - **Come to me**, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [But this is just after we get a sneak peek into God’s Secret Will (because He doesn’t tell us which ones He’s chosen) about who actually will come to Jesus...]

Matthew 11:20–27 (ESV) - Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. <sup>21</sup> “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. [Whoa! And yet Jesus was sent NOT to a group that “would have repented” at His prchng, but to a group to which mostly these things had been hidden by the Father (see v. 25)] <sup>22</sup> But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. <sup>23</sup> And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. <sup>24</sup> But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.” <sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus declared, “**I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;** <sup>26</sup> yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. [This is His SOVEREIGN will, yet the REVEALED will (see v 28) was for all to “Come to Jesus”.] <sup>27</sup> All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

236 *God's REVEALED will is His command to the lost to repent and come to life:*

237 Ezekiel 18:32 (ESV) - For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord  
238 GOD; so turn, and live." [Also see Ezek 18:23, 33:11, Acts 17:30-31].

239

240 *And yet, He DOES take a certain righteous pleasure from the death of the wicked. Not in*  
241 *the pain of the wicked itself (God is no sadist), but in the glory of His righteous wrath being*  
242 *revealed (also see Rom 9:21-23, Rev 18:20, Prov 16:4).*

243

244 1 Samuel 2:22–25 (ESV) - Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were  
245 doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to  
246 the tent of meeting.<sup>23</sup> And he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your  
247 evil dealings from all these people.<sup>24</sup> No, my sons; it is no good report that I hear the  
248 people of the LORD spreading abroad.<sup>25</sup> If someone sins against a man, God will mediate  
249 for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But they would  
250 not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will [this is **the same Hebrew root word as**  
251 **"pleasure" or "delight" in Ezek 18:23, 32, 33:11!**] of the LORD to put them to death.  
252 [Listening to your father is the REVEALED will of God, but His SECRET will (or "delight" or  
253 "pleasure") was "to put them to death."]

254

255 Deuteronomy 28:63 (ESV) - And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and  
256 multiplying you, so **the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and**  
257 **destroying you.** And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take  
258 possession of it. [So there's a sense in which God does NOT delight in the suffering itself (see  
259 Ezek 18:23, 32, 33:11), AND a sense in which He DOES delight, in the bringing about of justice  
260 and the manifestation of His righteous wrath (Rom 9:21-23). See also Lam 3:31-33.]

261

*In all of this, remember that we are NOT to try to figure out God's "Secret / Sovereign Will"; we're to trust Him for His goodness and wisdom in that, and simply to trust and obey in the REVEALED will: Deuteronomy 29:29 (ESV) - "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, **that we may do all the words** of this law.*

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269 *God's REVEALED will is His command to repent and turn to Jesus and be saved:*

270 Acts 17:30–31 (ESV) - The times of ignorance God overlooked, but **now he commands**  
271 **all people everywhere to repent,**<sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will judge  
272 the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given  
273 assurance to all by raising him from the dead." [And I'm willing to say that this may very well be  
274 the import of 1 Tim 2:4 and 2 Pet 3:9 as well...]

274

275 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV) - The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but  
276 is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach**  
277 **repentance.**

278

279 1 Timothy 2:4 (ESV) - who ["God our Savior"] **desires all people to be saved and to come**  
280 **to the knowledge of the truth.**

281

282 *And yet... we need to realize that God does NOT will (in His Secret, Sovereign Will) to*  
283 *"grant repentance" and the "knowledge of the truth" to everybody:*

284 2 Timothy 2:24–26 (ESV) - And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to  
285 everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,<sup>25</sup> correcting his opponents with

286 gentleness. God may **perhaps grant them repentance** leading to a **knowledge of the**  
287 **truth,** <sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after  
288 being captured by him to do his will. [*We do and should PRAY for this to happen, because God*  
289 *has clearly REVEALED His desire for this to happen in people's lives. And then not get frustrated*  
290 *when He chooses (in His Sovereign Will) NOT to grant repentance and knowledge of the truth to*  
291 *some, for His hidden and good purposes.]*  
292  
293

### 294 **“But what about our free choice?”**

295  
296 *There's not ONE single NT mention of a lost person choosing God!! The only thing close is Mary*  
297 *choosing time listening to Jesus instead of working with Martha (Lk 10:41-42). But LOTS of talk*  
298 *of God choosing people (see the list below). This list goes way up when you add in the terms*  
299 *“elect\*,” which is often used instead of “chosen”.*

300  
301 *A verse that almost implies (at first, then clearly corrects that possible impression) man's initiative*  
302 *in pursuing God is*

303 Galatians 4:9 (ESV) - But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known **by**  
304 God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the  
305 world, whose slaves you want to be once more?  
306

307 There ARE some clear OT references (Deut 30:19-20, Josh 24:15), and lots of IMPLICATIONS  
308 throughout the Bible that we need to choose God, and that this a choice for which we will be held  
309 accountable (Isa 66:3b-4, Rom 9:17-23). It's just that the Bible doesn't at ALL emphasize the  
310 concept of “free choice”. (Instead, it emphasizes that we make real and accountable choices.)  
311 As a matter of fact, the Bible strongly emphasizes that we come to God and choose Him because  
312 He first chose us (Mt 11:27, 22:13-14; Jn 15:16, 15:19; Acts 9:15, 22:14; Rom 11:4-5; **1 Cor 1:26-**  
313 **29**; Eph 1:3-5; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:2-5; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 2:7-9 (and notice that the lost  
314 “stumble...as they were destined to do”).  
315

316 **The Bible DOES say we make choices, and that they matter, and that we'll be held**  
317 **responsible / accountable for them (Isa 66:3b-4; Isa 10:5-25; Rom 9:14-23).** I can't fully  
318 explain how this works together (Deut 29:29; Rom 11:33-36), but the Bible clearly teaches that God  
319 really has ordained EVERYTHING that happens, AND (somehow!) we make real choices that we  
320 are responsible for. When we're tempted to sin, or counseling a friend who's tempted to sin, we  
321 ought to emphasize this second Biblical truth (without forgetting the first ☺). But most Americans  
322 today are so emphasizing the second truth (our responsibility) that they truncate the first truth  
323 (that God has ordained everything), thereby undercutting real comfort in hard times (Rom 8:28-39;  
324 Isa 43:1-3; Php 1:28-29) and after we've sinned (Gen 45:5; Lk 22:31-32; Rom 5:20-6:2) or been sinned  
325 against (Gen 50:20; Rom 8:28; Acts 4:21-31).  
326

327 **“But God must give us free will, or our love for Him wouldn't be real.”**

328  
329 I did a search in the whole Bible for “free will” OR “freewill”. EVERY time this term is used in  
330 Scripture, it refers to those who are already God's people and something being given over and  
331 above what is commanded. It is NEVER used to refer to someone repenting/believing.  
332

333 One of the key texts is 1 Chron 29:1-19, because of the regular repetition of terms like “offer  
334 willingly” and “freewill offerings,” etc (see vss 5,6,9,14,17). But the ultimate reason for this happy  
335 “freewill” is an enabling heart-work done by God:

336 1 Chronicles 29:14 (ESV) - “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be **able**  
337 thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.  
338 *[And he’s not JUST talking about God enabling them by giving them the money (though that’s true,*  
339 *too). He’s talking about giving them the right HEARTS, too (see 1 Chron 29:18-19, just below...)].*

340  
341 1 Chronicles 29:18–19 (ESV) - O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our  
342 fathers, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct  
343 their hearts toward you.<sup>19</sup> Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart that he may keep your  
344 commandments, ... performing all, and that he may build the palace for which I have made  
345 provision.”

346  
347 **Besides this, the modern definition of “free will” needs to change.** Most ppl today think of  
348 “free will” as meaning the equal ability to choose God or reject Him. To choose evil or to reject it.  
349 But this can NOT really be what freedom is, or God is the least free being in the universe - He  
350 CANNOT choose evil (nor does He WANT to, because His “wanter” is completely righteous, just  
351 like ours will be in heaven)! No, Biblical “freedom” must mean “choosing what we WANT”; NOT  
352 the equal ability to choose right or wrong. Lost people ALL choose sin (there’s no “equal ability to  
353 choose right or wrong”). But they will be held accountable because they all WANT to choose sin.  
354 So in that very limited sense they could be called “free,” I suppose (but not much of a “freedom!”).  
355 And when believers get to heaven, our “wanters / willers” will be fixed, and we will ALWAYS  
356 choose what is right (looking forward to that!!). And we will NOT be able to choose sin. But in  
357 heaven we won’t WANT to sin, anyway, so we’re living in freedom! But if we define “freedom” as  
358 the equal ability to choose right or wrong, then heaven will be our least “free” state – that doesn’t  
359 fit the Biblical picture at all!! And our love for God in heaven will be real and 100% pure – even  
360 though (especially though?) we can’t choose something else – we won’t WANT to!

361  
362 **“God won’t work in your life without your permission.”**

363  
364 *To the contrary! Thankfully God doesn’t ask ANYONE’S permission – He’s the Potter, we’re the*  
365 *clay! As a matter of fact, WE can’t grow/change/mature without HIS permission:*

366 Hebrews 6:1–3 (ESV) - Therefore **let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go**  
367 **on to maturity, ...**<sup>3</sup> **And this we will do if God permits.**

368  
369 *Here are just a FEW examples of God NOT needing anyone’s permission...*

370  
371 **\*\* Paul, in Acts 9**

372  
373 **\*\* Job – God brought Job up to Satan, set limits on what Satan was allowed to do (aren’t you glad**  
374 **that Satan has to ask permission of God?!). And in Job 1:20-22, 2:6-10, and 42:11 it’s clear that,**  
375 **though Satan was certainly involved, GOD HIMSELF is the Ultimate Cause of all that Job is going**  
376 **through. And we find near the end of the book that one of the good purposes God was doing was**  
377 **revealing more of His greatness to Job. Listen to what Job learned (and it’s NOT that we need to**  
378 **give God permission to work in our lives...)**

379 Job 42:1–6 (ESV) - Then Job answered the LORD and said:<sup>2</sup> “I know that you can do all  
380 things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.<sup>3</sup> ‘Who is this that hides counsel without  
381 knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me,  
382 which I did not know.<sup>4</sup> ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to



383 me.’<sup>5</sup> I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, **but now my eye sees you;**<sup>6</sup> **therefore I**  
384 **despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”**

385  
386 \*\* Rosaria Butterfield (see her testimony at [www.DesiringGod.org](http://www.DesiringGod.org)).

387 In 1999, Rosaria Champagne Butterfield was a tenured English professor at Syracuse University, a  
388 skeptic of all things Christianity, and in a committed lesbian relationship. ...Butterfield shares the story  
389 of her conversion from a radical lesbian to a redeemed Christian. ... **“I tried to toss the Bible and all**  
390 **of its teachings in the trash — I really tried,”** she says. “But I kept reading it, reading it not just for  
391 pleasure, **but reading it because I was engaged in a research program trying to refute the religious**  
392 **right from a lesbian feminist perspective. . . . After my second or third, maybe fourth, pass**  
393 **through the entire Bible something started to happen. The Bible got to be bigger inside me than I.**  
394 **And it absolutely overflowed into my world. I really fought against it. . . .** But I really had to  
395 confront this God.”

396  
397 \*\* *King Abimelech, in Gen 20. Abraham had lied to him about Sarah, so Abimelech had taken her with*  
398 *a view to marry her soon. Note how God kept him from sinning (without Abimelech’s knowledge or*  
399 *“permission”). He COULD do that with any/all of us every time (and for believers, the moment we go to*  
400 *heaven He WILL make this happen permanently for us!). But He so often permits / ordains our sin instead*  
401 *(still holding us accountable – see Rom 9:17-21).*

402 Genesis 20:3–6 (ESV) - But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him,  
403 “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s  
404 wife.”<sup>4</sup> Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, “Lord, will you kill an innocent  
405 people?<sup>5</sup> Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my  
406 brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.”<sup>6</sup> Then  
407 God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your  
408 heart, and **it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you**  
409 **touch her.** [But choices still matter! Keep rdg...] Genesis 20:7 (ESV) - Now then, return the  
410 man’s wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. **But if you do**  
411 **not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.”**

412

413 \*\* *Nebuchadnezzar. God wanted to do a humbling work in his heart, and gave him a dream that*  
414 *Daniel used to call the king to repent and humble himself. He didn’t, yet God is not at all stymied*  
415 *by Nebuchadnezzar’s sinful choice...*

416 Daniel 4:29–37 (ESV) - At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal  
417 palace of Babylon,<sup>30</sup> and the king answered and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have  
418 built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?”<sup>31</sup> While the  
419 words were still in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, “O King Nebuchadnezzar,  
420 to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you,<sup>32</sup> and you shall be driven from  
421 among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And **you shall be made to**  
422 **eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that**  
423 **the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.”<sup>33</sup> Immediately the**  
424 **word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. . . .**<sup>34</sup> At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar,  
425 lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and  
426 praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and  
427 his kingdom endures from generation to generation;<sup>35</sup> **all the inhabitants of the earth are**  
428 **accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and**

429 **among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What**  
430 **have you done?”** <sup>36</sup> At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my  
431 kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me,  
432 and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. <sup>37</sup> **Now I,**  
433 **Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are**  
434 **right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.**  
435

436 **\*\* Lazarus in John 11, and compare with us in Eph 2:1-10 – “dead in trespasses and sins...” “by**  
437 **nature children of wrath...”**

438 Ephesians 2:4–10 (ESV) - **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with  
439 which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> **even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together**  
440 **with Christ**—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with  
441 him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the  
442 immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you  
443 have been saved through faith. And **this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,** <sup>9</sup> not a  
444 result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ  
445 Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

446 **\*\* Lost ppl that God chooses to save (this is kind of a continuation from Eph 2:1-10...) –**  
447 **2 Corinthians 4:3–6 (ESV) - And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are**  
448 **perishing.** <sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to  
449 keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup>  
450 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your  
451 servants for Jesus’ sake. <sup>6</sup> **For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has**  
452 **shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of**  
453 **Jesus Christ.** *[God doesn’t need our permission (or the permission of the lost we’re praying for!)*  
454 *anymore than He needed the permission of the hopeless-looking darkness in Gen 1!! We can pray*  
455 *fervently to our God who changes hearts, and makes people willing! Who transforms persecutors of*  
456 *the church into His missionaries! (Acts 9) Who takes the dead (Jn 11 and Eph 2:1, 5) and the dark (2*  
457 *Cor 4:6) and brings them to life and light!! Let’s passionately (James 5:16-17) and persistently (Lk*  
458 *18:1-8) pray to our Father who changes lives to bring glory to His Name!!]*  
459 -----

460 **Bringing it all together...**

461 **Praying boldly to our Sovereign God, then witnessing about our Great God**  
462 **(who has even predestined evil for His good purposes)**

463 Acts 4:23–31 (ESV) - When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the  
464 chief priests and the elders had said to them. *[They had just been threatened by the ppl who crucified*  
465 *Jesus just weeks ago...]* <sup>24</sup> And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said,  
466 **“Sovereign Lord**, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, *[note*  
467 *that they start by reminding themselves of the Sovereign Majesty of our Creator God and King.]* <sup>25</sup> who  
468 through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, “Why did the  
469 Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, and the  
470 rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’—<sup>27</sup> for truly in this city  
471 there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod  
472 and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup> to do whatever your hand  
473 and your plan had predestined to take place. *[i.e., every evil done to Jesus was “predestined” by God.*  
474 *This is how they’re comforting themselves!]* <sup>29</sup> And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to  
475 your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, <sup>30</sup> while you stretch out your hand  
476 to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” <sup>31</sup>  
477 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they

478 were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.  
479 *[Effective praying, then bold witnessing, all in the context of worshipping our God who is absolutely*  
480 *sovereign AND caring for His own!!]*