

Human Ethics and God's Providence



Characteristics of Christian ethics

1. **INDIVIDUALISTIC** - The image of God indwells individuals not political or social systems.
2. **RESPONSIVE** - It is a worshipful expression of gratitude to the grace of God in Christ.
3. **INSIDE OUT** - It calls for a change of mind and heart that transforms the outer life.
4. **JUDGMENT** - It embraces a linear view of history with a coming day of moral judgment for all humanity.
5. **VOLUNTARY** - It is the result of free choices made by disciples of Jesus.

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Ethical Integrity

Growing up in all aspects into Christ

The Integrity of Ethics

The validity of moral choice & consequence



Philippians 2

"¹² So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for **it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**"

How is God involved in our desires, choices, and actions?

God's Sovereign Providence

is the active implementation of God's plan for his creation so that His strategic purposes are realized and His Son is ultimately glorified.



Does God control every detail of life?

Acts 4:27-28

“For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, **to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.**”

Is God's sovereign will determined before the human decisions are made?

In this case is doing evil a part of God's plan?



R.C. Sproul

“If there is one single molecule in this universe running around loose, totally free of God's sovereignty, then we have no guarantee that a single promise of God will ever be fulfilled.”

Divine Sovereign Providence

is the active implementation of God's plan for his creation so that His strategic purposes are realized and His Son is ultimately glorified.



If God decrees what happens, do ethics have any meaning?

An explanation

1. As the sovereign Lord, God is the **1st cause** (in control) of everything.
2. Most events have **secondary causes** through which God's decrees are worked out.
3. **Sinful acts** are attributed to these secondary causes, not to God directly.
4. Some view this as God's **permissive will**.

But what about Acts 4:27-28

“to do whatever **Thy hand** and **Thy purpose** predestined to occur.”



John Frame
Doctrine of God, p178

God permits nothing passively, but his permission is “an efficacious permission.”

If God sovereignly preordains all behavior apart from human volition -

- Are human ethics just a charade?
- How can God find fault with anyone without condemning Himself?
- In what way are the exhortations & warnings in Scripture meaningful?
- Is human free choice just an illusion?

A common explanation

1. As sovereign Lord, God is the everything.
2. Most events have which God's decrees are worked out.
3. causes, not to God directly.
- 4.
5. How this gets God off the hook for sin is a **mystery** that is beyond our understanding.

This invites other explanations.

Acts 4:28

“predestined” (PROORIZO)
“to determine or resolve beforehand”

This has to do with a fixed plan that is known beforehand and acted out.

It may or may not be based on mitigating human contingencies.

Calvinists
no known mitigating human contingencies.

Example: A game plan based on nothing outside the coach's style & will.

Arminians
known mitigating human contingencies.

Example: A game plan based on scouting the other team.

Fatalists

Calvinists

Arminians

Deists

God controls every detail.

The seeking, learning, respecting, speaking truth in love, zone.

The creation is on its own.

Human choices are set by and in service of God's choices.

The danger is that God is seen as controlling too much

Human choices are independent of, but used by, God in His plan.

The danger is that God is seen as limiting Himself too much

What is the nature of God's sovereign power?

1. **Is it His control** - predestination of all creation, human actions, etc.?

Does God need to micromanage everything in order to accomplish His purposes?

2. **Is it His creativity** - loving knowledge?

Is God's love (working through creative wisdom) the principle element in His sovereign power?

How is the glory & power of God best revealed?

1 John 4:8

“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

1 John 4:19

“We love because he first loved us.”

2 Corinthians 5:14

“For the love of Christ controls us.”

What impressed Paul was not God's control but the wisdom and knowledge that guided His actions.

Romans 11:33

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”



Consideration #1

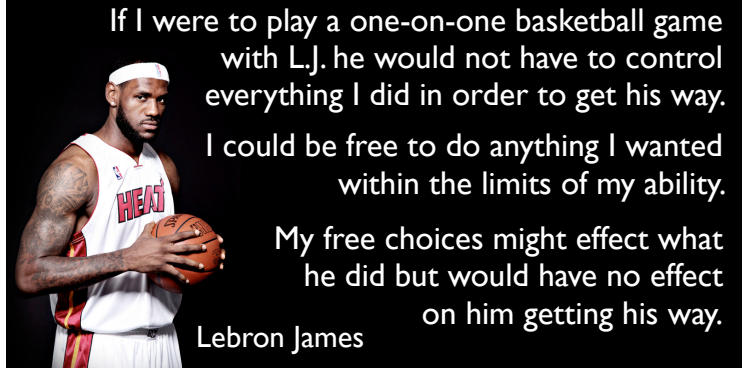
**Is God's loving, sovereign, power
SELF LIMITED IN THIS AGE?**

Did God give moral creatures (those who bear God's image) a measure of real freedom to choose with the subsequent consequences?

Could God's love and respect for them limit His absolute control of them?

Consideration #2

**Is God's loving, sovereign, power
threatened by MY CHOICES?**



If I were to play a one-on-one basketball game with L.J. he would not have to control everything I did in order to get his way.

I could be free to do anything I wanted within the limits of my ability.

My free choices might effect what he did but would have no effect on him getting his way.

Lebron James

Consideration #3

**Is God's loving, sovereign, power
a function of His CREATIVE WISDOM?**



**Whose Line
is it Anyway?**

**"They create
humor out
of anything."**

Consideration #3

**Is God's loving, sovereign, power
a function of His CREATIVE WISDOM?**



**"God
changed
chaos to
cosmos."**

Genesis 1

Consideration #4

**Is God's loving, sovereign,
power a function of His
KNOWLEDGE?**



**"I can give my
grandson Alex
free choices and
because I know
him, I know what
he will choose."**

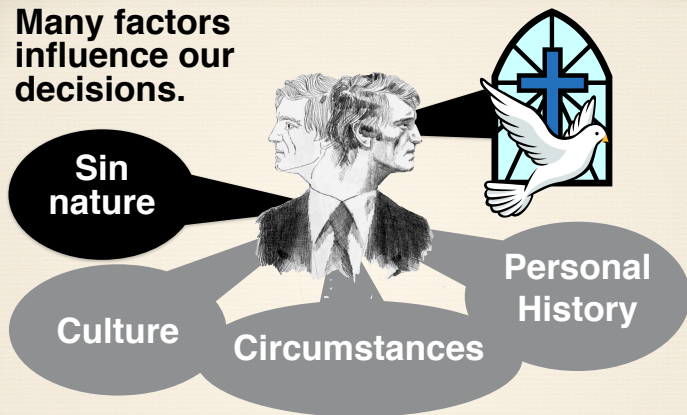
Consideration #4

**Is God's loving, sovereign,
power a function of His
KNOWLEDGE?**

Psalms 139

"1 O Lord, You have searched me and known me. 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thoughts from afar. 3 You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. . . 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it."

Many factors influence our decisions.



As with the weather, the greater the knowledge the better the foreknowledge.

Consideration #5

Is God's loving, sovereign, power in sync with His FOREKNOWLEDGE .



Carlsen Magnus

Like a grandmaster in chess, God can see how history is set up to enable certain things to unfold, and He uses this as a part of His providential plan.

Romans 8:29-30

"For those whom He **foreknew**,
He also **predestined** . . .
called . . . justified . . . glorified"

**Does predestination
start with foreknowing?**

**Could God's foreknowledge
of us (including our choices)
be used by Him in His
providential plan?**

Consideration #6

Is God's loving, sovereign, power
THE WAY OF THE CROSS?



Christ crucified is the power of God

God's power is not like the world's power.

1 Corinthians 1

"¹⁸ For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, "*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.*" . . . ²² For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

"²⁶ For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, ²⁹ that no man should boast before God."

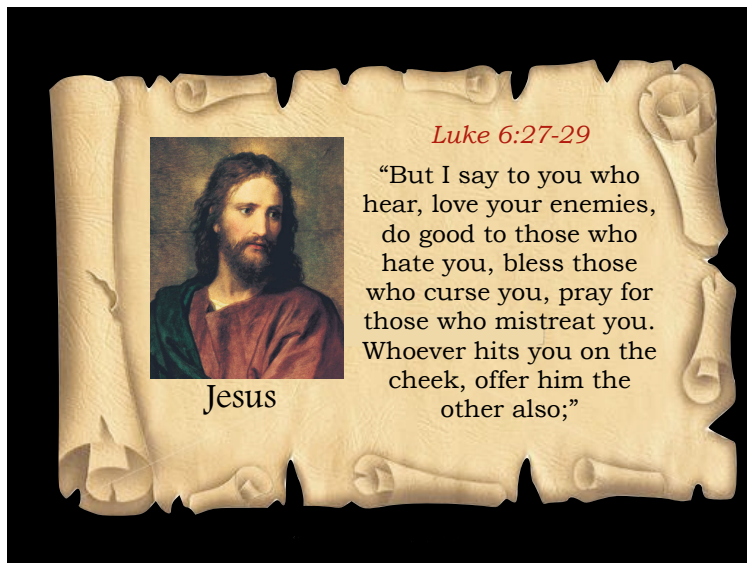
**God's people are to illustrate that power
in who they are and what they do.**

- **Jesus was a model of God's Power - Incarnation, forsaking political means, Cross, etc.** *1 Cor.1:24*
- **Paul gave up his power to follow Jesus.** *Phil.3:4-11*
- **Paul taught others to do the same.** *Phil.2:5-8*
- **Joseph was a righteous man when he protected Mary rather than having her stoned.** *Matt.1:18-19*
- **Peter calls disciples to submit to personal injustice in the hands of worldly power as they follow Christ.** *1 Pet.2-3*



As a powerful woman, how do you respond to those who say that women are not free to be ordained in the Catholic Church?

“Power in the Kingdom of God is the freedom to love. I have that freedom and I do not need a position or a title to exercise that power.”



Luke 6:27-29

“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also;”

Jesus

Romans 8:28

“And we know that **God causes all things to work together** for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”

It can't be that difficult for a God who is infinitely wise, powerful, and creative.

Is your God too small?

Deuteronomy 29:29

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”

At the end of the day we may not be able to fully understand some things

but



Romans 11:33

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

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