

## The Interdependence between Divine Providence and Free-Will

There's been a timeless debate raging between the apparent contradiction between the theories of Divine providence and Free-will. How can we be free to choose and yet God still be in control? Or if God is in control, then what kind of free choice do we really have? Shortly after follow the never ending speculations concerning Fate and Predestination.

The Bible labels God as 'The Power' in a few places, and as 'The Almighty' in several. If we fully understand and apply the implications of what, exactly, this means, it has the potential to readily clarify any contradictions between free-will and Providence.

There is quite a bit of difference between the Churches teaching of "Free-Will" and the psycho term 'willpower'. This is where the misconception may originate from. I believe that we possess no such thing as willpower, apart from God. We have the ability to Will, surely, but we have not the power to effect that will. The power is God's, and God's alone. He may at any time empower these wills of ours to actually do what we will, but again, that choice lies beyond our control. He just as possibly has the option to withhold that power from us, allowing us to continue to wish, to plan, and to Will, but denying us the power of implementing these desires and plans.

Paul illustrates this principle beautifully when he says, "That I will to do, I do not do, yet that I will not to do, it is that I do do!"

We can see this principle at work in our own lives. We resolve to stop a harmful habit, smoking for example, or cursing, dwelling on vengeful fantasies, fantasizing about impure thoughts...etc, and yet for all the supposed willpower we supposedly possess, we are not able to refrain from doing. That's a negative, yet the reverse also holds true.

Our rational mind knows what steps to take to obtain success. For example, if I desire to become a muscle bound athlete, I know that I must stick to a rigorous work-out schedule and seek out and find qualified trainers in whatever field I seek to aspire to, whether that be football, martial arts, or whatever, then I must apply myself with all my effort. If I desire to be a rich businessman, I know rationally that I must study the principles of whatever business I wish to dominate in, I must deny myself the pleasures of spending time or money pursuing my own pleasures and dedicate myself completely to understanding the keys to success. Vengeance, Greed, Lust, we can all list the things hindering us from achieving what we will to achieve. And yet with all things we know we should do and the things we should avoid, we just can't force ourselves, or our resolves, to withstand the boredom of such intense periods of study, we cannot maintain our resolve to invest all in a business while denying ourselves the luxuries we want, we cannot overpower our innate desire to rest and relax when

we know that rigorous training is the means to success.

In short, we have the Will, but not the Power to push that Will against all the obstacles that present themselves.

Enter God. Scripture says that He knows our most hidden thoughts. He sees the desires of our hearts. He sees the desire of that man to murder his enemies and his entire family, yet he withholds the power enabling that will to overcome his fear of state sponsored execution, so that will, an evil one, fizzles and dies with no result. He sees another will desiring to go through medical school to heal and cure children and cancer patients and he empowers that will to overcome all obstacles. The power rests with God alone.

Sure, sometimes He empowers the bad guys. But even in the Old Testament He allowed some things to occur for good to result. Due to the crimes of the Israelites, He allowed the Babylonians to enslave and kill them. Why? To discipline and chastise them, to show them the error of their ways in order that they would turn from such behaviors and begin to do good again. It is sad time and again how God is able to even bring Good out of Evil. Yet even with that view, the evil will never originated with Him, it originated by the sinfulness of others.

God does not and cannot will evil. But He is in complete control, He is Divine Providence. All power rests with Him alone. Any Good that we do should not be a source of pride for us, because without Him empowering us, we could do absolutely nothing. And while any bad we do it may be true that we could not do it without His over, it is equally true that we WOULD not do it without our own sinful desire to WILL it. He will never make or wish that we WILL to sin. He just works His plans out in a creation of differing wills that He allowed the ability to freely choose. We, His creatures, have been granted this freedom of choice, and He does not take it from us....Chris Hall.