

## W.E.C. #15 - Open Theism - The Future Can't Be Set in Stone Because God Rules by Love

Presupposition: God Neither Decrees All Things or Foresees All Things

Rather - God Rules Through His Divine Wisdom as the Grand Chess Master

- If God decrees all things that come to pass
  - Humanity is not free
  - We cannot do anything but what God has determined to come to pass
  - This erodes human personality and responsibility
  - We are bound and determined to act according to causal antecedents which existed before we were even born
  - Freedom is simply an illusion
- If God foresees everything a person will ever do
  - Humanity is not free
  - They have no choice but to do exactly what God foresees
  - God knows all things actual as well as potential
    - Meaning - God can know all things in the present tense as well as *all possibilities* of things that could exist
    - But He does not know the future for certain because humanity has not made its free-will choice to act
- The understanding of God's sovereignty according to Open Theism:
  - God has chosen to create a world that gives its people free agency to act contrary to His will
  - *Much* of the future is already settled
    - This explains all the verses Calvinists use to demonstrate God's sovereignty
  - **But** – those verses do not teach the future is *exhaustively* set in place
- Like Arminianism - not everything that takes place is according to God's will
- Humanity is perfectly capable of thwarting God's plans and it does so most frequently
- Rather than diminishing His sovereignty"
  - Open Theism believes it lifts it higher than classical Calvinism because God rules out of love rather than control
  - God demonstrates his sovereignty by empowering others to enter into a loving relationship with him
  - He demonstrates his sovereignty when, out of love, He puts himself in a position where His heart might be grieved and frustrated
  - God makes Himself vulnerable through His sovereignty
    - It takes a God who is truly in control to be willing to give away some of his control, knowing that doing so might cause him incredible pain
  - God is victorious without being in control of all the details.
- According to Gregory Boyd:
  - "It takes a truly sovereign God to make himself vulnerable like this. It takes a God

who is truly in control to be willing to give away some of his control, knowing that doing so might cause him incredible pain. It takes a truly wise and creative God to guarantee victory without having to control every detail of history. By contrast, to simply control others so that you always get your way is a sure sign of insecurity and weakness.”

- God knows that evils will occur but has not specifically decreed it into his plan.
- God governs the world in accordance with His *general strategies* which are brought about for the good of the creation.
- The details of the consequences are not foreseen by God prior to the decision
  - Rather than controlling all events that take place, God has to plan and respond to His creation.
  - To simply control the process and information regarding the future does not require the use of God’s virtuous attributes
- The understanding of God’s immutability in Open Theism is based upon univocal predication like classical Arminianism, but to a much larger degree.
  - God can change, He does not have exhaustive knowledge of the future, He is not absolutely sure of the actions of His agents, and He can change His mind.
  - His will can be thwarted since man has the libertarian free will to defy Him.
  - God is made out to be more of a passive agent than He is according to classical Arminianism, but under the context of love and liberty
- In order for man to be truly free, God cannot have exhaustive knowledge of the future.
  - If God knew what man was going to do before he acted, humanity would be bound by that knowledge and unable to do anything other than what God already foreknew.
  - No matter what choice man makes, he is bound by this knowledge.
- Open Theism believes God is still able to gain victory in the end by planning and responding to His creation out of His infinite love and wisdom.
  - God does not control all things but is able to organize them in a way where He gets what He desires.
  - Man is able to thwart God’s plans at times, but in the end, God ends up victorious.
- For this reason, many Reformed theologians claim that Open Theism is the only consistent option for an Arminian.
  - Since Arminians believe God knows all things, how can man be truly free if God already knows what must certainly take place?

### Evidence from Scripture

- Much of the future is already settled
- But:
  - Those verses do not teach the future is exhaustively set in place
  - Here are those verses that prove this to be the case

- If the future is already settled, how could Jesus ask the Father for the plan of the crucifixion to be changed?
  - **Matthew 26:39** - *And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, **if it be possible**, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”*
  - **V 42** – *Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, **if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.**”*
- If the future is already settled, how could God ever regret a decision He made?
  - **Genesis 6:6** – *And the Lord **regretted** that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart*
  - **1 Sam 15:11**- *“**I regret** that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments.”*
  - **V 35** – *And the Lord **regretted** that he had made Saul king over Israel.*
- If the future is already settled, how could God be surprised and expect different results than what took place?
  - **Jeremiah 3:6-7** - *<sup>6</sup> The Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah: “Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? <sup>7</sup> **And I thought**, ‘After she has done all this she will return to me,’ **but she did not** return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it.*
  - **V 19** – *“**And I thought** you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me”*
- If the future is already set, why would God test His people to see how they would react?
  - **Deut 8:2** - *And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, **testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments***
  - **V 13:3** – *For the Lord your God is **testing** you, **to know** whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*
- If the future is already set, why does God speak in terms of possibility, that things may or may not take place?
  - **Ex 4:8-9** - *<sup>8</sup> “**If they will not believe you,**” God said, “**or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign.** <sup>9</sup> **If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice...***
  - **Ex 13:17** – *When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, “**Lest the people change their minds** when they see war and return to Egypt.”*
  - **Ezekiel 12:3** - *As for you, son of man, prepare for yourself an exile's baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight. You shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. **Perhaps** they will understand, though they are a rebellious house*