

# 301: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY I

## Week 5 - Providence

### Deuteronomy 29:29

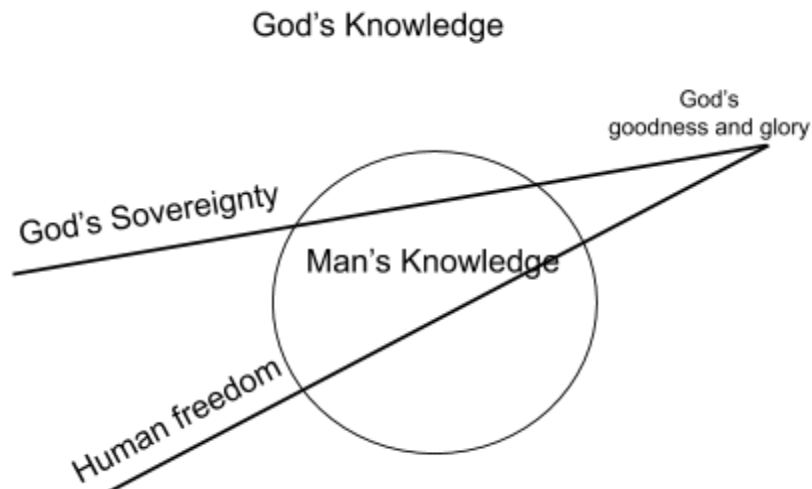
The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

### Wayne Grudem

God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes.

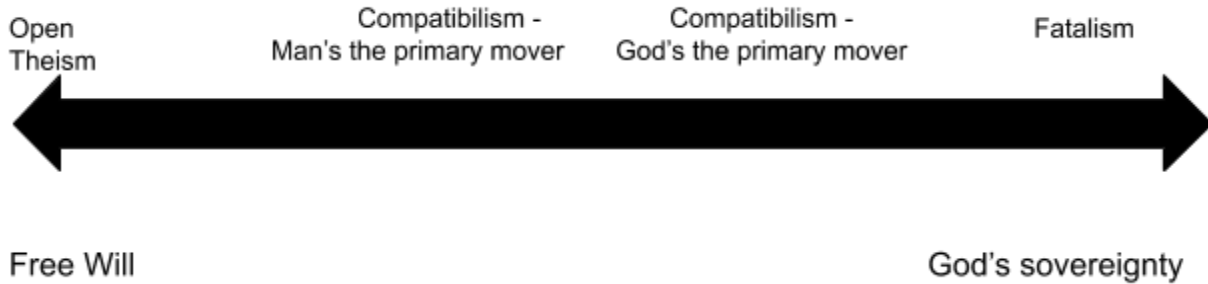
God's sovereignty -

Free will -



**Romans 8:28**

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.



**Open-Theism -**

**Fatalism -**

**Compatibilism -**

**Man as primary mover:** God knows and acts based on what you are going to do

**God as primary mover:** God knows and acts based on what He wants you to do

**Problem of Evil**

- **Open-theism -**
- **Fatalism -**
- **Compatibilism -**

**Tim Keller, *The Reason for God***

Christianity alone among the world religions claims that God became uniquely and fully human in Jesus Christ and therefore knows firsthand despair, rejection, loneliness, poverty, bereavement, torture, and imprisonment. On the cross he went beyond even the worst human suffering and experienced cosmic rejection and pain that exceeds ours as infinitely as his knowledge and power exceeds ours. In his death, God suffers in love, identifying with the abandoned and godforsaken. Why did he do it? The Bible says that Jesus came on a rescue mission for creation. He had to pay for our sins so that someday he can end evil and suffering without ending us.

**Salvation**

- **Open Theism -**

- **Fatalism** -
- **Compatibilism** - two major camps:
  - **Arminianism/Wesleyian** -
  - **Calvinism/Reformed** -

**Calvinism -**

**Ephesians 1:3-11**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, **4** even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. **7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, **8** which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight **9** making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ **10** as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

**11** In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will

**Romans 3:23**

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

**Ephesians 2:1**

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins

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- God through the preaching of the gospel and a work of His Spirit, draws you to Himself to place your faith in Jesus.

**Romans 9:10-13**

And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, **11** though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— **12** she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” **13** As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

**Romans 9:14-20**

**14** What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! **15** For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” **16** So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. **17** For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” **18** So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

**19** You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” **20** But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”

**1 John 2:19**

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

**C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce***

The gates of Hell are locked from the inside.

**Arminianism -**

**Ephesians 2:8**

For by grace you have been saved through faith.

**Matt 10:28**

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

- \_\_\_\_\_ — This grace is extended to every person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ — This grace is only extended to those who come under the intelligent hearing of the gospel, and not to every person.

**1 -**

**Charles Spurgeon<sup>1</sup>**

...whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer—I wish to be called nothing but a Christian; but if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it. But far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none but Calvinistic Christians within her walls, or that there are none saved who do not hold our views. Most atrocious things have been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of Arminians. I can only say concerning him that...if there were wanted two apostles to be added to the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitefield and John Wesley. The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self-sacrifice, zeal, holiness, and communion with God; he lived far above the ordinary level of common Christians, and was one ‘of whom the world was not worthy.’

**2 -**

**Randy Alcorn**

“If we imagine our position on sovereignty and free will is the only one without problems, we’re kidding ourselves, and need a dose of humility. All positions have snags, whether biblical, logical or practical inconsistencies. A position can be entirely true, but there will always be arguments

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<sup>1</sup> *A Defense of Calvinism*

against it, and if we don't understand those arguments, or if we dismiss them as if only a stupid person could believe them, we can't effectively communicate. God deliver us from theological arrogance!

I think it's a mistake for anyone to attach too much importance to being consistent with our own system. I was an Arminian, as a young Christian in an Arminian church, and after years of studying Scripture I gradually changed my view on election and predestination. But had I allowed my theological system to hold sway, I wouldn't have changed my views, but would have stayed logically consistent, and that would have been a mistake.

But we Calvinists can do the same thing. We end up being accomplished logicians rather than pure biblicists. If we're attempting to be card-carrying Calvinists, trying to keep in step with our theological comrades, our real authority is our theological system, or our logic, not the Bible. (If we depend too much on logic, we would never believe many biblical doctrines, including the Trinity—the mathematics don't add up, do they?)

I recommend being willing to have “leaks” and inconsistencies in your theological system, while remaining unwilling to do violence to Scripture to make it fit your system.”<sup>2</sup>

3 -

**Matthew 9:37-38**

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; **38** therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

**1 Thessalonians 5:17**

...pray without ceasing.

**Matt 28:18-20**

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Romans 10:13-15**

everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”**14** How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? **15** And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

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<sup>2</sup> “Randy Alcorn on Calvinists, Armenians, and Everything in Between.” *The Gospel Coalition*.  
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/randy-alcorn-on-calvinists-arminians-and-everything-in-between/>

## GROUP DISCUSSION

- What stood out to you from the lesson?
- What's been your previous experience or impression on this topic?
- In the lesson we said that we both have free will and God is sovereign. Have you experienced this theological tension before? How so?

## CASE STUDIES

How would you handle each of the following scenarios? What are the possible theological beliefs behind their statements/actions? What passages could you point them to?

- Someone in LifeGroup has coworkers that don't know Jesus. Based off your follow up with them week after week you realize they don't feel an urgency to build with, invite to rhythm or share their faith. After pressing them about this, they said they don't really sense the urgency since God will save them if He wants to.
- Someone in LifeGroup feels anxious about their non-Christian friends. They've tried everything - they've shared their faith, invited them to rhythms, they've gone out of their way to serve but their friends don't seem interested in Jesus at all. This leaves them constantly feeling like a failure at evangelism.

## VERSE TO REMEMBER

### **Romans 8:28**

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

[\*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God\* by J.I. Packer](#)

[\*Chosen by God\* by R.C. Sproul](#)

[\*Armenian Theology: Myths and Realities\* by Roger Olson](#)