



# LED BY HIS SPIRIT

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 2025

**Title:** Free Will and Depravity: A Response to Calvinism

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*“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”  
(1 Timothy 2:4)*

INTRODUCTION: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 1. \_\_\_\_\_ Understanding of Free Will

### A. Definition

**QUOTE:** “As a general definition, free will means the human capacity to choose a course of action from among various alternatives.”

**—Mark Lanier in Christianity on Trial**

A soft-libertarian concept of free will: “To sum up this point, to say that an act was done with libertarian free will doesn’t mean it was uncaused, nor does it mean that no factors in any way influenced the agent as he or she chose and acted. The agent caused her own acts, but did not do so because of any causal conditions that decisively inclined her will in one direction rather than another.”—**John Feinberg, No One Like Him, p. 629.**

### B. Illustrations from Scripture

### Adam Was Given a Real Choice in Genesis 2:17

*“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”  
(Genesis 2:17)*

### Joshua Told the Hebrews to Choose Who They Will Serve in Joshua 24:15

*“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15)*

### Paul Stated That General Revelation Left Men With No Excuse in Romans 1:20

*“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”  
(Romans 1:20)*

### Jesus Lamented Jerusalem’s Rebellion in Matthew 23:37

*“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37)*

### Stephen Said That the Hebrews Always Resisted the Holy Ghost in Acts 7:51

*“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.” (Acts 7:51)*

### Jesus Promised to Draw Everyone to Himself Through the Crucifixion in John 12:23

*“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”  
(John 12:32)*

## C. Implications of Free Will

**QUOTE:** “Therefore, reason also demands that all moral creatures are morally free; that is, they have the ability to respond one way or another. Whatever evil we do and are responsible for, we could have responded otherwise... Moral obligation implies moral freedom.” **–Norman Geisler in Chosen but Free, pg. 30**

C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* states, “Free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having.”

**QUOTE:** “[Francis] Schaeffer valiantly tries to keep the two incompatible compartments of libertarian freedom (and all that comes with it, namely, love, rationality, significance and morals) and total, unconditional predestination separate under the guise of ‘balance,’ but this arrangement is destined for the same sort of fate as the dualistic proposals he rejects. No type of complete determinism, naturalistic or theistic, can make provision for true, significant first-cause freedom.”—**Burson and Walls in C. S. Lewis & Francis Schaeffer, pg. 96**

**QUOTE:** “No extant Christian author prior to Augustine taught anything other than genuine free choice in combating the rigid determinism of these pagan philosophies.”—**Ken Wilson in The Foundations of Augustinian-Calvinism, pg. 18**

**QUOTE:** “Of the eighty-four pre-Augustinian authors studied from 95–430 CE, over fifty authors addressed the topic. All of these early Christian authors championed traditional free choice.”—**Wilson, pg. 104**

## 2. Affirming the Doctrine of \_\_\_\_\_

### A. The Bible Does Teach That We Are Depraved

*“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10–12)*

### B. The Bible Does Not Teach Total Inability

We are hopeless without divine revelation and the moving of the Holy Spirit. However, everyone has both of these (see Psalm 19:1–6, John 1:9, John 12:32, Romans 1:20, Titus 2:11, etc.)

Calvinists mean something very different. “Another way of describing total depravity is to call it total inability.”—**Edwin Palmer, The Five Points of Calvinism, pg. 24.**

*“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:”  
(Romans 1:18-20)*

### C. Total Inability Leads Directly to Determinism

Full determinism has more in common with atheism and Islam than Christianity

Determinism should be rejected due to Adam’s sin. Determinists claim that we are free to act in accord with our desires, but not to choose our desires. However, this fails to explain Adam’s sin

**QUOTE:** “Freedom is the ability to do what one most desires.”—**John Frame, We Are All Philosophers pg. 94.**

**QUOTE:** “Herein lies the problem. Before a person can commit an act of sin he must first have a desire to perform that act. The Bible tells us that evil actions flow from evil desires. But the presence of an evil desire is already sin. We sin because we are sinners. We are born with a sin nature. We are fallen creatures. But Adam and Even were not created fallen. They had no sin nature. They were good creatures with a free will. Yet they chose to sin. Why? I don’t know.”—**R. C. Sproul in Chosen by God**

### D. Culpability Implies Capability

*“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:”  
(Romans 1:20)*

## 3. Avoiding \_\_\_\_\_

### A. Error 1: Salvation Precedes Faith

Calvinist’s claim, “A man is not saved because he believes in Christ; he believes in Christ because he is saved.”—**Loraine Boettner in The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination**

**QUOTE:** “We do not think that faith precedes and causes new birth. Faith is the evidence that God has begotten us anew.”

**–John Piper**

**QUOTE:** “A cardinal point of Reformed theology is the maxim: Regeneration precedes faith.”–**R. C. Sproul**

*“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” (John 11:25)*

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)*

*“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”  
(Galatians 3:26)*

**QUOTE:** “We are all ready to set our seal to the clearest possible statement that men are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, and saved the moment they believe.”–**Charles Spurgeon**

## B. Error 2: Foreknowledge Is Deterministic

**QUOTE:** “If God is the cause of all human actions, then human beings are not morally responsible.”–**Normal Geisler, “Free Will.” in Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, pg. 262**

**QUOTE:** “If God’s providence governs causally down to the last detail (as the strong Calvinist insists), and we say the world is not as it ought to be (which is conceptually entailed by sin, and in this case the rejection of Jesus), then we are explicitly saying that God should not have caused the world to be as it is. Again, these ideas are not mysterious; they are contradictory.”–**David Allen and Steve Lemke in Whosoever Will pg. 269**

## C. Error 3: God’s Offer of Salvation Is Not Universal

*“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)*

*“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.” (Acts 17:30)*

## D. Error 4: God Is the Cause of Sin

**QUOTE:** “If determinism is true, then Go is the first cause of sin.”-  
Kenneth Keathley in Salvation and Sovereignty

**CONCLUSION:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**QUOTE:** “This is the doctrine that we preach; if a man be saved, all the honor is to be given to Christ; but if a man be lost, all the blame is to be laid upon himself. You will find all true theology summed up in these two short sentences, salvation is all of the grace of God, damnation is all of the will of man.”—**Charles Spurgeon**

*“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)*





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