

# Free Agency Concluded - Consistant With Certainty

by John Murray

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*John Murray explores the relationship between free agency and divine certainty, emphasizing God's sovereign plan for salvation and its implications for humanity.*

**Duration:** 51:15

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:4

**Topics:** "Free Agency"

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## Description

The sermon transcript discusses the concept of free agency and its relationship to the execution of God's plan for salvation. The speaker acknowledges that there are many questions and difficulties surrounding this topic, but does not have time to address them in the class. The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationships and order within God's execution of salvation. The speaker concludes by praying for God's guidance and wisdom in studying and understanding these concepts.

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## Transcript

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, enable us constantly to walk before Thee with humility, with a sense of our complete dependence upon Thy wisdom, Thy power and Thy grace. And may life, therefore, be to us a great joy in the midst of all tribulation, knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not a shame, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the voice that is given unto us.

And do Thou grant that in all our studies we may advance in knowledge, in understanding, in devotion, so that we may be good stewards of the mysteries of God and faithful in our total witness unto Him who died and who rose again, that we might have life and have it more abundantly. In His name, Amen. Not to them for knowledge, but we are dealing simply with the necessity and the proposition has reference simply and solely to the fact that in a state of confirmed unholiness or in a state of confirmed holiness, removal of the power to the contrary does not in the least degree interfere with the reality of fleet-free agency.

Now the anthropological importance of this proposition appears in certain particulars. First, it must be borne in mind that the prelapsarian, the prelapsarian power of contrary choice was not given to man as a necessity of his free agency, of his natural liberty. It was given to him by God.

These alternatives were left open to him by God, namely the alternatives of contrary choice were left open to him by God for purposes of probation. If man had been confirmed in his original holiness and blessedness, he would still have been a free agent. The point is that it must be, and yet that there is no impairment of his natural in accordance with his prelapse.

In accordance, these conditions proceed out of grace. God, apostatized from the faith, has said that his unto death does not interfere. If possible, free agency only brings his natural liberty, his free agency, into in a way that is consonant with the fullness of the highest that he can enjoy.

Free agency, free agency is not incompatible with free agency. And to state doctrine, well, summarily, that an act may be certain as to its futuration, and nevertheless free as to the mode of its occurrence, is concerned first of all with the foreordination, and the whole question is summed up, reiterated again and again, that foreordination, do not so operate, is subordination to reality, free agency. In the sense defined, namely, that God has announced at this point, I know how to go to this point.

Now the next thing God lobes us insistently for discussion in soteriology is the plan. For if there is thought, even if man, he must do as a rational being. We don't do anything intelligently.

It must be the forethought, and therefore the plan, in accordance with which it is executed. Even if man himself was all-seeing, this would be true. Even on a naturalistic, that no fact in life would require more forethought, more intelligent planning, plans operate.

So you see, it's obvious that the first topic in soteriology is the plans of man. Now, instead of living, as described, for the living, let me go, I'll give you what we understand of soteriology. Now, as the text on this, I am proceeding now on this, that God, that God is the author.

He organized, organized Christianity in its various branches. Super-nationalistic is rather than natural. God's plan.

God, if God has provided for the salvation, it must be salvation that takes effect in the sphere of human existence. And therefore, in the temporal, historical realm, only, only in the sphere of the temporal and historical, do men exist. But what God does in time, he must have designed from eternity.

And that is clearly stated by Paul in Ephesians 1, 11, that he does all things according to the counsel of his will. Does all things according to the counsel of his will. Now, it may very well be that Paul is using all things there restrictively, all things within the sphere of salvation, in accordance with the preceding verses.

But he may be speaking there all inclusively. He may be speaking of the whole course of history in its broadest extent and in the mootest detail. In any case, he says that he does all things according to the counsel of his will.

And that points back, of course, to Ephesians 1, 4, because the doctrine with which Paul is particularly concerned in that passage is that God chose his people in Christ before the foundation of the world that they should be holy, be holy, before the foundation of the world. And that is a clear index to what Paul means in verse 11 when he says that he does all things according to the counsel of his will. Now, the counsel of God's will, particularly as it concerns salvation, the counsel of God's will is simply the decree of God as determined from eternity.

The decree of God is another way of expressing it, determined from eternity. And the plan of salvation is simply the plan designed by God from eternity, plan designed from eternity. However, salvation as accomplished in time comprises of great many elements and factors, and of great many elements, factors, and aspects.

And this diversity or multiplicity arises from two considerations. First, salvation takes account of our need. Our need is manifold.

Our need has respect to sin in all its implications. It has respect to the misery arising from sin. It has respect to death as the wages of sin.

So if salvation exists at all, it must be as diverse as our need, must be as multiform as our need. For if any aspect of our need were not provided for, the salvation would be incomplete. But secondly, this diversity exists because the salvation God has provided is not a minimal salvation.

For if any aspect of our need were not provided for, the salvation would be incomplete. But secondly, this diversity exists because the salvation God has provided is not a minimal salvation. It is not salvation merely from sin and its consequences, but it is a maximal salvation.

Salvation that expresses the riches of God's beneficence, goodness, wisdom, power, grace, and love, it is salvation too. Where must salvation come? And it is salvation to a privileged contest. The highest conceivable.

The privileged and destiny, the highest conceivable, cannot simply be highest conceivable by man, but be highest conceivable by God. It is not blasphemy, not blasphemy to say. No higher destiny for man is conceivable than that he should be conformed to the image of God's own Son, so that he may be the firstborn among many brethren.

Gentlemen, bear that in mind. It is a salvation that shows forth the exceeding riches of grace, His loving kindness to us in Christ. Hence, for these two reasons, it is salvation manifold.

Now, if that is so, then the Eternal Council, the Eternal Council, must have designed these diverse elements, must have designed them all. And is this necessary for us to take account of this diversity, multi-formity, the manifoldness, in the Council of God, as well as in the actual execution? Then we have an index to that very process, that very process, in Ephesians 1, 4, and 5, again, Even as we chose us in Him, only for the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him, in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself. Take these two verses, and they clearly demonstrate, that it follows on page 12, God has designed the various elements of this life, and that we have an index to the diversity, the multi-formity in the Divine Council.

But again, the first, the elements of salvation as executed in time, in the temporal historical realm, say the elements are executed, realized, in the sphere of human existence, are related to one another in an orderly manner. They are not half-centered and related occurrences. And it is necessary for us, when we are dealing with salvation as actually accomplished and executed, that we seek to discover these relationships.

If we study the doctrine of salvation as set forth in Scripture, it is inevitable that we discover, to some extent at least, the relationships which are obtained between the various elements. The ingredients of this determination. But again, if that is true in the realm of execution, there is not only diversity, but

relationships, or a certain sequence.

It must also be true in the eternal council, or if in God's execution, in time, in God's execution, with His order, relationships, that must have been designed, and designed, of course, from eternity. These distinct elements of salvation, as they break in the eternal family, must be related to one another in a way that is adequate to the relationship that they sustain to one another in actual execution. Now, these various elements, as the ingredients, these various elements, as they are embraced in the eternal clan, as sometimes it is thought of, as the distinct decree of elements in the council, it is so proper to speak of them as distinct decree.

Distinct decree. Distinct determination on the part of God in His eternal clan. Distinct determination in the eternal clan.

And distinct. Now, that discretion of the clan itself in the history of theology has often been construed as the discussion of the order of the divine decree. The order of the divine decree.

This too is synonymous with the ideal of theology. So this is the order. The divine decree.

With. Or don't. Choose.

There is order in this diversity. There must be order. It is there that the distinct elements sustain a certain relationship with one to the other.

These various elements are way back in the council of God as distinct decrees, and therefore the order of the elements seems to be the same thing. Now, what is next? With this. Because.

Well, for two reasons. First of all, we are dealing. That is the eternal thought.

And we have no excuse. Only God. We think about.

But we cannot think eternal. That belongs to God. And it belongs to his purpose of life.

It belongs to his eternity. And consequently, you see, it is difficult for us to think about. Think about.

But then there is another reason. When we speak of order, sequence, we are very liable to think exclusively in terms of historicity, or succession, at least the succession of moment. And of course the succession of moment cannot be applied to the thought of God.

But he doesn't think eternally in categories of sequence, of historical sequence. Augustine put it, surveying in one act of eternal contemplation the sum total of all things. And so it's difficult, when we're talking about the order of the divine decree, to suppose that we're thinking about historical, and therefore object.

The discussion of this topic is irrelevant and really presumptuous, because thereby we're trying to impose the categories of history upon the thought of God, which transcends history, which transcends time. So you see, these are the objections. But now, let us return to this subject.

I think I can give you biblical warrant, biblical warrant for this doctrine of order in the eternal thought of God. Order. Not temporal order, not temporal succession, no.

No, no, no. Order. If you take Ephesians 1, love of having predestination, the very mention of predestination, you see, takes us away back to the eternal thought of God.

There's one thought, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him. But let me focus on one. God has really chosen in his eternal culture.

And therefore we must think about it. We can't think, we must think about it. That predestination is determined by love accordingly, illogically.

And so you have in that text, even if it were nothing more than that one text, a vindication of what God has revealed to us, a vindication of our discussion because God has revealed to us what occurred in his thought, respecting the destiny of man. Well, the bell will ring in just a second or two, I think.

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