

Human
Freedom



Divine
Sovereignty

"I take comfort in knowing that my God is in control of all that happens."

"I know that I am secure because saving faith is a gift that does not come from me."

"If I had more faith, I would be healed."

"If our nation does not repent, God will judge it."

Is it possible for God to know what will happen without determining what will happen?

Is my faith response to God at work?

Can I dictate God's action with prayer?

If repentance is a gift how can we be responsible to thwart God's judgment?

My objectives

- ✓ Not to convince you of my view or find the final word on difficult issues.
- ✓ Help us know how to read the Bible.
- ✓ Help us know God, not just a stereotype of God.
- ✓ Help us talk about God in meaningful and sensitive ways.
- ✓ Help us appreciate and respect sincere people who disagree with us.

Some general rules in dealing with theological difficulties.

- ✓ There are many more wrong answers than right answers.
- ✓ We will always fail to see some things clearly in this life.
- ✓ It is wiser to live with a paradox than to remove it with an erroneous view.
- ✓ Certainty is based on evidence, logic, culture, and commitment.
- ✓ Respect for the complexity of an issue and those who honestly differ is a gracious virtue.

Some mistakes we make in resolving difficulties.

- ✓ Blindly following tradition and culture.
- ✓ Demonizing all who disagree with us.
- ✓ Dogmatically defending our opinions on all issues.
- ✓ Dramatizing every issue as a "major."
- ✓ Demanding that everything be Black and White.
- ✓ Expecting that God will give me special revelation knowledge through prayer.
- ✓ Refusing to be open to change by personalizing all convictions.

Hard questions about

**God's
SOVEREIGNTY**



March 1 - **Is faith a gift?**

March 8 - **Can we love without being free?**

March 15 - **Is God fair to those who have not heard the Gospel?**

March 29 - **How open-ended is God's plan?**

Is Saving Faith a gift from God?

Two lines of evidence argue that it is.

1. Many Scriptures are sighted in support of "the gift" of saving faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9

"we are saved by grace through faith and that not of yourselves, **it is the gift of God** not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

John 6

"all that **the Father gives Me** shall come to Me," ... "No one can come to Me, **unless the Father who sent Me draws him,**" ... "no one can come to Me, **unless it has been granted him from the Father.**"

Acts 13:48

"When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and **as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.**"

Ephesians 2:1-5

"And you were **dead** in our trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, . . . But **God, . . . made us alive** together with Christ."

Philippians 1:29

"For to you **it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe** in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

Romans 12:3

"**God has allotted** to each a measure of faith."

Is Saving Faith a gift from God?

Two lines of evidence argue that it is.

1. Many Scriptures can be sighted in support of "the gift" of saving faith.
2. It is a logical deduction from a theology of God's sovereign grace.

If our salvation is totally an act of God's grace and not of man then faith must be a gift of God?

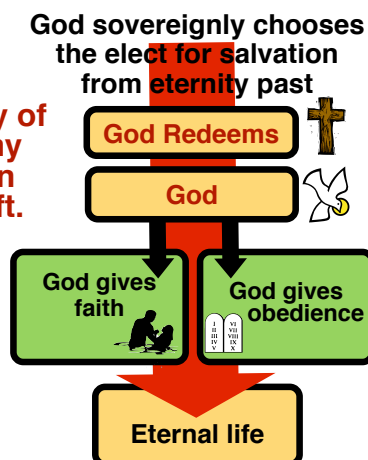
TULIP

- ✓ **Total depravity** - Unregenerate man is incapable of turning to God in faith.
- ✓ **Unconditional election** - God chooses some for salvation apart from anything but His sovereign will.
- ✓ **Limited atonement** - Christ's atonement is complete for all and only the saved.
- ✓ **Irresistible grace** - Those who are elect cannot but believe and obey Christ.
- ✓ **Perseverance of the saints** - The elect will not fall away from faith or fail to be sanctified in this life.

The Faith Gift view

If salvation is fully of God and not of any human action then faith must be a gift.

Faith is a sign or marker that identifies God's chosen people.



Romans 8

"¹⁴ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! 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 does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth."¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?"

Our first response

Faith is a gift only when viewed in the context of God's hidden decrees.

Man's free choice is subject to God's free choice.



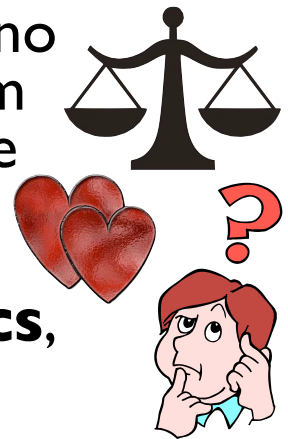
Our second response

Faith is never to be understood as divorced from human responsibility.

- Why did Christ bother to persuade the non-elect? He would certainly know who was elect (Jn.10:14 "I know my own and they know me.")
- Why should Paul bother to use persuasion at all? (Acts 17:3-4,17; 18:4; 19:8-9). Note that in Acts 14:1 the Apostles "spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed."
- Why did Christ marvel at unbelief?
- How can unbelief be judged?

- How can we explain degrees of unbelief being judged more severely?
- How can demonic activity hinder a direct work of the Spirit? Lk.8:12; 2 Cor.4:4.
- Why are some classes of people harder to win than others? Titus 1:12-13
- Why does God "give the gift of faith" to so many Americans and to so few Libyans, Mongolians, Tibetans, Afghans, Tunisians, Turks, etc?
- In Scripture, faith is always ascribed to man, not God. Lk.7:50 "**Your** faith has saved you", Matt.9:22 "**Your** faith has made you well", Matt.9:28-29 "it shall be done to you according to **your** faith".

• If there is no real freedom can there be any real meaning to **love, ethics, & justice?**



Our third response

Faith is a gift in ways that we can neither understand nor explain.

Job 5:9

"Who does great and unsearchable things, wonders without number."

Job 11:7

"Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?"

Job 15:8

"Do you hear the secret counsel of God, and limit wisdom to yourself?"



Our final response

Faith is a gift in ways that should inspire awe and worship not passivity or fatalism.

Romans 11:33

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"

