

DOES GOD EVER TAKE AWAY MAN'S FREE WILL?

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God grants man free choice *most of the time*, but sometimes He might take away free choice and use man as a mere instrument. When it comes to salvation for example, God wants free choices. But when it comes to controlling nations and rulers, God will use causation if influence doesn't work.

CONDITIONS MET WHEN FREE WILL IS SET ASIDE

Michael Saia, in his book on the cross, explains five conditions in which God can justly take away someone's free will:

1. The person is not a righteous person: God has no need to take away the free will of an obedient man.
2. The person's will is only suspended temporarily: the removal of free will is a temporary exception.
3. The person's salvation is not affected by the temporary loss of free will: God does not force a person to be saved or force a person to be reprobated.
4. The event has implications for all mankind: There is a major reason or a great necessity for the free will to be removed.
5. The consequences are suspended: the man is not morally accountable for anything that he did not willingly do, so he will not be rewarded for doing what God wanted him to do.

EXAMPLES OF FREE WILL BEING SET ASIDE

Here are some major examples of God setting aside a man's free will:

1. Balaam's blessing of Israel when he tried to curse (Num. 22-24).
2. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4-14)
(I think this is particular situation still open to interpretation)
3. The placement of fear on the hearts of Cannanites so they would be destroyed (Deut. 2:25; 11:25)
4. The stirring of Cyrus's heart to release the Israelites from captivity and to rebuild the temples in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 36:22; Ezra 1:1)

5. The turning of Nebuchadnezzar's mind to that of an animal (Dan. 4)
6. The giving over of a kingdom into the hands of the best (Rev. 17:17)

These are all examples of God ruling His providential government through causation. That is why the Bible says, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: *he turneth it whithersoever he will.*" Prov. 21:1

THE FOUR GOVERNMENTS OF GOD

But in order to understand this issue, we need to understand the different governments of God, and how God governs each different government:

The **Material Government** (Solar systems, matter, whether, material worlds) is governed by **the law of cause and effect** (Gen. 6:7, 19:24, Exo. 14:21-29; Num. 11:31; 1 Kin. 18:38; 2 Chro. 7:13; Ps. 50:1, 93:4, 135:6-7; Isa. 45:7, 45:12; Dan. 4:35; Jonah 1:4, 14-15; Matt. 5:45, 8:24-27, 24:29; Mk. 4:39-41; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2-3; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:1-4, 8, 12, 18, 21).

The **Creature Government** (Animals, insects, etc) is governed by **the law of instinct and causation** (Gen. 9:2; Num. 22:22-23; Deut. 11:31; 1 Kin. 17:4-6; Dan. 6:22; Jonah 1:17, 2:10; Matt. 10:29, 17:27, 26:74; Mk. 5:11-13).

The **Providential Government** (nations, rulers, and kings) is governed by **the law of influence and causation** (Gen. 19:24-25; Exo. 11:9-10; 18:10; 20:2; Num. 33:53; Deut. 2:5; 2:25; 3:20; 9:23; 11:24; Josh. 1:2-6; 1:15, 8:1; 11:20; 23:15; 24:14; 1 Kin. 22:19-23; 1 Chro. 29:10-12; Esther 4:14; Ps. 22:28, 66:7; Prov. 21:1; Isa. 60:22; Jer. 21:10; 27:6; 32:27-30; 35:15; 50:9; Eze. 11:15; 17:24; 29:19; Dan. 2:21; 2:38; 4:17; 4:32; 5:21; 5:18; 7:25; Zeph. 3:8; Jn. 19:10-11; Rom. 13:1; 13:4-5; Rev. 17:17).

God's **Moral Government** over man is governed by motives presented to the mind, appealing to free will. It is not governed by the law of cause and effect, not governed by force, but is rather governed by the law of liberty or **the law of influence and response** (Gen. 3:11; 4:6-7, 6:5; Deut. 30:19, Josh. 24:15; 1 Kin. 18:21; Isa. 1:16-20, 5:4; 45:22; 55:6-7, 66:3-4; Jer. 2:9; Hos. 10:12; Jer. 18:5-11; 21:8; 26:13; Eze. 18:30-32; 20:7-8; Matt. 23:37; Jn. 1:11; 5:40; 7:17; Acts 2:40; 17:30; 7:51; Rom. 2:5-11; 6:16-17; 2 Cor. 7:1; 2 Tim. 2:21; Jas. 4:7-10; 1 Pet. 1:22; Gal. 6:17-8; Rev. 3:20; 22:17).

So while God may temporarily set aside man's free will, whenever it is necessary for His Providential Government, the Lord does not set aside man's free will when it comes to moral choices or salvation.