



2025 God's Love and Justice Lesson 8 Freewill, Love, and Divine Providence

by Tim Jennings

WEDNESDAY from Lesson 7

Read second paragraph,

- The freewill defense is the view that evil is the result of the misuse of creaturely free will. God, then, is not to blame for evil, because evil is the result of creatures misusing the free will that God has given us for good reasons. Why, however, would God give such free will? In this regard, C. S. Lewis once wrote that “free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other. . . . And for that they must be free.”—*Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan, 1960), p. 52. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God's Love and Justice p. 56.

To me this is the only answer to why God would create a universe where evil could exist—because God is love and love requires real freedom. God could have made sophisticated robots, but robots cannot love. Thus, God created beings who have the freedom to choose to break His design laws of love, the protocols upon which He built life to operate, but the only result of that is ruin and death, unless healed by the Creator.

Does the fact that God created a universe in which freewill exists mean God caused evil or God is the source of evil? Absolutely not!

Does the fact that God foresaw its existence mean that God caused it? Or because He foresaw it does that mean God ordained it or wanted it to happen?

Consider this Bible commentary:

- The **plan for our redemption was not an afterthought**, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of “the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.” Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an **unfolding of the principles** that from eternal ages have been the **foundation of God's throne**. From the beginning, **God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man** through the deceptive power of the apostate. **God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence**, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So **great was His love** for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. *The Desire of Ages* p. 22, emphasis mine.

Do you agree with this? What do you hear?

What does the plan of salvation being an unfolding of the principles that are the foundation of God's government mean?

What are those principles? Truth, love, and freedom. The design laws that are built into the operations of reality. When sin entered, love, truth, and freedom warred against the lies, fear, selfishness—ultimately in Jesus who lived out the design laws of God in humanity perfectly. He revealed the truth that destroys the lies, restored the law of love, which is the law of life, into the human species, and exposed Satan and his methods as the source of pain, suffering, and death, while confirming God is not only good, but is the source of life.

What is the only way God wins? How do God's methods of truth, love, freedom win in the end?

Can God get a safe, secure, and sinless universe of love and trust by imposed law with law enforcement? What is the only way?

Satan's system of government is imposed law with coercive enforcement, justice through punishment, rule-keeping.

And how much of the Christian world is teaching that God's government functions on Satan's principles of imposed law and law-enforcement?

But God cannot get love, trust, loyalty, devotion by imposed law and law enforcement, it is only through truth, love, and freedom. And therefore when we teach God's kingdom works like human kingdoms through imposed law, legal judicial processes and infliction of punishments, we are working to delay the second coming of Christ.

Consider Saul of Tarsus before the Damascus Road experience. A worshiper of Yahweh, a believer in the Bible, Sabbath, sanctuary, coming Messiah, Creation, faithful tithe payer, zealous for God's cause, a member of the only church on earth that God had blessed up to that time. Yet, he used the power of the state seeking to enforce religious dogma through imposed law and punishment.

After Damascus Road, he still worshiped Yahweh, but now knew that Yahweh was Jesus. He still worshiped on the Sabbath, still believed in the coming Messiah, but now the second coming, still paid a faithful tithe, still believed in the inspiration of Scripture—but now he wrote in Romans 14, when religious differences occur, that every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind (Romans 14:5).

It is only when we are persuaded in our own minds that our hearts are changed, and God's plan of salvation heals hearts and minds; to save people from sin, from evil, God's Spirit of truth and love must cut our identity away from being motivated by fear, selfishness, and distrust and establish our identity, our inmost being upon truth, love, trust and faithfulness so that we can be like Job, Daniel, the

three worthies, people who are trustworthy, people who would rather die than betray God, people who would give their lives in love for others, as Revelation describes the remnant:

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; **they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.** Revelation 12:11 NIV84, emphasis mine.

They overcame by the blood of the Lamb—the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11) and thus they overcame by the life of Jesus which they have internalized and partaken of through trust so that they have a new life—a new animating motivational energy of love for God and others, and are no longer their old self, sinful, fear ridden self-living, but Christ lives within, the motives, desires, methods of Christ is what they identify with. It is who they are. And because they have been reborn with the blood/life of Christ within, they give the word of testimony that is the same testimony that Jesus gave, they have the “testimony of Jesus,” the testimony that God is not like Satan alleges, the testimony that Jesus and the Father are one and God’s laws are design laws reality is built upon and life is only possible in harmony with God and His design laws for life. And thus, they live that law of love in sacrificial service to God and others and do not love their life so much that they would shrink from death, they will not resort to the power of the state and imposed laws to try and protect themselves by forcing others to comply on matters of conscience with what they think is right.

But when Romanism is embraced—the imposed human law system—instead of the truth that the blood of Jesus is the life of Jesus reproduced in the believer, people read the blood of Jesus as the death of Jesus being legally paid to the Father so that they can claim legal payment to their record books in heaven, and the testimony such legalists give is the testimony of Satan as they testify to the world the lie that God’s law functions like human law, and God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering and death that He will impose upon people who do not claim the proper legal payment. Thus they testify that God is like Satan in character. This is the evil that infects the church, the pagan, false, demonic worship of God’s enemy under the name of God.

SABBATH

The lesson focuses on the providence of God, what do you understand God’s providence to be?

The lesson describes God’s providence as God working through human history to bring about His purposes in dealing with sin and evil.

The lesson describes how some people believe God’s providence means God is in control of everything, if you see something bad happen, it is the “providence of God” and thus God’s will for it to happen and some go farther and suggest God causes all things to happen directly.

What is the problem with these beliefs?

If God causes all things directly, then we are all just robots, puppets, sophisticated simulations, and there is no freedom and life is just a sham, and God is completely evil and untrustworthy for such a

god would be deceitful, abusive, selfish, and cruel. So it is pretty straightforward to reject the idea that God is the one who causes everything to happen directly. No, we have freedom and our choices are real choices and cause real outcomes.

When we see evil it is not an act of God or God's will for evil to occur, but it is true that evil would not exist if God did not create a universe where evil could exist. Why is that?

Because, as we just discussed, God is love, and love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom. God could have created a universe of robots, but such a universe is not consistent with our God of love. Just consider if you had the ability to create a world—and you start out by creating really beautiful and wonderful robots that do whatever you program them to do—you have trains that run on the tracks you set, you have robots go through the rounds you program—but there is not one other living intelligent free being on the entire planet. How long would such a world of programmed robots satisfy you? And why would you want more than robots?

What about our infinite God—does our God of love want more than robots?

And what is required for you or God to have creatures that are more than robots? Intelligence and genuine free will.

Therefore, God, who is love, created intelligent beings with freewill because He wants a universe in which love, joy, happiness, fellowship, friendship actually exist and none of that exists with robots.

So, God created the conditions by creating intelligent beings with freedom to choose, a universe in which evil could arise, but God did not create evil, nor was it His desire or purpose that evil should exist.

But He foresaw and in His foreknowledge He understood that He could create either a universe of robots or a universe of free beings in which rebellion would occur, and which He would successfully, at extreme cost to Himself, address and overcome the evil and then have a universe in which evil is eradicated and for all eternity future evil never arises again and love, friendship, joy, happiness, trust, really exists. That is the plan God chose and for which we are privileged to be a participant.

So how do we, in this world of sin, understand the providence of God?

Consider this historical quote, do you agree?

- The **conflicts** of earth, **in the providence of God, furnish** the very training **necessary to develop characters** fit for the courts of Heaven. We are to **become** members of the royal family, the sons of God, and “all things work together for good to those who love God,” and submit themselves to his will. Our God is an ever-present help in every time of need. He is perfectly acquainted with the most secret thoughts of our heart, with all the intents and purposes of our souls. When we are in perplexity, even before we open to him our distress, **he is making arrangements for our deliverance**. Our sorrow is not unnoticed. **He always**

knows much better than we do, just what is necessary for the good of his children, and **he leads us as we would choose to be led if we could discern our own hearts and see our necessities and perils, as God sees them**. But finite beings seldom know themselves. They do not understand their own weaknesses, and when reproof comes, and cautions are given, when they are rebuked, or even advised, they think that they are misjudged and unjustly treated. God knows them better than they know themselves, and he understands how to lead them. But when he undertakes to guide them in ways which seem mysterious to them, because of their blindness and lack of faith, they rebel, and **bring upon themselves unnecessary grief and trouble**. They have prayed to the Lord for light and guidance, and the Lord answered them as he did Jacob, and, like Jacob, they do not discern that it is the hand of the Lord leading them in a way contrary to their own choosing. **If we will trust him, and commit our ways to him, he will direct our steps in the very path that will result in our obtaining the victory over every evil passion, and every trait of character that is unlike the character of our divine Pattern.** *Signs of the Times* May 25, 1888, par. 9, emphasis mine

So what of this text, what does it mean?

- And we know that **all things work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, **He also predestined** to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:28–29 NKJV, emphasis mine.

What does this mean? It does not say all things are good, but God can work all things together for the good of those who trust Him, which comes across better in other translations:

- And we know **that in all things God works for the good of those** who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also **predestined** to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:28–29 NIV84, emphasis mine.

But what about being predestined? Does it mean that God predetermines who is saved and who is lost?

Not at all, the key is “foreknew” Those who God foreknew he predestined... how is God’s foreknowing the key?

Because in the Bible knowing is not about cognitive knowledge, it is about intimacy and trust.

- Now this is eternal life: that they may **know you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3 NIV84, emphasis mine

Eternal life is knowing God, not knowing about God. And God’s foreknowledge is not God knowing about us, but knowing is in the context of our return to love and trust in Him, being reconciled to Him. And thus, those God foreknew are the ones predestined to be healed, restored, recreated to the likeness of His Son.

SUNDAY

Read the first three paragraphs,

- “God is sovereign,” the youth pastor taught his middle school group. “That means He controls everything that happens.” One puzzled middle schooler replied, “So God was in control when my dog died? Why would God kill my dog?”

Trying to answer this question, the youth pastor replied: “That’s a tough one. But sometimes God lets us go through hard times so that we’re prepared for even more difficult things in the future. I remember how hard it was when my dog died. But going through that helped me deal with an even more difficult time later when my grandma died. Does that make sense?”

After a long pause, the middle schooler replied, “So God killed my dog to prepare me for when He’s going to kill my grandma?”—Marc Cortez, quoted in John C. Peckham, *Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenantal God of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), p. 141. *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025*, God’s Love and Justice p. 61.

Have you heard this type of thinking from people, that God’s sovereignty is God controlling everything? There are many very famous Christians in our society who think and teach this. I asked one to endorse my book *The God Shaped Brain*, back when it was being released, but the response I received was a gentle rejection stating their inability to endorse it because they see the sovereignty of God differently than I do—they believe that God is in control of everything that happens.

How do you respond to people who believe this? What if they quote the following?

- The **older will serve the younger.**” Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but **Esau I hated.**” What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, “**I will have mercy on whom I have mercy**, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” **It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort**, but on God’s mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and **he hardens whom he wants to harden.** Romans 9:12–18 NIV84, emphasis mine.

How do you answer someone who quotes this text to prove God’s sovereignty means God uses His power to control outcomes, it doesn’t matter our desire or effort, only God’s will and power matter, and God did love Esau, but hated him and God used His power to harden Pharaoh’s heart?

The key to understanding the saying “God is in control,” as well as essentially all theological questions, is how one understands God’s law. If one views God’s law functioning like the laws that humans make up — imposed rules requiring the ruling authority to impose punishments — then people view God as making everything happen.

This leads to a variety of different errors are formed, such as the teaching that when tragedies occur, it is God who is bringing the pain — such as God controlling the molester who abuses people, or God directing the hurricanes, earthquakes, or God hardening the hearts of certain people.

The truth is realized when we return to worshipping God as Creator and realize His laws are the protocols upon which reality is built to operate, such as the laws of physics, law of love, truth, worship, liberty, exertion, laws of health, the moral laws, and so many more. It is how reality works.

Thus, **God is in control of what God controls** — and God controls Himself and all His laws. He sustains reality; He keeps the universe running upon the protocols and laws He established. And one of those laws is the law of liberty, which grants real freedom to sentient beings. Why? Because love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom.

So, with this in mind, understanding God's design laws of truth, love, freedom can we explain what it means that God loved Jacob but hated Esau?

Is this talking about God's emotions, God's character, God's attitude or God's function—God's ability to functionally love the two? Did one of the brothers have a heart that sought God and submitted to Him and the other who rejected God and would not submit?

So, would the heart attitude of the brothers impact whether God's love would flow into them, transform them, and function within them? So, one experienced God's love and was transformed into a trusting friend whose name was changed to reflect that heart change. And when that happened, God loved it! God not only functionally loved Jacob, but God personally loved that He was able to love Jacob. But Esau closed his heart and God could not functionally love Him in intimacy, friendship, and have His love transform Esau and God hated that, but He still, in heart, loved Esau.

What about hardening of Pharaoh's heart? The Bible describes in the following three different ways the hardening of Pharaoh's heart:

- God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 4:21; 7:3)
- Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15, 32)
- Pharaoh's heart was hardened (Exodus 7:22)

Which of these texts are inspired by God? All of them! Then how are all of them true—that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and also Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and that Pharaoh's heart was hardened?

If one believes the lie that God's law functions like human law, then one falsely believes that God uses power to force His way, to override Pharaoh's freedom and harden Pharaoh's heart in order for God to show His power—then one finds a conflict in the inspired record and must reject or exclude the texts about Pharaoh hardening his own heart.

But when we return to design law we understand how reality actually works, and we find that all these texts are in perfect harmony.

How does any heart, including Pharaoh's, actually become hardened to truth and love? It is by rejecting truth and love and choosing lies and selfishness. That is how a hearts becomes hardened.

So how did God harden Pharaoh's heart? By presenting the truth and leaving Pharaoh free to accept or reject it. The accepting or rejecting causes the end result — healing or hardening. The act of choosing to accept or reject truth; to embrace love or embrace selfishness; to steal, lie, cheat, or be honest, truthful and loyal, changes the person who makes the choice. Without the truth presented and the freedom to reject it, Pharaoh's heart would not have become as hardened. Thus, God hardened Pharaoh's heart through the laws of truth and freedom; He presented truth to Pharaoh that the king understood and then left the ruler free to decide for himself. God controlled His laws and the presentation of evidence and even the Holy Spirit bring conviction to Pharaoh's heart, but Pharaoh exercised his own freewill and controlled his own choices, and in choosing to reject the truth, he hardened his own heart. This is how reality works and how God is in control. God controls what God controls, and one of the things God controls is the law of liberty.

So the next time you hear “God is in control,” think, “In control of what?” — and remember that God is in control of Himself and the laws upon which reality is built to operate. That means we have real freedom, because only in such freedom does love exist. If God made us all robots we would behave perfectly, but there would be no love. God only wins His cause by utilizing His methods — truth, love, and freedom.

But someone might ask, if God in His foreknowledge knew Pharaoh would reject the truth and thus harden His heart, why would God present the truth He knew would be rejected and ultimately result in Pharaoh hardening his heart?

Think through reality—what is the condition of every single human born since Adam and Eve sinned? We are all born in sin, conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). We are all born with a terminal sin condition that will result in eternal death unless healed by our Creator. Pharaoh had a terminal sin condition, the only hope for Pharaoh's eternal salvation was the truth, and even though God foreknew Pharaoh would reject it, God, who is love, would not deny Pharaoh his freedom to choose, God would not deny Pharaoh his opportunity, so God presented the truth in the most powerful and impressive ways to Pharaoh for only the truth will set us free. But sadly, Pharaoh chose to reject it and harden his own heart.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on God as being all powerful. Some believe because God is all powerful He can do anything. But the lesson rightly takes the position that God cannot do anything, that there are some things God cannot do.

The lesson cites 2 Timothy 2:13 which states that God cannot deny Himself, meaning God will not contradict who He is, will not go against His own character of love.

This is absolutely true—God is true to Himself, true to His nature, His character, and thus there are something God cannot do, not because He doesn't have the power to do it, but because to do it would be contrary to who He is, and destroy that which He has created and loves.

Can you give any examples, evidence that supports this position?

- Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. Zechariah 4:6 NIV84

What God wants is our love, trust, loyalty, devotion, friendship—can any of that be obtained by might and power? What happens if God uses might and power to reach into a person's brain and change what they have not freely chosen to change about themselves, their character, their values? It erases that person and causes them to be someone else.

Did you notice I specified God changing elements of who they are in character? Why? Because God can use power to change things about us and our brains that do not alter our characters any examples of this?

- See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts... Exodus 35:30-31 NIV84.
- All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:4 NET

Any examples from biblical history that confirm with historical evidence that God cannot achieve what He wants by using might and power?

- The Flood resulted in building the tower of Babel
- Plagues of Egypt, miracle at the Red Sea, Thundering at Sinai resulted in worshipping a golden calf and asking for a priestly intercessor
- Fire at Carmel resulted in immediate fearful acknowledgement but then recurrent pagan worship and rebellion

So, are there some things God cannot do? Any others?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- That God is all-powerful does not mean that He can do the logically impossible. Accordingly, God cannot causally determine that someone freely love Him. If freely doing something means to do something without being determined to do it, then by definition it is impossible to make someone freely do something. In short, as we have seen, and must re-emphasize—**God cannot force anyone to love Him, for the moment it's forced, it is no longer love.** *Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2025, God's Love and Justice p. 63, emphasis mine.*

This is well said, and what does this truth expose as false that is taught in much of Christian theology?

The idea that God's law functions like human law and God is required by law to use power to inflict external punishment upon those who reject His love.

What will God do to those who, like Pharaoh, reject all His pleadings, mercy, love, and truth?

What do people who hold to the lie that God's law functions like human law teach?

Don't they teach that God is required to use His power to inflict pain, suffering, punishment upon people as much as they deserve before He kills them?

And if that were happening then isn't that God using force? And since love cannot be forced teaching this theology obstructs God's plan to save people from sin because it obstructs love, it is a lie that incites fear and rebellion and leads to theologies that separate people from God rather than reconcile them to Him.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on God's foreknowledge and our freewill choices. I have met several good-hearted Christian individuals who really struggle with this idea. In fact, they struggle so much that they reject that God has foreknowledge because they believe that if God foreknows what we are going to choose then we are not actually free to choose it but it is predetermined by God.

These individuals will acknowledge that God can know all the possible choices a person can make before they make them, but doesn't actually know which choice the person makes until they make it. Their view is that if God foreknows then we are predetermined and are not free. This view is called Open Theism.

Interestingly, as I was reading in the book *The Desire of Ages* this week, I found the following description of the false theology the Sadducees that came to tempt Christ believed:

- The Sadducees **rejected the teaching of Jesus**; He was animated by a spirit which they would not acknowledge as manifesting itself thus; and His teaching in regard to God and the future life contradicted their theories. They believed in God as the only being superior to man; but **they argued that an overruling providence and a divine foresight would deprive man of**

free moral agency, and degrade him to the position of a slave. *The Desire of Ages* p. 604, emphasis mine.

Wow, this was quite stunning to me when I read it because this is the same argument made by open theists, that if God foreknows we are not free moral agents.

What do you think? Does God have foreknowledge and know our actual choices before we make them, or does He only know the possible choices we might make, but doesn't know until we make them?

And if God does foreknow our choices, are we still free or has our future already been determined by God?

Is there any biblical evidence to help us clarify this concern?

There are two types of evidence in the Bible, declarative statements and the historical record. Let's look at the historical record first, which I find more persuasive.

- At the time of the flood God directed Noah to build how many arks? Why only one? If God didn't know beforehand how many people would respond, if God could only calculate the various possibilities of the numbers wanting a seat on the ark, and until the door to the ark was closed God was still wondering how many would respond, then what does it mean that God didn't have more arks ready? If God didn't know beforehand how many would say yes and choose to get onboard, wouldn't that mean He never intended to let all on board, but just a few people, thus Noah's preaching for 120 years would be a sham. I reject the view that God didn't foreknow the choices of the people and believe that God did know their choices before they made them and Noah preached to show God did not exclude anyone, but because God did foreknow their choices only one ark was needed.
- The prophecies of Daniel demonstrating the fall of kingdoms one after the other and predicting the rise of the next kingdom all the way through the fall of Rome to the second coming demonstrate that God foreknew choices and events, not just the possibilities that might occur. I realize open theists are not comfortable with this so they try and move the date of the writing of the book of Daniel to the time of the Roman Empire and yet what does the prophecy next predict? That there would be no other world empires to rise. This prediction goes completely against the trend of history as four empires in a row had come and human thought would have predicted another to follow. Only our God, who knows the future before it happens, could have predicted with such certainty that no other world power would control those lands again despite all the marriages and attempts. This requires knowledge of individual decisions of how kings and generals will act.
- The prophecy that those who crucified Christ would gamble for His clothing. This required knowledge of their specific choices.

- Jesus predicting that Judas would betray him and that Peter would deny him three times before the rooster crowed. This required specific knowledge of their choices before they made them, yet they were still left completely free to make their own choices.

Now the declarative statements:

- “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done., saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure Isaiah 46:9,10.
- He hath made every [thing] beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. Ecclesiastes 3:11.

And then consider these historical quotes:

- I AM means an eternal presence; **the past, present, and future are alike with God. He sees the most remote events of past history and the far distant future with as clear a vision** as we do those things which are transpiring daily. *That I May Know Him* p. 22, emphasis mine.
- He that ruleth in the heavens is the **one who sees the end from the beginning—the one before whom the mysteries of the past and the future are alike outspread**, and who, beyond the woe and darkness and ruin that sin has wrought, beholds the accomplishment of His own purposes of love and blessing. *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 43, emphasis mine.

God is the Creator of all reality, space, matter, energy, life and time—and God lives outside the bounds of time and is the one who sustains its operations. Thus, God is not restrained to a linear existence like we created beings are, but is able to live outside the stream of time and is described as living in unapproachable light.

One other problem the open theists have is that they do not differentiate foreknowledge with causality. They believe knowing is causing, but it is not. If you had a time machine and could travel through time and watch the next Super Bowl and then come back to this time and foreknow every play, who fumbles, who scores touchdowns and the final score, your foreknowledge does not cause the coaches to call the plays they call, the players to execute the plays, the fumbles, the scores, the officiating, every person must still carry out their choices in governance of themselves in harmony with the operations of the design laws built into the operations of reality, including the laws of physics that govern gravity, motion, friction, etc. to cause the ultimate outcome. Your foreknowledge causes nothing, the freewill choices of the individuals cause the outcome.

So the real question is not does God know the future, including our choices, before it happens, but what kind of being do we believe God to be? Do we believe God is just like Jesus, a being willing to let His creatures kill Him rather than use His knowledge and power to restrict their freedoms? Or do

we believe God is something other than this, a God who would manipulate and control and take away liberty by manipulating things with such knowledge?

I think deep down the open theists cannot believe God would not be able to avoid manipulating things if He knew, and they want to represent God as a trustworthy God so they allege He doesn't know, but in this very argument they are not only undermining the power and ability of God, they are undermine the character of God by insinuating that God would be corrupted and we would not be free if God had such knowledge.

I believe the Father is exactly as Jesus revealed Him to be – a being of complete trustworthiness who does know our future and our choices, but whose character is so pure, holy, and loving that our individual freedom is never undermined!

THURSDAY

Read John 16:33

- “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 NIV84

The lesson focuses on the reality that the followers of Christ will have trouble in this world, but we are not to lose hope, but stay faithful because Jesus has overcome the world.

What do you understand this means?

What is the world that Jesus has overcome? Isn't this talking about Satan's kingdom of lies, fear, and selfishness, coercion, force, the methods and principles of this world of sin?

And what are the methods and principles of this sinful world? Survival of the fittest, driven by fear and selfishness, which will use any means, any power, to protect self, lies, fear, intimidation, manipulation, imposed law, inflicted punishments, inducements, bribes, blackmail, deplatforming, accusation, canceling, ultimately killing others to protect self.

Isn't this how the world works? The ends justify the means—but in reality, in the truth of God's design laws and creation, this is a lie. We can only have life, health, happiness in harmony with God and His design laws.

Jesus overcame the world by choosing always in governance of Himself to live out the principles of truth, love, and freedom and never use the methods of fear, lies, selfishness. He would sacrifice His life in love to save others rather than use external power to do justice, to stop injustice, to prevent people from killing and abusing Him.

As the final events on planet Earth unfold it will come down to these two antagonistic principles, laws, and methods.

- Fear and selfishness versus love and trust
- Imposed law versus design law
- Sanctions, coercion, force versus truth, love, and freedom.
- The beast versus the Lamb of God
- The wicked versus the righteous

And in the end it will be all about the law one chooses in governance of self as they decide how they will live and treat others. Do we identify with and choose the spirit of fear and selfishness and thereby choose impose law and coercive force to make self feel safe, the methods and principles of the beast. Or do we identify with the Spirit of love and trust built upon the truth that Jesus revealed and choose to live out God's design law of truth, love, and freedom in governance of ourselves and trust God with how things turn out—including trusting God with our lives under injustice like Job, Daniel, the three worthies, Stephen, Paul, and all the martyrs through history.

As we already cited,

- They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; **they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.** Revelation 12:11 NIV84, emphasis mine.