

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

The #1 Doctrine that Answers Christianity's Toughest Questions with Dr. Tim Stratton

(March 8, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, what if I told you that there was one theological doctrine or system of thought that, if true, would help you answer so many of the most difficult questions about God, about Christianity, and help you answer the objection to Christianity? Let me give you a few of the problems that this theological doctrine or system of thought can help you answer.

How can God be sovereign and man be free? You know, the old conundrum of God's sovereignty versus man's free will, predestination, Calvinism, Arminianism. Is there a system of thought that can help us untangle and answer that seemingly intractable problem? Another problem I think this theological doctrine or system of thought can answer is, if God controls everything, wouldn't that mean He caused humans to sin? Wouldn't that make Him the author of evil?

And if he commands everyone to obey, but some can't obey because God didn't choose them, then how does He hold them morally responsible? Another problem, if God exists, why is there evil? Why does He allow human beings to suffer? Or how can we believe that God will bring good from evil when we can see no possible way that can happen?

After all, aren't there some evils, such as children being trafficked or being killed, that we don't see any good coming from them? So how can we believe there is a good God if these things happen? Another problem it can answer, if God exists, why isn't He more obvious? And why don't non-resistant non-believers find Him?

You've probably heard people say, look, I'm not a Christian, but it's not like I'm against Christianity. I mean, I'm open, and yet I can't find God. So why is God so hidden to such people? Now, what if this theological doctrine, if it really were true, could provide answers, sound, excellent answers to all these problems? What if that were the case?

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Well, I think it is the case, and there's someone here who can help us unpack that theological doctrine or system of thought. It's Dr. Tim Stratton of Free Thinking Ministries. And Dr. Tim, in addition to being a PhD, has graduated from the CrossExamined Instructor Academy many years ago. That's the CIA course that we run every year.

This year it'll be in Charlotte, North Carolina, in August. If you want to be a part of that, just go to CrossExamined.org and click on Events. You'll see CIA there. It's also an online course. If you can't get to Charlotte this summer, but you want to take the online version, you can do that as well if you click on Online Courses at CrossExamined.org.

Anyway, Tim, Dr. Tim Stratton and about nine other former CIA students wrote a book called 'Faith Examined: New Arguments for Persistent Questions, Essays in Honor of... (I'm very blessed by this) Dr. Frank Turek.' That would be me. This is a great little book. By the way, I had nothing to do with it. Okay?

They wrote it. And Tim has an article in here on apologetics and molinism. And he is a professor at Trinity Seminary, and he has FreeThinkingMinistries.com. Tim has also joined me on the college campus. Tim, where were we? We were in Nebraska at, was it, were we at University of Nebraska at Lincoln? Is that where we were a few years ago?

TIM:

Well, we were there together, but our main time was at the University of Nebraska at Carney.

FRANK:

At Carney, that's right. Yeah. So, you're out in Nebraska. You've been with Free Thinking Ministries, the president there for many years. You actually have a book on this topic. Tell our listeners, if they really want to go deep, what the name of that book is.

TIM:

Yeah, we've got 'Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism.'

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FRANK:

Mere molinism. That's it. Molinism, ladies and gentlemen, is what we're going to be talking about today. That's the theological doctrine or system of thought, if you want to put it that way, that can help answer so many of these questions. Now, Tim, first of all, how did you even get interested in molinism? And then we'll describe what it is. What happened that you went, wow, this is brilliant.

TIM:

Okay, so I used to be a pastor, and during my time as a pastor, I was a Calvinist. And I was even more than a five-point Calvinist. I was what I now refer to as an exhaustive divine determinist. So, I believed that God determined everything, and I preached that from the pulpit as a youth pastor. In 2008, I started to see a lot of the high school students and college students who I was working with.

Well, there was a wave of atheism that was coming through both groups, and I could not answer their questions and objections. And what really hit me is when one 16 year old, who I had been discipling for two years, came to me and said, I'm no longer a Christian. I'm not coming back to church. I'm not coming back to youth group. I am now an atheist.

And anyway, long story short, he gave me so many objections to think about, a lot of which I think I was partly responsible for causing because I think really some of the problems of evil that arose from what I was preaching. And so, you'll see in the book that you were just promoting that we wrote in your honor, kept it a surprise.

FRANK:

I had no idea.

TIM:

So, I wish I could have seen your face when that was presented to you. But I really focused so much on how this new understanding that I discovered of God's sovereignty and human responsibility, human free will, can answer so many of these problems of evil, problems of suffering that this young man and so many others were offering.

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So, that's how I got started. I was trying to answer these tough questions. I was devastated that young men and women under my watch as a shepherd were falling away and becoming atheists. And I realized what I was offering them could not sufficiently interact or answer their questions and objections.

But then I stumbled upon molinism, primarily from Dr. William Lane Craig, and I started studying it more, and so much so that it became the focus of my doctoral dissertation. And I think it answers a lot of the big questions. I think it's true.

FRANK:

First of all, where does it come from? Why is it called molinism? Start there.

TIM:

I actually hate the name, but that's what it's called. So, it's derived from the last name of a Spanish theologian, from the 1600's named Luis de Molina. So, you got Molina, molinism. That's why we call it that. And it's really based on the idea, on two big ideas here, that humans possess libertarian free will.

I like to start by saying, look, if 1 Corinthians 10:13 is true, then at least Christians have what I call limited libertarian freedom. That means every time we're tempted to sin, God promises to provide a way of escape so that we do not have to sin.

And so, we know that, you know I can think of a sin I've committed recently. I don't like to think about that. But we all still struggle with sin. So, I know that that last time I sinned, God provided a way of escape so that I did not have to sin.

So, I literally could have done otherwise. And that's the strongest sense of libertarian freedom we can have. So, I think Scripture is clear that at least on occasion, we have the freedom to do otherwise. To sin or not to sin. Many other passages of Scripture I could go to, that's just usually the first one I start with. So that's one aspect.

The other aspect is that God is necessarily omniscient. And so, God is not surprised by my free choice to sin or take the way of escape. In fact, I would say that God even knew prior to

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creation, even prior to His creative decree, that God was still omniscient and knew that if He created this world, that Tim Stratton would sin in that freedom permitting scenario.

Now, if God has that kind of knowledge, if He is necessarily omniscient and knows the true value to all propositions, then that means that God, not only He wasn't surprised that I sinned when I could have done otherwise, but He knew that I would if He created me in that circumstance. So that's what we call middle knowledge. And when you get middle knowledge and human libertarian freedom, you get mere molinism.

FRANK:

And we'll unpack that further right after the break. We're talking to Dr. Tim Stratton. We're talking about molinism, a theological doctrine that can solve many problems that there are. We'll be back in two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

If you're low on the FM dial looking for National Public Radio, go no further. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. You're never going to hear this on NPR. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist on the American Family Radio network, my guest, Dr. Tim Stratton. We're talking about a chapter from a book that he contributed to called 'Faith Examined.'

And this chapter that Tim wrote is a chapter that will introduce you to the concept of molinism, which will help you solve problems of God's sovereignty and human free will. And if there's a good God, why is there evil? Why does He allow certain evils to occur?

It will help you solve the problem of what is called divine hiddenness and so much more. And he explains it in this chapter of the book called 'Faith Examined.' Now, Tim, just before the break, you were pointing out there are two aspects to this. Can you just review those real quickly again and then we'll continue?

TIM:

Yeah, that's right. I say there's two main ingredients to what I refer to as mere molinism. And number one, that is, occasionally humans possess libertarian freedom. That means that sometimes when I think and act and make choices, that these thoughts, actions, and whether

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they be mental actions or body movements, that these things aren't determined by something or someone else, that I'm the driver of that ship occasionally.

FRANK:

Why do you say occasionally? Are you saying there are times you don't?

TIM:

Yeah, I think there's a lot of times when my beliefs are determined or that I can't think or believe otherwise. But I'm really laser focused on what it means.

FRANK:

Like two plus two equals four. You can't not believe that. Is that what you mean? That kind of thing? Okay, all right.

TIM:

Yeah, that's right. Even if you were to offer me a billion dollars right now to really believe that two plus two equals five, I want the billion dollars, but I just can't do it. Right?

FRANK:

I got it. Okay. [Laughter]

TIM:

But yeah. When I'm deliberating about theology and metaphysics, if my thoughts and beliefs are determined by something or someone else, then I've got some big problems. For the atheist, they've got to affirm then that mindless stuff that doesn't know anything about metaphysics and doesn't care if you do either is determining all your thoughts and beliefs about metaphysics.

For the Christian or the theist who's also a determinist, it's problematic for them because we see, I mean, if you look at all the four views books of different Christian doctrines out there, Christian theologians, and scholars, and philosophers are all across the board disagreeing on everything. And since nobody's going to claim that there's one Christian who is infallible, that means that every single Christ follower gets some theological matters wrong.

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Now, if you're going to say that God determines everything, then that means that God determines all Christ followers to get theology wrong. And now the whole thing is going to blow up because that makes God into what I refer to as a deity of deception.

And as soon as we say that a deity of deception inspired Scripture, now there's reason to doubt Scripture. And yeah, the whole system is going to fall apart, so we can't go there. So anyway, to back up, I said we need two things. Number one, occasionally I have to have the freedom to think and deliberate to reach my own conclusions about metaphysics and theology. And also, that God is necessarily omniscient.

So, He's never surprised by any of my free actions. He knew how I would freely choose in a libertarian sense, and in fact, He knew how I would freely choose prior to creation or to His creative decree. If God is necessarily omniscient and I have libertarian freedom, at least occasionally, then what I refer to as mere molinism is true.

FRANK:

Okay, now let's deal with molinism from the classic argument between the Calvinists and the Arminians. Calvinists will say, well, you don't really have a free choice in salvation, that God chooses who He chooses, and He doesn't choose other people. And Arminians will say, no, human beings have the free choice. But does that limit God's sovereignty? How does molinism solve this apparent conundrum?

TIM:

Yeah, well, the first thing I want to point out, and I spend basically a chapter in this book discussing this, is that molinism is not necessarily a soteriological system. That means it's not necessarily dealing with salvation issues and how salvation works. It's simply a model showing how God can be sovereign over all things and how humans can still possess real free will or libertarian freedom on some things.

Now, I do apply molinism to salvation matters, so I call that soteriological molinism, and I argue for that. But also, in the book I point out how molinism can be affirmed by both Arminians and

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Calvinists. In fact, you and I are friends with some Calvinists who hold to all five points of Calvinism but still say no, we've still got some libertarian freedom.

In fact, if we don't have that, then say goodbye to rationality and important kinds of knowledge. Those folks will still affirm God's middle knowledge, even though they affirm the five points of Calvinism, they reject determinism, exhaustive divine determinism, which I think is good. So, my point is an Arminian and a Calvinist can both affirm molinism, but they don't have to.

In fact, as I discuss in my book, Arminius may have been a molinist. In fact, I think he probably was in some sense. But the Arminians did not understand molinism at all. And so, what was dealt with at Dort wasn't Molinism. And so, I say we've had 500 years of confusion ever since. But that's a completely other historical topic.

FRANK:

But Tim, let me ask you a question. And you've spoken to many Calvinists, I'm sure, on this. Why would a Calvinist say that he or she has libertarian free will to know choices like should I get chocolate ice cream or vanilla ice cream, but not the free will choice to accept the Holy Spirit's invitation to become a Christian? Why would they say that God has given us free will for trivial matters, but not the ultimate decision that we need to make? And that's whether or not to follow Jesus.

TIM:

Yeah, well, I personally think that our freedom does allow us to choose to reject God's love and grace or not. I mean, Scripture is clear in Acts when it says, you always resist the Holy Spirit, you stiff necked people. You always resist the Holy Spirit. So, a lot of people say, no, you can't. It's irresistible. You cannot resist the Holy Spirit. I'm like, well, Scripture actually says that we can word for word and condemns those people for doing that.

So, I do think we have a choice to reject God's love and grace or not. Now, on my personal view, I say that if you choose not to reject the Holy Spirit, then God will do all the work and transform you. He will do the work to transform you if you do not reject Him. But that gets into some nuanced conversations. But my personal belief is that we do have the freedom to resist God.

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And the citizens of Hell are there because they have chosen to reject God's love and grace, and that's it.

FRANK:

So, are these Calvinists, and I know you can't speak for all of them. But why would they say that we have freedom in the minor issues but not the ultimate issue? Because they think the Scripture teaches that we don't have freedom in the ultimate issue? Is that what they're saying?

TIM:

Yeah, that comes down to usually a specific interpretation of Romans 9 that I don't think is a good interpretation. I actually think that Romans 9 implies that we have libertarian freedom in some sense. Because where it says, who are you, oh man to talk back to God?

Well, okay, but if God is determining everything, then it's like God putting His hand in a puppet and saying, why did you make me like this? How dare you? Who are you to talk to me like that? I think it implies libertarian freedom. Like, you should not talk back to God. And you didn't have to talk back to God.

But if God determines everything, then God determined and made the person talk back to God. I like to say, and the same guy that wrote Romans 9 is the same guy who wrote 1 Corinthians 10:13, which is clear that at least Christians have libertarian freedom. But then I make the case.

I'm like, if we can apply this and show that God is sovereign and that we have libertarian freedom over all these other matters, then why can't we do it when it comes to salvation issues?

FRANK:

Yeah. And as we've talked about on this program before, ladies and gentlemen, Romans 9 has nothing to do with the election of individuals to salvation. It has to do with the election of the nation of Israel. And we've unpacked that before. So, even if you do take that hard, deterministic view of Romans 9, it's not talking about whether somebody's saved or not. But in any event.

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So, you're saying from a molinistic perspective, just to sum it up, Tim, you're saying that God knows all things. He's omniscient. He knows how you would, or I would behave in other circumstances. He knows all counterfactuals and so any universe He sets up, He knows how we're going to behave. But we're still freely behaving the way we behave. Just because He knows what we're going to do doesn't mean He's causing us to do it. Am I missing something here?

TIM:

Yeah, that's exactly right. I say, just because God knows how you will freely choose doesn't mean that you do not freely choose. The word freely doesn't go anywhere just because God knows. Knowledge does not stand in causal relation. So, an event is determined. Let me give you a technical definition here.

An event is determined if prior conditions are sufficient to necessitate said event. So, if those prior conditions are not sufficient to necessitate the entirety of your mental activity or body movements, and they're not random, then that means that you are free in a libertarian sense. You're the driver of some of your mental activity and some of your body movements. And that means you have libertarian freedom.

FRANK:

And by the way, ladies and gentlemen, this does not take any sovereignty away from God because God has sovereignly chosen to give you free will. And I'm of the opinion that God is so sovereign that He can get his will done through our free will. If you're saying that God can't do that, then you're claiming He's not sovereign.

So, it kind of backfires, I think, on the hard five point Calvinists by saying, oh, I'm just all for the sovereignty of God. I asked them, are you saying that God isn't sovereign enough to get His will done through your free will? Gee, you're taking some power away from God here, aren't you?

I mean, this idea, this system of thought called molinism you can read more about in Tim's major work. But if you want kind of the Cliff's notes version of it, get the book 'Faith Examined.' It's just one chapter out of many, and these chapters are unique.

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I haven't seen people write about these issues in such a clear way, in such a short form than this book 'Faith Examined.' Check it out. It's edited by Clark Bates, who is also a CIA graduate. And Dr. Tim Stratton's my guest today. He is a contributor to it, and his website is FreeThinkingMinistries. Is it .com or .org? I always get it confused. I think it's com. It's not .org. Am I right?

TIM:

It's confusing. It's FreeThinkingMinistries.com, but it's also FreeThinkInc. That's FreeThinkInc.org.

FRANK:

All right. That's Timothy Stratton, ladies and gentlemen. Dr. Tim Stratton. We've got a lot more. We're going to deal with the problem of evil right after the break. And if you want to go further, get the book 'Faith Examined: New Arguments for Persistent Questions.' Great essays in here. You don't want to miss it. And more on how can God allow all this evil to occur? Molinism will help. Don't go anywhere. We're back in just two minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you want to learn from some great Christian apologists how to present and how to answer questions, you've got to come to CIA this summer in Charlotte, North Carolina. Go to CrossExamined, click on Events. You'll see it there. If you can't actually make it to Charlotte and you want to take the online version, here will be your instructors, Greg Koukl, J. Warner Wallace, Richard Howe, myself, Alisa Childers, Brett Kunkel, Natasha Crain, Sean McDowell, David Wood and Jorge Gil.

You'll get actual video presentations from all those folks. And then if you take the online version, either myself, J. Warner Wallace, Alisa Childers or Natasha Crain will be evaluating your presentations online. If you take the presentation version of CIA online, it starts in just a couple of weeks. Go to CrossExamined, click on Online Courses. You'll see CIA online. That's the CrossExamined Instructor Academy, and we only take a limited number of students, so you better sign up before it fills up.

And my guest today, as well as all the authors of the book 'Faith Examined,' are all CIA graduates. And Tim, let's talk about molinism now, this idea that God has all knowledge and

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human beings have libertarian free will, and God knows all counterfactuals. How does that help us with the problem of evil?

TIM:

Oh, man. So that's a great question.

FRANK:

It's a big question. Just pick any aspect of it.

TIM:

Yeah, it is a big question because usually some argument that falls under the banner of the problem of evil is going to be somebody's objection for why they don't think God exists. In fact, I would say the problem of evil is the number one argument against the existence of God. These arguments are fleshed out in different manners, but I do think that molinism does the best job of answering all of them.

So, I shared an argument in the chapter. And I would say, although I did write about some of the stuff in my book 'Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism', the chapter that I wrote for you, Frank, has some information in it that hasn't been published in any other book. And so, really getting into the problems of divine hiddenness and other issues as well.

But let me give you one argument against. I call it molinism versus all the problems of evil. So, it goes like this. Premise one, if God is omnibenevolent, that means perfectly good and all loving. If God is omnibenevolent, then He desires genuine eternal love relations with humans. Premise two, if God desires genuine eternal love relations with humans, then He creates humans with libertarian freedom.

Because 2.1, a genuine eternal love relationship between God and humans necessarily requires that humans possess libertarian freedom. Premise three, if God creates humans with libertarian freedom, then He allows humans to experience suffering, because 3.1, suffering can result from libertarian free humans, and 3.2, this is where middle knowledge comes in.

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God created a world in which He knew that unless He permitted all kinds of evil, some would not freely choose to eternally preserve the suffering free state of affairs in the new heavens and the new earth. And I use 2 Corinthians 4:17 to back that up. Premise four, God is omnibenevolent. He is perfectly good and all loving. Conclusion five, therefore, God, since He's omnibenevolent, allows humans to experience suffering.

So, what's typically offered as the problem of evil? It's really going after the idea that God is perfectly good and all loving and tries to say, well, look, especially if He's perfectly powerful, and perfectly intelligent, and perfectly loving, then if He's perfectly loving, He wouldn't want all this suffering to be there. If He's perfectly powerful, He would have the power to stop it. And if He's perfectly intelligent, He would know how to use his power to stop all this pain, evil, and suffering. But look at all this pain, evil, and suffering.

Well, therefore, this perfect God that you say exists, Christians, doesn't exist. Well, my argument that I just gave counters that and says, not so fast. Look at that conclusion again. Therefore, God, since He is omnibenevolent, not to mention perfect in power and knowledge, allows humans to experience suffering.

So, we see here, it's really weird that suffering is a gift. I hate suffering, absolutely hate it. But it's a gift to humanity that we can learn from. Second Corinthians 4:17, Paul says, and he's being sarcastic when he calls it light. But he says, these light, momentary afflictions prepare us for an eternal way of glory beyond all comparison. How does it prepare us?

Because we learn how stupid it is to not follow the love or the law of Christ, and to love God and love everybody all the time. We learn how stupid it is to reject God's love and grace. We learn how stupid it is to not love each other.

So, it prepares us to be great citizens in heaven. And as I alluded to earlier, the only people who are not in heaven are those who refuse to learn and have refused God's love and grace, and those are the citizens of Hell. So anyway, what do you think about that argument?

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FRANK:

Well, yeah, I starred that article in the book 'Faith Examined' in the chapter that you did. And I just want to make sure I understand it correctly. You're saying that if God did not give us sort of this in between state, between creation and heaven, this state where we live in a fallen world, if he took us right to heaven, are you suggesting that therefore, then we wouldn't have learned the problems of rebelling against Him, and we might rebel in heaven, sort of like what Satan did? I mean, how would you? Is that. Is that what you're saying here? Go ahead.

TIM:

Yeah, obviously, Satan and a third of the angels provide a great example to see that just because you're created in a perfect state of affairs in the very presence of God, where suffering does not exist, at least if Christianity is true, if one wants to do an internal critique, if Christianity is true, then we see examples of people who take it for granted and wreck it. I mean, Adam and Eve also were created in the presence of God, and God was anything but hidden to them, and were created in a suffering free state of affairs. And like Satan and the demons, took that suffering free state of affairs for granted and chose to wreck it.

Now, I don't know about you, Frank, but I've already experienced so much suffering in my life. I know I'm 50 years old now and might not look like it, but my knees feel like they're 75 because I was really hard on them growing up. And when I close my eyes for the last time on this planet, and I open my eyes on the other side of death, looking into the eyes of Jesus, that's what I want more than anything else.

And I am not going to take that for granted. When I'm in the suffering free state of affairs, when I realize my knees don't hurt anymore and I'm looking around and nobody else is suffering. Animals aren't suffering. I'm in the very presence of God. I will not take that for granted because I've learned from light, momentary afflictions.

Now, molinism gives us, there's two things in that argument that I gave us is that we need libertarian freedom so that we can love. And we also need to learn in this classroom of suffering, so to speak. It prepares us to be citizens of heaven. Satan wasn't prepared to be a citizen of heaven, but you and I will be.

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So, I think it's pretty cool.

FRANK:

I think Paul's also saying there that we enhance our capacity to enjoy God by going through difficulty. You know, redemption actually, this is hard to even conceive of, but I think it's true. Redemption brings you to a stronger state of a relationship than if you stay in the state of innocence. And for you businesspeople out there, I'll just give you one example of this. It's a trite example, but I think it's true. The surveys show this is true.

If you're a business owner and your customer gets upset with something you've done, if you correct the problem and go above and beyond the call of duty to take care of your customer, that relationship that your customer has with you is now stronger than it was before the problem, because they've gone through difficulty, and you came in and redeemed the problem.

So actually, going through the problem and having it solved creates a stronger relationship than if you had never gone through the problem. That's why making up is so much fun if you're in a relationship, because the redemption is actually something that enhances the relationship and you go, I don't want to ever do that again. But I'm glad at least now we've gone through that, so we've strengthened our relationship. So, I know that seems kind of an odd way of describing it, but I think that's what Paul's doing here.

It's like winning the Super Bowl after everyone said you couldn't win it, right? And you're not that good, and you go through all the difficulty, and you hold up the trophy at the end of the game, you're going to enjoy that trophy more than somebody who didn't play a down all year but was on the team, right? Because you went through the trouble, you went through the difficulty.

And I think if I'm understanding you right here, Tim, you're saying after you go through difficulty, after you see the problems of this life, it makes you appreciate heaven all the more. And you're going to go, I'm never doing that again. Right. I don't ever want to go back.

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TIM:

That's right. Yeah. Why would anybody after they've experienced all this pain, evil, and suffering, and then find themselves in a suffering free state of affairs in the very presence of God in perfection ever choose to leave that state of affairs for a place that's worse than the place they already left? So anyway, I think now if God has middle knowledge, then He's created a world with the end game in mind, with eternity in mind, as Paul's discussing in 2 Corinthians 4:17, He's got eternity in mind. He's got the end game in mind, and He creates.

So, I say, look, if God creates a world in which the maximum amount of people will freely enter into a true love relationship with God and others who have learned into the infinite future, then a perfectly good and loving God would create that world, no matter how much pain, evil, and suffering is allowed in this classroom of suffering, this temporary, finite world of suffering, because it is a finite period of time. But God has infinity in mind with no end, the eternal weight of glory. Frank, you and your son wrote a book about superheroes and--

FRANK:

'Hollywood Heroes.'

TIM:

Yeah, yeah, 'Hollywood Heroes.' And really my favorite analogy or illustration to use when I'm talking about this is I point people to 'Avengers: Infinity War' and 'Avengers: Endgame.' And in those movies, Dr. Strange is aware of 14,000,605 possible worlds or possible futures that he could actualize.

And in these worlds, he's not determining the thoughts and actions of Thanos, and Captain America, or anybody else. He just knows how they will freely choose. He also looks to the end game. That's why that movie is called 'The Endgame.'

FRANK:

Hold the thought, because after the break we're going to come back and talk about 'Endgame' and how this applies to molinism and our time here on earth. So don't go anywhere. You're listening. I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. My guest, Dr. Tim

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Stratton of FreeThinkingMinistries.com. And we're also highlighting his chapter in the book 'Faith Examined.' You want to pick up a copy. We're back in two minutes.

Ladies and gentlemen, for those of you near New Orleans on March 24, I'll be at Journey Fellowship Church in Slidell, Louisiana, not far from New Orleans. Then the next night I'm going to be at Southeastern Louisiana University. That's in Hammond, Louisiana. We'll be talking about I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.

Later that week, the 28th, I'll be at a Grant Community event in Grant, Michigan. All the details are on our website, CrossExamined.org. Click on Events - Frank Turek Calendar. You will see it there. So, there's a lot coming up.

Then the following week, April 3, University of Buffalo, Buffalo, New York. Then Calvary Chapel, Star. That's Star, Idaho on April 7 and then Boise State University on April 8. All that on the website. If any of you are near any of those locations, love to see you when I'm out there. And it's interesting, Tim, just before the break or during the break, we were talking about you being invited to go to a medical and dental conference. Explain to our audience why this is interesting. Go ahead, explain what happened.

TIM:

You know, I've been invited to speak to a Christian medical and dental conference because they've found that many of the surgeons and dentists who have bought into this idea of divine determinism aren't being as careful as they could have been during surgeries. And then they write it off as well, look. That's just what God determined to happen. Not my fault.

I've actually talked to surgeons who have verified this to me personally in the face-to-face conversations. And so, they've asked me to say, look, God is sovereign over anything. He created a world in which He knew how you would freely choose to be careful or not as careful as you could have been when you're doing surgery. So, when you mess up, when you're careless, that's on you.

Now, God wasn't surprised by it, but He didn't make it happen. You could have been more careful. So, if you weren't as careful as you could have been, that's on you. Now, I also want to

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say, look, God has given you an amazing ability, a power to save life. And as long as you really are careful and you do your best, hey, if you fail, you can still sleep at night because you've done your best.

But anyway, they've asked me to speak about our free will, our responsibility, and how it works with God's sovereignty. God can still be sovereign over everything, even our free choices. And so, it's relevant in the real world.

FRANK:

Oh, absolutely. And I see so many people who try and answer questions about evil when they're Calvinists. They just can't answer them because they get back to if God's determining everything, then He's causing us to sin. Now He's the author of evil.

Now, you don't have Yahweh, you got Allah, right? You've got an arbitrary God who is just pulling all the strings like some puppet master. That's not the God of the Bible. And of course, we're not going through all the verses here that some people say point to that. We don't have time to.

But if you want to get a book on it that gets into it, my co-author, Dr. Norman Geisler, wrote the book 'Chosen But Free.' And then, of course, you got Tim Stratton's book. Name the title of the book, because not everyone can see it. Tim. Yeah, okay.

TIM:

Yeah. 'Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism.' The entire second chapter is based on Scripture.

FRANK:

Okay. You can check all that out. You can also get, if you want, the Cliff's note version, get the book 'Faith Examined.' You'll not just get Tim Stratton's chapter, but several other chapters. Chapters written by Alisa Childers and Natasha Crain, and Melissa Dougherty, and Jorge Gil, and Eric Hernandez, and Eric Chabot.

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By the way, we're going to have Eric Chabot on next week. He's talking about messianic prophecy in this book he teaches, or actually is the Ratio Christi director at The Ohio State University. But let's go back. Before the break, we were talking, we somehow got talking about Thanos and 'Endgame.' So, pick up the conversation right there.

TIM:

Yeah, no, what I love about those two movies, 'Avengers: Infinity War' and 'Endgame,' is those two, movies, as far as I understand, are the most viewed movies in the history of cinema. And so, they make for a great illustration, because so many folks have seen it. And in that movie.

Well, in Infinity War, Dr. Strange uses the time stone to see 14,000,605 possible worlds that he could create. And Tony Stark asks him, well, how many of those worlds do we win? And he says, only one. And most of the viewers thought, oh, no, one out of 14,000,605. Those are horrible odds. And I'm sitting there in the movie thinking, this is molinism. It's not about the odds. It's what Dr. Strange is going to choose.

And so, to actualize that world, he had to do the unthinkable and give Thanos the time stone. Now, that would lead to not only Doctor Strange's death, but the death of half the life in the universe and half of the Avengers. But Doctor Strange had middle knowledge. He knew what would happen if he gave Thanos the time stone.

And so, that set up, the end of 'Infinity War' and the entire movie of 'Endgame,' where he knew the endgame, that the evil of Thanos would be defeated, and all the saints would be raised. I mean, all the Avengers would be raised from the dead. And they would crush Thanos under their feet. Where did they get that from? That's totally ripped from Scripture, right?

And in fact, I love it. When Captain America is fighting Thanos, he just wielded the hammer of Thor, and he still got his butt kicked. And he realizes, wow, I'm going to keep fighting, but I'm going to fight to the death. It's inevitable. I can't beat him. So, he tightens up half the shield he's got remaining and he starts slowly walking to his death, thinking that all hope is lost. And then he hears on your left, and he turns and looks over his shoulder and he sees these portals starting to open up.

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And all the dead saints or the dead Avengers have been raised from the dead, along with Doctor Strange, who sacrificed his life. And he is raised from the dead as well. And they crush the evil of Thanos under their feet. That is totally from Scripture. But Doctor Strange predestined all that happened in the 'Endgame' movie without determining it.

He just simply knew how Thanos would choose, how Captain America would choose, and how Tony Stark would choose, and everybody else. He knew all the evil, pain, and suffering that was going to come along the way, but he still did that because he knew of the endgame. And I think our God did the exact same thing. And that's what molinism gives you.

FRANK:

Yeah. Our friend Leighton Flowers, who has a great YouTube channel on many of these things called Soteriology 101, pointed this out. I think this is a very good point. Whenever you see the word predestined in Scripture, particularly the New Testament, you might want to think of the word guarantee rather than predestined, because predestined makes it seem like you don't have a choice.

Whereas guarantee means if you're in Christ, you're guaranteed for sure this is going to happen. Not because you don't have a choice. You have made the choice. And because you've made the choice, this is the guaranteed or for sure outcome. And so, when you look at Ephesians 1, it says, all those who are in Christ, those who have accepted Christ, are predestined, meaning they're guaranteed to be sealed with the Holy Spirit.

And ultimately, as Romans 8 talks about, to be glorified. It doesn't mean you don't have a free choice. You do have a free choice. You've made it. But since God is God, He can guarantee the outcome. And that's what molinism gives you. You see, it solves problems rather than creates these conundrums where people go, oh, how can God be free? Or how can man be free and God be sovereign?

It's not a contradiction. Not a contradiction at all. I remember when Dr. Geisler, years ago, I was at his house and I said something like, well, if God chooses the outcome by creating, doesn't that mean we don't have free choice? He says, no, we still have free choice. Doesn't matter that

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He's choosing the outcome because He knows what we're freely going to do. And that was like a light bulb moment. He knew what we freely were going to do.

Doesn't mean He's causing us to do it. And Tim, this book also, this chapter in 'Faith Examined' solves many other problems as well. You talk about divine hiddenness, you talk about the problem of fine-tuning, cosmological argument, moral argument. Molinism has an impact on all those.

We can't go through them all here. But let me just ask you one more question, and that is, there are people out there who say, look, I'm a non-resistant non-believer, so I'm looking for God. I can't find Him. Why haven't I found Him? I guess this God doesn't exist. You say what?

TIM:

Yeah, that's demonstrably false if molinism is true. This is known as John Schellenberg's hiddenness argument. And this is really supposed to be the big bad argument these days against the existence of God. As demonstrated in this book that we wrote for you, that's just demonstrably false if molinism is true. So Schellenberg's hiddenness argument goes like this. One, if God exists, there will never be any non-resistant non-believers. Two, there are some non-resistant non-believers. Three, therefore, God does not exist. But yeah, I was able to provide some arguments and counterexamples that show that's not true.

FRANK:

Involving Jordan Peterson. Start there.

TIM:

Yeah, that's right.

FRANK:

Go ahead, do the Jordan Peterson one. Everybody interested in that counterexample.

TIM:

It seems that if there's anybody in the world today who would be a non-resistant non-believer,

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it would be Jordan Peterson. I just watched him talk in person last week in Omaha. It seems that he's been a non-resistant non-believer for a handful of years now.

And I remember back in 2016, I was sharing my faith with a friend who was an avid, aggressive atheist, and he just would not listen. I actually pointed them to you, Frank. I said, go to some of Frank Turek's work. He wouldn't do it? Because why? Because you're a Christian. He said, I'm not going to go listen to any Christian propaganda.

I pointed him to William Lane Craig. Wouldn't do it. And so, finally it got so tense between us, and it got kind of just ugly. I'm like, okay, I'm just done. I wiped the dust off my feet, and I walked away. Well, probably a little over a year later, I run into him.

I'm downtown, and I see him like, Alex, how are you doing? And he's smiling from ear to ear, and he just comes up and gives me a hug. And this guy's actually a jujitsu expert, by the way. He's just awesome. He comes up and he gives me a hug. I could just feel like he could throw me in an armbar.

Anyway, he's smiling, and I said, what's up? And he goes, I gave my life to Christ. I'm a Christian now. I'm like, no way. How did that happen? And he said, you know, I read Jordan Peterson's '12 Rules for Life.' And I said, oh, that's awesome. But, you know, he's not a Christian. And he goes, Tim, I know.

But he got me so close to the truth that everything you said about the Gospel clicked. It finally made sense.

FRANK:

Tim, we've got to go. But if you want to read the rest of the story, you've got to get the book 'Faith Examined.' It's in Tim's chapter, and there's so much more in there. Also, check out Tim's ministry, FreeThinkingMinistries.com. Tim, it's been great having you on. And you were not predestined to be here without your free choice. God bless. See you guys later.

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