



# True Freedom

FaithBuilder 4 | Lesson 15 | Divine Providence

## Lesson Overview

### 1. Video

Watch *True Freedom* (1min 31sec) at [bitly.com/SMTrueFreedom](https://bitly.com/SMTrueFreedom) (1min 31sec) at [bitly.com/SMTrueFreedom](https://bitly.com/SMTrueFreedom)

### 2. Read

We have the freedom to act selfishly or unselfishly, pp.1-2

### 3. True or False?

Decide whether statements are true or false and discuss, p. 2

### 4. Activity: Freedom or Predestination?

Read a statement. Students decide whether they agree or disagree with it by moving to one side of the room or the other side. Hold a debate using statements from the Writings to back up your arguments, p. 3

## New Church Concept Divine Providence

For every smallest moment of a human being's life involves a series of consequences extending to eternity, each moment being as a new beginning to those which follow.  
*Arcana Coelestia* 6854.3

## Watch a Video

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## Discuss

1. What pitfalls does the idea that freedom means “getting what you want” hold? Why is this idea of freedom problematic?
2. In what ways are our various “wants” at war in us? What are these wants? Why can’t they agree?
3. The speaker asks whether “want” is even a friend of ours. How would you answer that question?
4. How did the speaker define “true freedom?”

## Read

Nothing is more important to the Lord than our freedom. From birth we are influenced by both heaven and hell. We act on the influence of heaven when we put others and the Lord first in our lives, and we act on the influence of hell when we put ourselves first.

When we act selfishly, we are exercising selfish freedom—which is the ability to think and want to do evil and to act on this desire when we think we can get away with it.

In time doing evil by free choice makes a person a slave to evil. The choice to do one evil, such as steal, leads to the “need” for another evil, such as lying about the theft. Repeatedly choosing this path leads to eternal slavery to evil in hell.

Doing evil by free choice looks like freedom, but it is slavery, because that freedom comes from self-love and love of the world, and these loves are from hell. Such freedom is after death actually turned into slavery, for a person who indulged in such freedom then becomes in hell a lowly slave. *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 142

When we choose to think and will what is good and to act on this desire we are exercising heavenly freedom. This is *true* freedom—the freedom of being led by the Lord.

When a person rejects selfish freedom, he then receives from the Lord heavenly freedom, which is utterly unknown to those who are in selfish freedom. People suppose that if selfish freedom were taken away from them, they would have no life left; when in fact life itself then begins; and joy, bliss, happiness, with wisdom, then come, because this freedom is from the Lord. See *Arcana Coelestia* 5786

Doing good by free choice is real freedom, because it comes of love to the Lord and love towards the neighbor, and these loves are from heaven. This freedom also lasts after death, and then becomes true freedom. *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 142

Although it may seem paradoxical the Writings tell us that by repeatedly choosing a heavenly path, a person feels more and more as if he is responsible for his own life, and at the same time he recognizes more and more that he is the Lord's.

Since everything that a person does in freedom appears to him to be attributable to him—for it accords with his love, and to act from one's love is to act in freedom—it follows that conjunction with the Lord causes a person to appear to himself free and so to be his own person, and the closer the conjunction with the Lord, the freer, and so the more his own person.

He appears to himself more and more distinctly to be as though his own person because Divine love is such that it wills what it has to be another's, thus to be a person's or angel's. That is the nature of all spiritual love, especially of Divine love. And besides, the Lord never compels anyone, because everything to which someone is compelled does not appear to him as attributable to him, and whatever does not appear to him as attributable to him cannot be made a matter of his love and so be assigned to him as belonging to him. Therefore a person is continually led by the Lord in freedom, and is also reformed and regenerated in freedom. *Divine Providence* 43

### True or False?

*Decide whether statements are true or false. Discuss.*

- T F** 1. Real freedom is the choice between good and evil.
- T F** 2. The Lord is constantly bending my choices towards heaven.
- T F** 3. If I make one bad choice, I am no longer free to go to heaven.
- T F** 4. Making the choice to do good gives a person real freedom.
- T F** 5. The freedom to act selfishly is not real freedom.

### New Church Concept Two Freedoms

Hellish freedom is one thing, and heavenly freedom another. It is an exercise of hellish freedom to think and will evil, and so far as civil and moral laws do not hinder, to speak and do it. It is an exercise of heavenly freedom, on the other hand, to think and will good, and so far as opportunity is given, to speak and do it. Whatever a person thinks, wills, speaks and does in freedom, he perceives as attributable to him, for to everyone all freedom accords with his love. Consequently people caught up in a love of evil perceive no otherwise than that hellish freedom is real freedom, whereas people impelled by a love of good perceive that heavenly freedom is real freedom, so that each regards the opposite as enslavement. Nevertheless, no one can deny that either the one or the other is freedom, for two conditions of freedom in themselves opposite to each other cannot both be really free. Moreover, no one can deny that to be led by good is freedom, while to be led by evil is enslavement; for to be led by good is to be led by the Lord, whereas to be led by evil is to be led by the devil. *Divine Providence* 43

## ***Philosopher's Chair***

### **Freedom or Predestination?**

- Read the statements for discussion and decide whether or not you agree with or have a preference for them. The “Teachings from the Word” below may help you decide.
- If you favor the statement, go to the right side of the room. If you disagree, move to the left side of the room. You must take one side or the other, but you will can switch sides if you change your mind.
- On each side of the room is a speaker’s chair. Only the person sitting in the chair can speak. Each side takes turns speaking.

As speakers make their points, you may change sides any number of times.

#### **Teachings from the Word**

It is well known in the church that the Lord desires the salvation of all, and the death of no one. Hence it may be seen that any predestination except to heaven is contrary to the Divine Love. *Divine Providence* 330

Since the Lord foresees the state of all after death and also foresees the places in hell of those who do not desire to be saved, and the places in heaven of those who desire to be saved, it follows that He provides places for the wicked by permitting and withdrawing, and places for the good by leading. And unless this were done continually from the birth of everyone to the end of his life neither heaven nor hell would continue to exist, for without this foresight and Providence at the same time neither heaven nor hell would be anything but confusion. See *Divine Providence* 333

All the future is present to the Lord and all the present is to Him eternal. The Divine Providence in everything it does has regard to the infinite and the eternal. See *Divine Providence* 333

All things, nay, the least of all things, down to the least of leasts, are directed by the Lord’s providence, even as to the very steps. *Arcana Coelestia* 6493

#### **Statement for Discussion**

**Even though the Lord already knows that my life choices are leading me to heaven or hell, I am free to choose my own path in life.**

If you think that people are not free to choose their own path, move to the right side of the room. If you think that people are free to choose their own path, go to the left side.

#### **Further Discussion**

If you would like to continue the discussion, you could consider the following statement:

**If the Lord didn’t know whether I will choose heaven or hell, He couldn’t provide me with opportunities to make the choices that will lead me there.**