

Does Sola
Gratia Destroy
Real Choice?

Objection 1: Does Sola Gratia Destroy Real Choice? (Part I)

There is an old, persistent fear that if God's drawing is decisive - if His grace must awaken the sinner's heart before faith can arise, then *our* believing is not truly a choice. The idea is essentially this;

“If God must act first, *decisively*, then the moment of faith is automatic. *My* ‘yes’ doesn’t mean anything. It isn’t *real*.”

This instinct is not trivial. In fact, it arises from something we *should protect*: the dignity of the human person as a real moral agent. A faith that is not truly chosen is not Christian faith at all. So, the objection deserves to be stated sharply and answered carefully.

But Scripture does not place God's gracious initiative and human choice on opposite sides. Instead, it reveals something far more profound: **apart from grace, the human will is bound; by grace, the human will is freed.**

 **Sola Gratia does not weaken human freedom - it *rescues* it.**

1. Why We Need to Clarify What “Choice” Actually Is

We often assume that a choice is “real” only if it emerges from a will that is utterly self-powered, self-originating, self-governing. That is, we imagine an internal world where nothing shapes desire except the self, where we create our own motives *ex nihilo* “out of nothing.”

But that is **not** how Scripture, experience, or even psychology understands human action.

A. A choice is the expression of your strongest desire in that moment.

Not your abstract ideals... but your actual inward preference *at the time* you act. We *never* choose against what we most want. We may regret it later, but in the moment of action, our will expresses our ruling desire *at that* moment.

B. Our desires are not self-created.

They are shaped by our nature, our loves, our fears, our upbringing, our culture, our habits, our experiences, our blindnesses, our wounds, our sin, and yes, also by divine grace. The will is not a throne room where the self sits in absolute autonomy. It is more like a river-mouth, fed by deeper streams of nature and influence.

C. Grace does not cancel choosing; it restores the ability to choose Christ.

Without grace, the sinner's will is bound by sin. By grace, the sinner's will is freed to desire Christ. And when grace frees the desire, the choice that follows is more authentically yours than any choice you made in bondage.

This is *why* Jesus says:

“No one can come to Me *unless* the Father draws him.” (John 6:44)

“Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father *comes* to Me.” (John 6:45)

✚ **Grace does not force the unwilling to come.**

✚ **Grace makes the unwilling *willing*.**

D. Without this, even while preaching against self-boasting... we end up *still* self-boasting.


Because if the *decisive* difference between you and the unbeliever is that *you* supplied the final, decisive desire for Christ—then *you* made the difference that God did not.

 **That is the very thing Paul destroys when he writes:**

“By grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8–9)

“So then it is not of him who wills nor who runs, but of God who shows mercy.” (Rom. 9:16)

If the decisive impulse toward Christ originates in you, then the very faith meant to silence boasting becomes its secret fuel.

 **Sola Gratia is not the enemy of real choice. It is the enemy of self-congratulation.**

2. Real Life Already Teaches Us That Influence Does Not Destroy Choice

Long before we step into John 6 or Ephesians 2, ordinary life quietly settles the issue. Influence, even decisive influence, does not erase responsibility or render a choice unreal. It merely supplies the motivating *cause* behind it.

A. When a friend “saves your life,” your choice is still your choice.

Picture a young man spiraling into destructive habits. A trusted friend intervenes with clarity and affection. Something awakens. The young man’s heart turns. He chooses life.

Afterward we say:

“*You* saved his life.” “*Your* influence made all the difference.”

Yet his choice was still fully his own.

✚ If decisive human influence does *not* violate freedom or turn the one “influenced” into “a puppet”, *why* would decisive divine influence?

B. We intervene decisively without moral discomfort.

Parents choose for children all the time. First responders act for the unconscious. Loved ones often intervene and rescue those who cannot help themselves.

✚ Love acts when its object cannot. Love protects, rescues, restores.

The Real-Life Rescue of my own son

I once saw my young son from raging water, as he was struggling to stay afloat. I acted, swam to him, then *pulled* him to me and safety. I did not stand on the sideline and wait for him to ask me for help. Nor did I first *seek his consent*. In fact such an idea never entered my mind. The *only* consideration in my mind

and subsequent action of “drawing” him to me and to safety was *my* love for and desire to see him not drown.

✚ **Did that make me a “monster”? Or reduce him to being a “puppet”? Did it mean I did not love him? Or prove that I *did*?**

“**In love** He chose us...*and* predestined us for adoption as His children through Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:4-5)

C. Influence does not erase agency; it awakens it.

The more evil blinds, the less the will can choose good. In fact, Jesus said in the very context of bearing good fruit – “Apart from Me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5). He meant it!

Though the staggering categorical problem this creates for most unqualified assumptions of “free will”, is seldom addressed in a meaningful way. For *why* it is true that “Unless you abide in Me you cannot bear fruit”? (John 15:4)

✚ **The question is not whether the human will is influenced—but *by whom*.**

Grace turns slaves into sons.

Sola Gratia, Soli DEO Gloria

[END OF PART I]

Real-life experience already teaches us what Scripture makes explicit: influence does not erase agency; it awakens it. If this is true with human influence, how much more with divine grace?

Part II will move to the biblical portraits—Lydia, Saul of Tarsus, and those who “by grace believed”—and then to the deeper question: is Satan’s influence stronger than God’s drawing?

Pick it up in Part II...