
Symptoms of **Overemphasis** upon *FREE WILL* vs. *GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY*¹

FREE WILL: Symptoms of Overemphasis

1. **Life seems increasingly exhausting** and draining rather than joyous and fulfilling.
2. **Fear nags** – fear that one has not done enough good things or fear that one has done too many bad things, or both.
3. **Doubt nags** – especially doubt about whether one is really saved, or will stay saved.
4. **Supernatural gifts of the Spirit seem more important than the fruit of the Spirit** because they appear to attest more dramatically to the Spirit's indwelling presence and God's approval.
5. **Conformity** to certain behavior patterns, non-essential scriptural interpretations, or rules of conduct and expression become important validations of salvation.
6. Teaching focuses on God's standards and **justice more than on his mercy**. Assurance of salvation seems a dangerous door to temptations.
7. **Emotional expression**, whether the glum extreme or the happy extreme, is taken as a sign of spirituality.
8. **Prayers implore instant deliverance** from immorality, addictions, and other long-term problems and ailments.
9. **Weaknesses and struggles must be hidden** from self and others or attributed to Satan's attacks.
10. **The letter of the law** receives more attention than the spirit of the law.
11. **"Perfect" obedience** rather than daily spiritual growth becomes life's goal.
12. Parents, teachers, and church leaders often seek **control** and justify it.
13. **Fear** of wrong choices leads to preference for:
 - a. "signs",
 - b. strongly enforced prohibitions, and
 - c. relinquishing choice to others, especially to authority figures.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY: Symptoms of Overemphasis

1. Life in Christ seems much the same as any "good" person's life, but with the benefit of an eternal life insurance policy.
2. **Ritual** (i.e. baptism, church membership, "coming forward", etc.) becomes more important than ongoing spiritual growth.
3. **Teaching emphasizes the mercy and forgiveness of God** over the justice of God.
4. **God's plans become more His than ours to fulfill**. The need for evangelists, missionaries, and counselors and for good teaching in apologetics and theology is downplayed.
5. Sermons focus more on **comfort and assurance** than on conviction, confession, and change. Hell is rarely if ever mentioned.
6. The role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers for **godly living receives little attention**.
7. Immorality, addictions, and long-term sin problems are treated as reminders that **we are "just human"**.
8. **Remorse** seems a sufficient step of repentance.
9. God's promises and reassurances are applied unconditionally.
10. **The Christian label may be broadly applied** to those who serve the community of the church, or who express kindness, generosity, and pleasantness.
11. **The fight against evil becomes more a societal than a personal battle**, especially in view of God's ultimate victory.
12. **Self-examination** seems a dangerous flirtation with guilt.
13. **The fear of being labeled "judgmental"** thwarts attempts to reprove and correct flagrant sin.

¹ Adapted from *Beyond the Cosmos*, by Hugh Ross, Navpress, 1999, pp155-156.