

Chapter 1

Introduction

John Calvin, the brilliant systematic theologian of the Reformation, in explaining predestination, said:

Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself, what would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal death for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say he is predestinated either to life or to death.¹

According to Loraine Boettner, the well-known interpreter of Calvinism, Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, “was as zealous for absolute predestination as was Calvin.”² To prove his point, Boettner quotes Luther’s commentary on Romans, where Luther said:

All things whatever arise from, and depend on, the divine appointment; whereby it was foreordained who should receive the word of life, and who should disbelieve it; who should be delivered from their sins, and who should be hardened in them; and who should be justified and who should be condemned.

¹ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, Chapter XXI, section 5.

² *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, page 15.

To further make his point, Boettner even quotes Melancthon, Calvin's student, who is reported to have said: "All things turn out according to divine predestination; not only the works we do outwardly, but even the thoughts we think inwardly"; and again, "There is no such thing as chance, or fortune; nor is there a readier way to gain the fear of God...than to be thoroughly versed in the doctrine of Predestination." Furthermore, Benjamin B. Warfield, who, in the opinion of some Calvinists, is the most outstanding Reformed theologian since Calvin himself, makes his belief in absolute predestination very clear. In an article entitled "Predestination," Warfield said that Predestination was "broad enough to embrace the whole universe of things, and minute enough to concern itself with the smallest details, and actualizing itself with inevitable certainty in every event that comes to pass."³

What Calvinists Teach Is Clear

Calvinists believe that absolutely nothing happens that God has not foreordained or predestined to happen! If an individual goes to heaven, it is because God predestined that he would, independent of anything this individual would do of his own free will; on the other hand, if an individual goes to hell, it is because God predestined that he would, independent of anything this individual would do of his own free will. This point is clearly stated in the *Westminster Confession*:

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good

³ *Biblical Doctrines*, pages 13, 22.

*pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.*⁴

It is against such error that this study is dedicated.

What I Believe The Bible Teaches

I believe the Bible teaches that Christ died for all people, for those who perish no less than for those who are saved; that the election of the saints is not an unconditional act of God; that saving grace is actually extended to every man, which he may then receive or reject; that man may resist the Holy Spirit's invitation to be saved, if he so chooses; that God's grace, once accepted, can then be rejected and is, therefore, not necessarily permanent, but that those who are ransomed by the precious blood of Christ can, if they are so disposed, throw away all God has so graciously given them and perish eternally.

This statement is not a creed to be implemented in all the churches; it is, instead, my own systematic theology. It is my conviction that all these things are taught in the Bible. I stand ready to give a reason for the hope that is in me by citing book, chapter, and verse for what I believe. Actually, the design of this study is to do exactly this! As I examine the cardinal arguments (points) of Calvinism, I will be refuting each argument the Calvinists make with a "thus sayeth the Lord." This is only as it should be, for the final

⁴ Chapter III, sections III-VII.

authority by which any doctrine or theological system is to be judged must always be God's word.

When it comes to Calvinism, many Christians continue to be "children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive."⁵ This is not because the Bible is somehow unclear on the subject. In point of fact, the Bible clearly and emphatically denies Calvinism. If God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,"⁶ *then Calvinism simply cannot be true.*

The problem for many is that the Bible is not a book on systematic theology. For example, the Bible teaches, but does not systematically set forth, the doctrines of the triune nature of God, the deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the reality of future rewards in heaven and condemnation in hell, all of which are questioned by some who claim to be Christians.

Nevertheless, the Bible is God's special revelation to man. As such, it has a beginning and an end. When one has studied this revelation from beginning to end, he then knows what it is God wants him to know about the myriad subjects contained therein. Only then can one begin to systematize these subjects.

Although systematization is an essential process of theology,⁷ it is at this very point that men begin to go astray. This problem is dealt with by the apostle Paul, who said, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."⁸

⁵ Ephesians 4:14.

⁶ 2 Peter 3:9.

⁷ By theology we mean only the legitimate study of God and His revelation.

⁸ 2 Timothy 2:15, KJV.

God's word always accomplishes what He intends; in other words, it never returns void.⁹ Therefore, how we interpret or "rightly divide" the Scriptures is extremely important. It is at this point that sheep begin to be separated from goats.¹⁰ There is no excuse for getting caught up in the error of Calvinism, none except ignorance of God's word!

Unfortunately, ignorance is a major problem among God's people today. Some are ignorant because they are still babes in Christ. Others are ignorant because they lack someone to teach them. Still, other Christians are ignorant through no fault but their own. They do not like to study God's word. Studying is hard work. It requires one to think and, quite frankly, these folks just do not want to think. However, if we are not ready to study the word of God, *thinking it out* and *thinking it through*, then we will, quite naturally, wrest the Scriptures to our own destruction.¹¹

So, if you are not willing to "gird up the loins of your mind,"¹² then this book is not for you. Consequently, your lot in this life is to be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."¹³ On the other hand, if you, like a new born babe, "desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,"¹⁴ then I believe you will appreciate this study.

Always keep in mind that this study represents the thinking of the author, who has endeavored to "speak as the oracles of God."¹⁵

⁹ Isaiah 55:11.

¹⁰ John 10:16,27; Revelation 3:20.

¹¹ See 2 Peter 3:16.

¹² 1 Peter 1:13.

¹³ Ephesians 4:14, KJV.

¹⁴ 2 Peter 2:2.

¹⁵ 1 Peter 4:11.

He could be wrong! Ultimately, it is your responsibility to “search the Scriptures” for yourself¹⁶ to see whether these things are so.¹⁷ The author has cited passages he believes authenticate his arguments. As you engage in this study, please read these passages for yourself. Make sure they are used correctly and not taken out of context. May God richly bless you as you study His word.

¹⁶ John 5:39.

¹⁷ See Acts 17:11.