**Calvin’s *Institutes of Christian Religion***

Lesson 27: Predestination, Part 1 (Book 3, Chapters 21-22)

**Chapter 21: Eternal Election, by which God has predestined some to salvation, others to destruction**

1. “No other doctrine accents God’s free mercy and unfathomable love better than divine election. Predestination demonstrates that God’s goodness and justice originate in Himself, for He acts according to His own good pleasure.” --J. Mark Beach
2. Not everybody hears the Gospel and those who do hear the Gospel have a variety of responses (acceptance, rejection, rejection then later acceptance, outward acceptance then later rejection, etc.). What accounts for this? “This variety serves the decision of God’s eternal election.”
3. But people recoil at the doctrine of election. “It’s not fair” they may say or “That means God doesn’t love everybody equally” or something along those lines. Others want to avoid it as a “divisive doctrine” or say that we need to be pragmatic in our preaching and preach how to have a better marriage rather than preach doctrine. Calvin begs to differ.
4. “We shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God’s free mercy until we come to know His eternal election, which illumines God’s grace by this contrast: that He does not indiscriminately adopt all into the hope of salvation but gives to some what He denies to others.”
5. “They who shut the gates that no one may dare seek a taste of this doctrine wrong men no less than God. For neither will anything else suffice to make us humble as we ought to be nor shall we otherwise sincerely feel how much we are obliged to God.”
6. 2 Cautions:
   1. Don’t seek to go beyond what God has revealed in Scripture in order to satisfy your curiosity. In this discussion when begin to approach or enter into the “hidden” or “secret” things of God so we much exercise caution. This option says God has revealed it so let us figure it all out.
   2. Don’t seek to avoid the question at all and bury it. This option says that election/predestination is too mysterious and hard for us to understand to lets avoid it altogether. Calvin says we are to adopt a position/attitude of “learned ignorance” which will call us to stop trying to be wise when God sets an end to teaching.
7. Scripture teaches election/predestination so we should seek to understand it. It’s in Scripture so that means election/predestination is profitable for our encouragement, exhortation, rebuke, and training in godliness, but we should go no further than what God has revealed.

*Predestination Defined and Explained*

1. Definition: “We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which God compacted [covenanted] with Himself what He willed to become of each man (person). For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal condemnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or death.”
2. There is a corporate and an individual aspect to election.
3. God elected the nation of Israel (but even within that nation some were chosen and others not)
4. God elected individuals: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, etc. God did not elect some individuals: Ishmael, Esau, Saul
5. So Corporate election is not the same as individual election. Corporate election (of Israel) was that Israel was chosen as God’s vehicle through which He gave those shadows that prefigured Jesus Christ and through whom He revealed His holy will. Israel was to be a light to the nations and as they lived lives of obedience to God’s Law, He would bless them and the nations would see this blessing and be attracted to Israel and come to Israel to know God and see that He was the one true God. Corporate election didn’t guarantee that everybody in the nation was actually saved/regenerated.
6. Individual election is to actual salvation in Christ. “The adoption was put in Abraham’s hands. Nevertheless, because many of his descendants were cut off as rotten members, we must, in order that election may be effectual and truly enduring, ascend to the Head [Jesus], in whom the Heavenly Father has gathered His elect together, and has joined them to Himself by an indissoluble bond. So, indeed, God’s generous favor, which He has denied to others, has been displayed in the adoption of the race of Abraham; yet in the members of Christ a far more excellent power of grace appears, for, engrafted to their Head, they are never cut off from salvation.”
7. So here we need to distinguish between covenant and election. “The general [corporate] election of a people is not always firm and effectual: to those with whom God makes a covenant, He does not at once give the spirit of regeneration that would enable them to persevere in the covenant to the very end. Outward change is not the same as inward grace.” In other words, the covenant in and of itself is not effectual unto salvation, divine election is effectual unto salvation because it is according to God’s unchangeable plan.
8. Calvin’s summary: “As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction. We assert that, with respect to the elect, this plan was founded upon his freely given mercy, without regard to human worth; but by his just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible judgment He has barred the door of life to those whom he has given over to damnation.”

**Chapter 22: Confirmation of this doctrine from Scriptural Testimonies**

*Election Is Not From Divine Foreknowledge of Merit*

1. Today’s modern Arminian will say something like this, “God looks down the corridor of time and sees those who will believe in Him and on the basis of that, God elects such persons.” But if that’s the case, what is the basis of election?
2. Ephesians 1:4-5 – “He [the Father] chose [elected] us in Him [Jesus] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love **5**He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will”
3. Romans 11:5-6 – “So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. **6**But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”
4. John 10:25-29 – “Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, **26**but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. **27**My sheep [and nobody else] hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. **28**I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29**My Father, who has given them [the sheep] to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”
5. For other verses along the same thought see: 2 Timothy 1:9, Romans 9-11, & John 13:18.

*Election and Reprobation Not Based on Works*

1. John 6:37 – “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”
2. John 6:44 – “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.”
3. John 17:9 – “I am praying for them [those that believe in Jesus]. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours [the Father].”
4. So election is never based on works but solely upon the pleasure, will, and purpose of God the Father. Reprobation or “God leaving people in the state of deadness in their sins” is never based on works either, but solely in the will, purpose, and plan of God the Father.
5. Romans 9:10-13 – “And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, **11**though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— **12**she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ **13**As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’”
6. Romans 9:21 – “Has the potter [God] no right over the clay [Human beings], to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?”

*A Helpful Analogy*

1. Marriage: Do you love your spouse the same way you love other men/women? No! You love your spouse in a special way that differs from the way you love your children, other extended family members, your church family, neighbors, and co-workers. Your love for your spouse is exclusively for him/her and is a special love. So the Father loves His elect with a special, exclusive love. He doesn’t have to love all people equally just like we don’t love all people equally. Yet, we wouldn’t say our marriage love is unfair, would we?