

## John Calvin On Predestination

The covenant of life is not preached equally to all, and amongst those to whom it is preached, it does not always meet with the same acceptance either constantly or in equal degree. In this diversity the unsearchable depths of God's judgment are made known. For there is no doubt that this variety is subordinate to the will of God's eternal election. It is clear that salvation is freely offered to some while others are barred from access to it, on account of God's pleasure, this raises some major and difficult questions. They can be explained only when election and predestination are rightly understood. Many find this a puzzling subject, in that it seems to be nothing less than capricious that out of the human community some should be predestined to salvation, others to destruction. But it will become clear in the following discussion that such confusion is needless. In any case, the complexity of this matter makes known both the usefulness of this doctrine and also the very sweet fruit which it brings. We shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from God's free mercy until we come to know his eternal election, which casts light on God's grace of God being by this comparison: he does not indiscriminately adopt all to the hope of salvation, but gives to some what he denies to others.

Predestination, by which God adopts some to the hope of life, and sentences others to eternal death, is denied by no one who wishes to be thought of as pious. But there are many, especially those who make foreknowledge its cause, who surround it with all kinds of petty objections. Both doctrines are indeed to be located within God, but subjecting one to the other is absurd. In attributing foreknowledge to God, we mean that all things always have been, and always will be, under God's eyes, so that there is nothing future or past to this knowledge, but all things are present - present in such a way that God not only conceives them through ideas, as we have before us those things which our minds remember, but God truly looks upon them and discerns them as things placed before God. And this foreknowledge is extended throughout the universe to every creature. We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which God determined what God willed to become of each human being. For all are not created in equal condition; but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any person has been directed to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him or her as predestined to life or to death.

. . . We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on his free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment. In regard to the elect, we regard calling as the evidence of election, and justification as another symbol of its manifestation, until it is fully accomplished by the attainment of glory. But as the Lord seals his elect by calling and justification, so by excluding the reprobate either from the knowledge of his name or the sanctification of his Spirit, he by these marks in a manner discloses the judgment which awaits them.

Institutes of the Christian Religion Book 3 Chapter 21