

Predestined for Free Will ©
by David Bennett

God created man in his own image... Genesis 1:27 NIV

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Genesis 1:31 NIV

I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse: therefore choose life Deuteronomy 30:19

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:15 NIV

God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes. Ecclesiastes 7:29 NIV

Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waiver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him, but if Baal is god, follow him. 1 King 18:21

I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen. You did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me. Isaiah 65:12

This is what the LORD says...For they have forsaken me ...They have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Baal--something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind. Jeremiah 19:1-5 (also see Jeremiah 7:30-31)

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD – Jeremiah 29:13-14

Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? Ezekiel 18:23

Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. Jonah 2:8 (NIV)

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing". Matthew 23:37 & Luke 13:34

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:16-17 NIV

But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Luke 13:3b NIV

God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. Acts 17:27

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Romans 3:22-24 NIV

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. Romans 5:18

...if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9 NIV

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. Titus 2:11

...humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. --James 1:21

...Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20

For additional information regarding Calvinism and Reformed Theology see <http://www.freewill-predestination.com>

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. James 4:8 NSAB

WHAT IS PREDESTINATION?

Predestination is doctrine which teaches that God predetermined who would go to heaven and who would spend eternity in hell. Furthermore, it teaches that each person has absolutely no choice in accepting or rejecting salvation through Christ. Every move you make and everything that happens to you, good or bad, was predetermined by God. If you reject Christ it is because you never had a chance or option to believe.

Those who espouse predestination claim that if we have the free will to accept God's salvation then we have earned our way into heaven. Therefore we're not saved by grace but by our own merit-- we caused our own salvation, not God.

Belief in predestination is generally referred to as *Calvinism* or *Reformed Theology*.

- **John Calvin (1509-1564):**
 - *God preordained, for his own glory and the display of His attributes of mercy and justice, a part of the human race, without any merit of their own, to eternal salvation, and another part, in just punishment of their sin, to eternal damnation.*
 - *We proved above that something not subject to free choice is nevertheless voluntarily done.¹*
 - *Some are predestined to salvation, others to damnation²*
 - *God "saves whom he wills of his mere good pleasure"³*
 - *Regarding the lost: "it was his good pleasure to doom to destruction."⁴*
 - *Since the disposition of all things is in the hands of God and he can give life or death at his pleasure, he dispenses and ordains by his judgment that some, from their mother's womb, are destined irrevocably to eternal death in order to glorify his name in their perdition.⁵*
 - *All are not created on equal terms, but some are predestined to eternal life, others to eternal damnation...⁶*
- **Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531)** was the leader of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland, and founder of the Swiss Reformed Churches. Zwingli viewed God as the cause of all human sin. A Reformed Theology website said, "*Zwingli's understanding of predestination as indistinguishable from providence, logically inclines him to the conclusion that God is the cause of human sin.*"⁷
- **Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892):** *I believe that nothing happens apart from divine determination and decree. We shall never be able to escape from the doctrine of divine predestination - the doctrine that God has foreordained certain people unto eternal life.*⁸

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

- **Lorraine Boettner (1901-1990):** *Even the fall of Adam, and through him the fall of the race, was not by chance or accident, but was so ordained in the secret counsels of God.* (44)
- **Edwin Palmer:** *“All things that happen in all the world at any time and in all history—whether inorganic matter, vegetation, animal, man or angels (both good and evil ones—come to pass because God ordained them, Even sin—the fall of the devil from heaven, the fall of Adam, and every evil thought, word, and deed in all of history.”*⁹
- **R.C. Sproul, Jr.:** *“...God desired for man to fall into sin...God created sin.”*¹⁰

WHAT IS FREE WILL?

Free will teaches that when presented with the facts of God’s plan for salvation that every individual person has a choice to make, to either accept or reject God’s gift of salvation. God desires that *every person* accept His gift. What was predestined was God’s *plan for salvation* through Jesus for those who accept it. Therefore if you accept that Jesus died for your sins and you have made Him Lord of your life then you are a part of the predetermined plan.

- **Jesus Christ:** *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*¹¹
- **Apostle Peter:** *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*¹²
- **Apostle Paul:** *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.*¹³
- **Apostle Paul:** *This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved.*¹⁴

Calvinists claim that their position is proven by *early church leaders* and then quote Augustine who lived from 354 to 430 AD. What do even *earlier* church leaders say about free will? Let’s look at a few. Some of these men were disciples directly by one or two of the original twelve apostles or by men the original disciples taught and mentored.

Ignatius of Antioch- Died between 98 and 110 AD. Ignatius was likely a disciple of both Apostles Peter and John and was martyred (Ignatius was condemned to fight wild beasts in the Coliseum) in Rome. Seven of his letters have survived to this day; he is generally considered to be one of the Apostolic Fathers (the earliest authoritative group of the Church Fathers):

- *If any one is truly religious, he is a man of God; but if he is irreligious, he is a man of the devil, made such, not by nature, but by his own choice.*¹⁵

Polycarp- c. 69 AD-c. 155 AD. Martyred by being burned at the stake in his 87th year. Polycarp had been a disciple of John (there is debate as whether this John was the son of Zebedee, or John the Presbyter (Lake 1912)).¹⁶ I list Polycarp here not for any particular quote but because he was a teacher of Irenaeus, whom I do quote:

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

- *But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom...*¹⁷

Irenaeus- (ca. 130-202) - Irenaeus, who was also a martyr, was taught by Polycarp and his writings were formative in the early development of Christian theology. About 180 AD Irenaeus wrote *Against Heresies Book IV*, against ideas that would later become aspects of Calvinist and Reformed Theology in its denial of the free will as you can see in the following summaries:

- *Men are Possessed of Free Will, and Endowed with the Faculty of Making a Choice. It is Not True, Therefore, that Some are by Nature Good, and Others Bad.*¹⁸
- *Man is Endowed with the Faculty of Distinguishing Good and Evil; So That, Without Compulsion, He Has the Power, by His Own Will and Choice, to Perform God's Commandments, by Doing Which He Avoids the Evils Prepared for the Rebellious.*¹⁹

Justin Martyr- c. 100/114AD – c. 162/168 AD. He was another early Christian apologist (defender) of the faith and was martyred by beheading. His works represent the earliest surviving Christian apologies of notable size:

- *Man acts by his own free will and not by fate.*²⁰
- *We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishments, chastisements, and rewards are rendered according to the merit of each man's actions. Otherwise, if all things happen by fate, then nothing is in our own power. For if it be predestined that one man be good and another man evil, then the first is not deserving of praise or the other to be blamed. Unless humans have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions-whatever they may be.... For neither would a man be worthy of reward or praise if he did not of himself choose the good, but was merely created for that end. Likewise, if a man were evil, he would not deserve punishment, since he was not evil of himself, being unable to do anything else than what he was made for.*²¹
- *But that you may not have a pretext for saying that Christ must have been crucified, and that those who transgressed must have been among your nation, and that the matter could not have been otherwise, I said briefly by anticipation, that God, wishing men and angels to follow His will, resolved to create them free to do righteousness; possessing reason, that they may know by whom they are created, and through whom they, not existing formerly, do now exist; and with a law that they should be judged by Him, if they do anything contrary to right reason: and of ourselves we, men and angels, shall be convicted of having acted sinfully, unless we repent beforehand. But if the word of God foretells that some angels and men shall be certainly punished, it did so because it foreknew that they would be unchangeably [wicked], but not because God had created them so.*²²

Clement of Alexandria (190 AD)

- *A man by himself working and toiling at freedom from sinful desires achieves nothing. But if he plainly shows himself to be very eager and earnest about this, he attains it by the addition of the power of God. God works together with willing souls. But if the*

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

*person abandons his eagerness, the spirit from God is also restrained. To save the unwilling is the act of one using compulsion; but to save the willing, that of one showing grace.*²³

- *Neither praise nor condemnation, neither rewards nor punishments, are right if the soul does not have the power of choice and avoidance, if evil is involuntary.*²⁴

Archelaus (250-300 AD)

- *All the creatures that God made, He made very good. And He gave to every individual the sense of free will, by which standard He also instituted the law of judgment.... And certainly whoever will, may keep the commandments. Whoever despises them and turns aside to what is contrary to them, shall yet without doubt have to face this law of judgment.... There can be no doubt that every individual, in using his own proper power of will, may shape his course in whatever direction he pleases.*²⁵

Methodius (260-315 AD)

- *Those [pagans] who decide that man does not have free will, but say that he is governed by the unavoidable necessities of fate, are guilty of impiety toward God Himself, making Him out to be the cause and author of human evils*²⁶

I could have quoted more early church leaders but the point is made. Lest you think I merely cherry picked favorable quotes to make my point consider what Calvinist Loraine Boettner has to say about the early church leaders. Boettner, author of *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* acknowledges that the early church fathers did not ascribe to the doctrine of predestination:

*“It may occasion some surprise to discover that the doctrine of Predestination was not made a matter of special study until near the end of the fourth century.... They of course taught that salvation was through Christ; yet they assumed that man had full power to accept or reject the gospel. Some of their writings contain passages in which the sovereignty of God is recognized; yet along side of those are others which teach the absolute freedom of the human will. Since they could not reconcile the two they would have denied the doctrine of Predestination... They taught a kind of synergism in which there was a co-operation between grace and free will...”*²⁷

Regarding what we now call the doctrine of predestination Boettner went on to say, *“This cardinal truth of Christianity was first clearly seen by Augustine...”* Augustine lived from 354 – 430 A.D., well after the church fathers quoted above.

Boettner wasn't alone in his conclusion that prior to Augustine there really weren't any who espoused a doctrine of predestination of a certain elect few. In 1882 James Morrison wrote in *The Extent of Atonement* about an English Bishop, John Davenant (1572-1641), who was present at the Synod of Dort in 1618. Bishop Davenant wrote:

It may be truly said before Augustine and Pelagius, there was no question concerning the death of Christ, whether it was to be extended to all mankind, or to be confined only to the elect. For the Fathers... not a word (that I know of) occurs among them of the exclusion of any persons by the decree of God. They agree that it is actually beneficial to those only who believe, yet everywhere confess that Christ died in behalf of all mankind...

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

Augustine died in AD 429, and up to his time, at least, there is not the slightest evidence that any Christian ever dreamed of a propitiation for the elect alone. Even after him, the doctrine of limited propitiation was but slowly propagated, and for long but partially received.

In other words, according to Reformed Theology, the early church fathers, men who studied under the original Apostles and Disciples or their students, did not understand basic Christian doctrine. Apparently the world would have to wait nearly 400 years for this revelation! They are in effect saying that Christ's work and the Scriptures were not understood by the early Christians. It required some special revelation of hidden truth to special people centuries later. Isn't that Gnosticism?

What we see is that Calvinists would rather put their trust in doctrine developed centuries after Jesus, the Apostles and the early church fathers, by a man who did not study with those closest to the source. Biblical historians and scholars will tell you the closer one gets to the original source, the more likely one is to get accurate doctrine from those who were there. The reverse is true, the farther away you get from those who were there, the more likely that errors are to develop in doctrine.

There is about a 400 year jump between the original Apostles and their students until Augustine revealed "*the truth*"; then you had another 1,100 years until men like John Calvin came along to develop and enforce this doctrine.

Dave Hunt sums it up nicely:

'The huge difference between the biblical God and the Calvinist God is clear. The biblical God punishes men for rejecting the salvation He provided for everyone, which all could have accepted by their free will-and punishes them for their sins, which are contrary to His will, none of which they had to commit but chose to do so.

'But the Calvinist God condemns to hell those whom He could save if He so desired but for whom He sovereignly chose not even to have Christ die and from whom He deliberately withholds the salvation He pretends to offer them—and punishes them for not accepting. Yes, that's a huge difference.'

The Berean Call, July 2007 Q & A

EARLY JEWISH THOUGHT

Jewish philosophy stresses that free will is a product of the intrinsic human soul and is closely linked with the concept of reward and punishment, based on the Torah itself:

I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse: therefore choose life

Deuteronomy 30:19

The 12-volume Jewish Encyclopedia, which was originally published between 1901-1906.

FREE WILL: The doctrine that volition is self-originating and unpredictable. That man is free to choose between certain courses of conduct was regarded by rabbinical Judaism as a fundamental principle of the Jewish religion. Although generally following the ethical system of the Stoics, Philo, influenced by Judaism, professed the doctrine of free will ("Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis," ed. Mangey, p. 279), and Josephus states that the Phar-

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

isees maintained it against both the Sadducees, who attributed everything to chance, and the Essenes, who ascribed all to predestination and divine providence ("Ant." xiii. 5, § 9; xviii. 1, § 5). "All is in the hands of God except the fear of God" is an undisputed maxim of the Talmud (Ber. 33b; Niddah 16b).

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=363&letter=F&search=free will>

PREDESTINATION: The belief that the destiny of man is determined beforehand by God. "Predestination" in this sense is not to be confounded with the term "preordination," applied to the moral agents as predetermining either election to eternal life or reprobation. This latter view of predestination, held by Christian and Mohammedan theologians, is foreign to Judaism...

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=503&letter=P&search=free will>

It is further understood that in order for Man to have true free choice, he must not only have inner free will, but also an environment in which a choice between obedience and disobedience exists. God thus created the world such that both good and evil can operate freely.²⁸

Free will acknowledges that God is active in our lives and that He does intervene and cause certain things to happen as evidenced by the prophecies in the scriptures. Other things that happen to us are a result of choices we make. While yet other events happen because of sin that is in the world, we can't control the events, we can control how we react to them. Free will teaches that because God is sovereign and active in our lives He can use any event for our benefit, even those events He does not directly cause to occur.

IS THERE A MIDDLE GROUND?

I've been told emphatically by a friend I'll call Fred, who is a bi-vocational Reformed Theology pastor, "there is no middle ground."

Loraine Boettner, author of *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* claims "*there is no consistent middle ground between Calvinism and Atheism.*"

DOES IT MATTER?

There are two reasons as I see it that it matters:

a) If a person's salvation is already determined there is no real point in being proactive in the faith or urgency in preaching the Gospel. If your neighbor is unsaved, Reformed Theology tells you that they will come to know Jesus or spend eternity in hell whether you tell them about God's plan for salvation or not.

b) Calvinists believe that if you don't believe in predestination it is because the Holy Spirit has chosen not to reveal the truth of predestination to you. The Holy Spirit reveals the truth of predestination to real believers so you must not be a real believer if you believe in free will.

Why do Calvinists even bother to debate the issue? After all, if Calvinists are correct then those believing in *Calvinism* and those believing in *Free Will* were predestined to have those beliefs, there is no basis for argument. Yet there seem to be more books and more web sites arguing the case for *predestination* than there are in favor of *free will*. Many Calvinist sites verge on the militant, dismissing any argument for free will out of hand. Many Calvinist websites I've come

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

across call freewill dangerous to true faith. If, as Loraine Boettner claims, “*there are no valid arguments for free will*” then why devote so much time to arguing the case for predestination?

Again, does it matter? It shouldn't be anything more than a difference in opinion. However, John Calvin had people executed who denied predestination and many prominent modern day Calvinists claim that Calvinism “*is the Gospel,*” the implication is if you reject Calvinism you also reject the Gospel, therefore you are not saved.

According to Calvinism the *good news* of the Gospel is not good news for everyone... The Reformed Theology Gospel is essentially this:

God only loves and saves those whom He chooses to love and save. Everyone else God specifically created to spend in hell, for eternal torment and damnation even though they never had the chance or option to accept God's gift of salvation. This is “God's good pleasure.” God demonstrates His Glory when he predestines certain people to destruction.

In case you think I'm exaggerating then read from John Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion*:

- God “*saves whom he wills of his mere good pleasure*”²⁹
- “*Those, therefore, whom God passes by he reprobates, and that for no other cause but because he is pleased to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines to his children...*”³⁰
- Regarding the lost “*it was his good pleasure to doom to destruction...*”³¹
- “*But if all whom the Lord predestined to death are naturally liable to sentence of death, of what injustice, pray, do they complain...because by his eternal providence they were before their birth doomed to perpetual destruction... what will they be able to mutter against their defense?*”³²
- “*Now since the arrangement of all things is in the hand of God...He arranges... that individuals are born, who are doomed from the womb to certain death, and are to glorify him by their destruction...*”³³
- “*...by his eternal providence they were before their birth doomed to eternal destruction*”³⁴

This is in contrast with the Gospel I know. *The Gospel* means *the good news*, which is that God created us to have a personal relationship with Him and cares for each individual person:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” John 3:16-17

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. Romans 1:16

THE PROBLEM WITH PREDESTINATION

According to Reformed Theology when someone, lets call her Molly, accepted Christ it wasn't made of her own free will, but because God created her specifically to accept Christ, without a choice.

Now suppose Molly's grown son dies without accepting Christ. Reformed Theology tells us that God created Molly's son specifically to spend eternity separated from God, in hell. Therefore all the years of prayer, anguish and hope that Molly's son would someday accept Christ was a waste of time.

It's one thing to have a loved one that rejects God because of his own choice, but it is another to believe that person never had a chance because God never *permitted* or *allowed* them a chance.

To follow predestination to its logical conclusion we should not feel any sense of grief or sadness when an unsaved friend or relative dies and spends eternity in hell. Rather we should rejoice because the person is going to hell, just as God intended.

IN THE BEGINNING... IT WAS VERY GOOD

We see in the first chapter of Genesis that God created *everything* and *everything* He created was *good*.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Genesis 1:31 NIV

What did God create that was not good? Nothing!

We're also told that "*God created man in His image*". The Bible tells us God created man, male and female, and *God blessed them* (Genesis 1:28). Nowhere in the Genesis account does it tell us that God created *anyone* specifically for eternal damnation.

Sin, Rebellion and Evil

God did not create the world to destroy part of it. That is something we brought on ourselves.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:17 NIV

Sin: Everything God created was good, so how did sin enter the world? Apostles Paul and John tell us that sin entered the world through Adam and that God did not create sin.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12 NIV

...But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him... the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God... 1 John 3:5-9 NASB

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

God did not cause Adam to disobey Him; otherwise man wouldn't have been created in God's image. The Bible tells us that God hates sin and that sin can't enter heaven. Solomon wrote

This only have I found: God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes. **Ecclesiastes 7:29** NIV

Reformed Theology says "God created us therefore whatever He does is just, whether we like it or not." Yes, that is true, however, I don't accept their definition of *just* nor do I believe that God is that capricious or arbitrary. God sets the standards for us those standards are knowable.

A *just* parent cannot force his child to eat a cupcake and then slap the tar out of him for eating it. It's a different case when the parent says, "Don't eat the cupcake", then if the child thinks about it and says to himself, "Dad really didn't mean he'd punish me if I did eat it" or "I don't care what Dad says, I make my own decisions and I am eating the cupcake anyway." Then the resulting punishment is just.

Having free will means bad things are going to happen as a result of living in a fallen world.

When a loved one gets sick, or dies in a traffic accident, or loses their job, or just gets a cold many tend to say "it's God's will." It is certainly a convenient and uncomplicated explanation. If one means its God's will because He didn't prevent it, this is different than saying God caused it to happen. That God *didn't prevent* it doesn't mean He *caused* it to happen. Many calamities are a consequence of living in a sinful fallen world of our own making. It is a consequence of having free will. Otherwise one would have to conclude that God causes every rape, every murder, and every starving child. The truth is because God can use any incident for His glory, He doesn't have to cause it to use it. In the same way, regardless of what befalls us, God expects us to react a certain way:

...Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...
Philippians 1:27 NIV

Rebellion: Did God create Lucifer/Satan, specifically to rebel and take a third of the angels with him? Because God is sovereign, He could have prevented the possibility of the rebellion from ever happening. Again, that God didn't *prevent* it doesn't mean He *caused* it to happen. God allowed it because He allowed free will.

Evil: Did God create evil?

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." **Genesis 2:16-17** NIV

And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:22 NIV

You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; **Psalms 5:4** NIV

The LORD loves righteousness and justice **Psalms 33:5** NIV

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

I have been told by my Reformed Theology friends that since God is *sovereign* over all it is presumptuous for us to call *anything* evil. They tell me since we cannot know God's mind and God causes all things as part of His sovereign plan, then nothing is really evil, there is no difference between good and evil. Yet God's sovereignty is not threatened by free will and He tells us we can distinguish between good and evil.

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil **Isaiah 5:20**

Josh McDowell had the following to say about creation, evil, and God's love for us:

The Scriptures make it plain that God did not create the world in the state in which it is now, but evil came as a result of the selfishness of man. The Bible says that God is a God of love and He desired to create a person and eventually a race that would love Him. But genuine love cannot exist unless freely given -- through free choice God allows us to accept His love or to reject it.

This choice made the possibility of evil a reality. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they did not choose something God created, but, by their choice, they brought evil into the world. God is neither evil nor did He create evil. Man brought evil upon himself by selfishly choosing his own way apart from God's way. ³⁵

GOD LOVES US

God created us out of love for a purpose. The purpose is God wants a relationship with us. A relationship cannot be one-sided where the interaction of one side is all controlled by the other side. Imagine creating a sock-puppet with button-eyes and carrying on both sides of a conversation with it. How satisfying is it for you as a creator to make up both sides of the dialog?

If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your forefathers.

Deuteronomy 7:12 NIV

... the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. **John 16:27** NIV

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. **1 John 4:8** NIV

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **1 John 4:10** NIV

God created man for fellowship, not to keep us in a fishbowl as a pet, in a cell as a prisoner, or preprogrammed to be obedient robots. If God did, there would be no relationship.

God, from the beginning, had a plan to redeem mankind and built into that plan were choices and consequences for man. God desires fellowship with all mankind, not just certain people. Yet God knows that not all people are going to reciprocate because of the freedoms He gave us.

WE ANGER GOD

We know that God cares for us because He created us. We also know He loves us because the Bible says God gave His Son for our salvation. There is another emotion that shows that man was created with free will. That emotion is *anger*. The Old Testament says that God was angry

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

with many people, even His own chosen people, the Israelites. Some He punished, some He relented from punishing at the pleading of people like Moses and others. If God preordained everything then why would He be angry if people and nations did exactly what they were designed by Him to do? God is sovereign and almighty therefore no one could oppose Him or disobey Him unless they were given free will.

In Genesis 1, God said *everything* He created was good. In chapter 6 God flooded the earth.

Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever... The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

Genesis 6:3;6 NIV

Sometime later after Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt they rebelled several times, even breaking the first and second commandments by creating and worshipping a golden calf:

"I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them..." Exodus 32:9-10 NIV

...For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways." Psalm 95:10 NIV

...When God heard them, he was very angry; he rejected Israel completely. Psalm 78:59

...they provoked the LORD to anger by their wicked deeds... Psalm 106:29 NIV

That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' Hebrews 3:10 NIV

And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. Hebrews 3:17-19 NIV

Several writers in Psalm wrote about God's anger:

How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever? Psalm 79:5 NIV

Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? Psalm 85:5 NIV

Throughout 2 Kings we're told the Lord was angry with the northern nation of Israel and removed them entirely leaving only the southern nation Judah. Later Judah too would fall away.

...Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away... Isaiah 12:1 NIV

Later His anger against Israel subsided:

The LORD said to me, "Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah. Go, proclaim this message toward the north: "'Return, faithless Israel,' declares the LORD,

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

'I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful,' declares the LORD, 'I will not be angry forever. Jeremiah 3:11-12 NIV

The prophets wrote about God's anger, punishment, and reconciliation:

The LORD is angry with all nations... Isaiah 34:2 NIV

When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath. Jeremiah 10:10 NIV

"The LORD was very angry with your forefathers Zechariah 1:2 NIV

Then the angel of the LORD said, "LORD Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which you have been angry with these seventy years?" Zechariah 1:12 NIV

They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry. Zechariah 7:12 NIV

We have seen that *we cause* God to be angry with us. God did not create us to tick Him off because He would not be angry if we did what we were created by Him to do. God did not create us to tick Him off. Let's follow Reformed Theology logic: we are not as great as God and we cannot *make* Him do anything. Therefore, if God becomes angry with us it is because He created us to anger Him.

GOD'S GIFT, FAITH, EXCUSES, REPENTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Gift: The Bible calls salvation a *gift*. A gift without acceptance is not a gift. If you force a gift on the receiver it is no longer a gift. In business law to have a legally binding contract or a legal transaction you have to have an *offer* and an *acceptance*. Another element to have a legally binding transaction you must also have *consideration*, that is, something of value has to be given. In the case of our salvation, Jesus paid the price.

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! --Romans 5:15 NIV

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. --Romans 6:23 NIV

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- Ephesians 2:8 NIV

There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words-- John 12:48

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. --James 1:21 NIV

During a question and answer episode on a J. Vernon McGee radio program a person asked "if Jesus died for everyone why is it that just those who believe in Jesus are saved?" McGee's

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

answer: “He died for all, but you have to accept the pardon that He paid in order for it to become yours. I’m told that in Pennsylvania there was a prisoner who was granted a pardon by the governor, and he refused to accept it. They took it to court, and the judgment was that a pardon could be granted but it wasn’t valid until it was accepted by the individual. Now, there’s a pardon for every sinner on top side of this earth, but you have to call for it by faith before it becomes yours.”

Faith: In Romans 4 we’re told that it was *by faith* that Abraham was credited with being righteous. It is faith by which all are saved.

Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” --Luke 7:50 NIV

I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. --Acts 20:21 NIV

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. --Romans 3:22-25 NIV

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. --Galatians 3:13-14 NIV

Faith requires an action on our part, otherwise it is not faith. If *faith* was a pre-programmed action then it wouldn’t be faith.

Excuse: My Calvinist friend Fred used as an argument for Reformed Theology that the Bible says we are all *without excuse*. True and that helps to make my case:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. Romans 1:18-20 NASB

“*Without excuse*” implies choice and consequence. If God created certain men to be condemned to hell then they had no choice and they *do* have an excuse. The excuse is: *God created me that way and I had no choice to either accept or reject God.*

Fred also told me, “*I read the bible to teach human responsibility, not free will.*” Without free will there is no responsibility. If you accept predestination then you rule out responsibility. Throughout the Bible God made conditions for individuals and groups, which they had free will to obey or reject.

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

“The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways.” Deuteronomy 28:9 NIV

“But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” Joshua 24:15 NIV

“Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waiver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him, but if Baal is god, follow him.” 1 King 18:21

Repentance: Repentance involves a conscious change on our part. It must be sincere; therefore it must also be made freely by our own choice.

Therefore, thus says the LORD, “If you return, then I will restore you— Jeremiah 15:19 NASB

Thus says the Lord GOD, “Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations. Ezekiel 14:6 NASB

Say to them, “‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways!’ Ezekiel 33:11 NIV

But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Luke 13:3 NIV

...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9 NIV

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

TESTING

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

“When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.” James 1:12-14 NIV

If one cannot pass or fail a test because God fixed the outcome, then it is no longer a test, but a pointless exercise. A test has a purpose and both *success* and *failure* must both be an option.

The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked... Psalm 5:11 NASB

Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind... Psalm 26:2 NIV

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

And we are told the Israelites were in the desert for 40 years not only as punishment but they were also being tested. God was testing them to know what was in their hearts.

Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. Deuteronomy 8:2 NIV

According to Calvinism God already predestined the outcome, so why test them? God was testing them, allowing them to keep His commands or not, something that could not be done without free will.

A FEW ARGUMENTS USED BY CALVINISTS

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of predestination arguments.

Calvinist Argument #1: *Free will denies God's Sovereignty*

Reformed Theology claims that those who believe in free will deny, or at the very least, limit God's sovereignty. As to denying God's sovereignty Reformed Theology has it backwards. God's sovereignty is limited by those who say that God can only exercise His will by predetermining who will end up in heaven or in hell by predetermining every action. The fact is because God is all-powerful He can ensure His plans are fulfilled *and* allow man free will.

Looking back at the discussion on Genesis we know that:

- a. Everything God created was good therefore God did not create sin.
- b. Sin entered into the world when man sinned of his own volition.

Even though God is sovereign He did not prevent man from sinning or the effects of sin. Having the capability to sin doesn't make us greater than the Creator which is what Calvinists claim if we have free will. That He *could have* prevented sin but didn't doesn't weaken God's position with respect to sovereignty and neither does allowing us free will. God allowed His perfect creation to become corrupted, but rather than holler "Cut!" and make us do the scene over God allowed His creation to continue.

Why did God allow sin in His creation? The answer is that to prevent sin and its effects would be to prevent free will. Therefore the fact that sin and its consequences exists is proof that we have been given free will. Otherwise God would either have created a perfect world and kept it perfect or he would have prevented the effects of sin from marring His creation once we messed it up.

Free will does not negate God's sovereign will, nor does it deny that God has a plan for mankind. That God allows us free will is demonstrated by His paying *the* price for sin for us all. All we have to do is accept Him.

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. Romans 8:3

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:2

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. James 1:21

Calvinist Argument #2: *God chose us, we didn't choose Him*

You did not choose Me, but I chose you. John 15:16 NIV

Jesus is talking specifically to His disciples. In Jesus' day men who wanted to study and learn from a rabbi *usually* chose which rabbi they wanted to follow and emulate. Jesus is reminding them that *He* chose them.

Another way to look at this verse which is equally valid is God chose man over all His creation from the beginning, to have fellowship with Him. So yes, "God did choose us, we did not choose Him."

Calvinist Argument # 3: *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*

...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved... Ephesians 1:4-6 NASB

At first glance it *appears* that Paul is saying that those who are believers were predestinated for salvation. However, Paul is talking about *the plan* that God has for us, *through Jesus Christ*. As stated previously, God created (and therefore chose us) to have a relationship with Him.

Calvinist Argument # 4: *The Bible does not teach free will*

Fred told me the Bible does not teach free will as the term *free will* is not specifically mentioned. Fred's claim that *free will* is not *specifically* mentioned is incorrect. For one thing that depends on which translation you're using. Consider the following:

Four different translations of the Bible, NIV, NKJV, KJV, and NASB on the following variations of *predestination* reveals how often derivatives of the term *predestination* are used:

Predestine	NIV=0	NKJV=0	KJV=0	NASB=0
Predestinate	NIV=0	NKJV=0	KJV=2 *	NASB=0
Predestination	NIV=0	NKJV=0	KJV=0	NASB=0
Predestined	NIV=4*	NKJV=4*	KJV=0	NASB=6*

* = None of the references were in the Old Testament or in the Gospels.

The point here is not that *predestination* or the concept is or is not in the Bible, but that it is not a widely used term. That the term is not widely used proves nothing one way or the other. So to say that the term *free will* is not used or is used infrequently is a moot point.

Case in point -the *Trinity* is not *specifically* mentioned in the Bible yet we are able to infer it when considering the Bible as a whole. From Genesis to Revelation the concept but not the actual term is there. The same with free will, just because the term may not be there it doesn't mean the concept isn't.

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

However, free will *is* specifically mentioned. Read Paul's letter to Philemon, it is a wonderful illustration of how God wants us to do things for Him, of our own volition, out of our love for Him. Not because we have no choice in the matter, even though He *could* make or force us to.

In this letter Paul is writing to his friend, and brother in Christ, Philemon, to let him know that Paul is returning something that belongs to him, his slave Onesimus who has now accepted Jesus for his salvation. Paul tells Philemon how useful Onesimus has been to him and how he wants Philemon to treat Onesimus not as a slave but as a brother in Christ. Paul appeals to Philemon that if he has any regard for Paul that he should accept Onesimus the same way he would accept Paul:

Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do that which is proper, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you...but without your consent I did not want to do anything, that your goodness should not be as it were by compulsion, but of your own free will. Philemon 1:8, 9, 14 NASB

It was out of *love* that Paul didn't force Philemon to free Onesimus. By virtue of Paul's position in the Church he could have easily kept Onesimus with him or he could have commanded and forced Philemon to free Onesimus and not punish him for running off.

Paul also reminds Philemon he was also indebted to Paul for leading him to salvation through Christ. Paul could have easily forced Philemon to do the right thing, but how much better for everyone involved, Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus, that Philemon do so of his own free will. It is always better to do things voluntarily, out of love, than by forced compulsion.

Calvinist Argument # 5: *We were predestined according to His good pleasure*

...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will-- Ephesians 1:5 NKJV

In his commentary John Wesley had this to say about Ephesians 1:5³⁶

- ***Having predestinated us to the adoption of sons*** = Having foreordained that all who afterwards believed should enjoy the dignity of being sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ.
- ***According to the good pleasure of his will*** = According to his free, fixed, unalterable purpose to confer this blessing on all those who should believe in Christ, and those only.

Calvinist Argument # 6: *God hardened Pharaoh's heart*

No doubt God knew what was in Pharaoh's heart. Here are a few different translations of the same passage:

- ***And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said. And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuseth to let the people go. Exodus 7:14 (King James Version)***
- ***And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said. So the LORD said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart is hard; he refuses to let the people go. Exodus 7:13-14 (New King James Version)***

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

- *Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go. Exodus 7:13-14 (New American Standard)*
- *Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go. Exodus 7:13-14 (New International Version)*

Regardless of the translation what God did was bring to the surface *what was already in Pharaoh's heart.*

Even accepting the King James translation that God hardened Pharaoh's heart it does not explain what that really means. J. Vernon McGee explains it well:

*Did God harden Pharaoh's heart? Yes, but in this way: If Pharaoh were a tenderhearted, sweet fellow who desired to turn to God and was happy to have Moses deliver the children of Israel because Pharaoh wanted to do something for them, then it was mean of God to harden the heart of this wonderful Pharaoh. If that is the way you read it, friends, you are not reading it right. **The hardening is a figurative word, which can mean twisting, as with a rope. It means God twisted the heart of Pharaoh. He was going to squeeze out what was in it. God forced him to do the thing he really wanted to do. God's part in this was to bring to the surface that which was already there.***³⁷

Calvinist Argument # 7: *No one seeks after God*

Fred wrote to me in an e-mail, "*The scripture says MULTIPLE times that 'No one seeks after God.'*"

Fred failed to provide a single reference for his claim so I looked it up. Actually the phrase '*No one seeks after God,*' is used **once**, not **multiple** times and is found in Romans 3:11 and Paul is partially quoting from Psalm 14:1-3, 53:1-3, & Ecclesiastes 7:20. If you read these in context these passages Paul references say we're **all** sinners. No argument from me on that!

The Bible does tell us, **multiple times**, that people are to seek Him: Exodus 18:15; Deuteronomy 4:29; 1 Kings 22:5; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 2 Chronicles 7:14; 2 Chronicles 15:2; 2 Chronicles 20:4; Psalm 9:10; Psalm 69:6; 69:32; Isaiah 55:6; Jeremiah 29:13 to specifically list a few.

- *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33 NIV*
- *Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8 NIV*
- *God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. Acts 17:27 NIV*
- *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6*

GOD LISTENS & JESUS INTERCEDES

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

We know God listens to prayers. Hezekiah and Moses are two examples where God said, “I am going to do X” and then yielded to the pleading of His people. There are other examples.

The Bible tells us Jesus is our intercessor. People who are predestined to be saved do not require an intercessor. In Reformed Theology what is the purpose of prayer or intercession? Is it just pretend listening and interceding?

*...God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men. **1 Timothy 2:3-6** NIV*

*Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. **Hebrews 7:25** NIV*

WHY DID JESUS NEED TO DIE?

Jesus did not die a painless, quick, clean, and honorable death. In taking on the sins of the world Jesus in fact suffered a very painful, lengthy, bloody and ignoble death.

If God was going to predestine some to be saved and not others, why set up a scenario where Jesus had to die a horrible death on the cross for the sins of the whole world? Why not just create perfect obedient people in the first place without the capability or opportunity to sin?

The reason is simple. Jesus died because God created us with free will. Jesus did not die for sins God created and predestined us to have, He died for the sins we willingly commit.

*He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- **John 1:10-12** NIV*

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life **John 3:16** NIV*

*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Romans 5:8***

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. **Titus 2:11.***

THE GREAT COMMISSION

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Matthew 28:19** NIV*

When I mentioned *the Great Commission* to Fred he told me the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel was not to save anyone, but *merely to be obedient* for the sake of the command. He said we do not actually accomplish anything as everyone has already been assigned an eternal place in either heaven or hell. That is not what the Bible says:

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. Acts 26:18 NIV

Reformed Theology mixed with the Great Commission is like having a doctor operate on a dead person. It may be obedient, but it's also a complete waste of time. Paul tells us differently:

Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. 1 Corinthians 9:16-17 NIV

Calvinists will tell you if you are *compelled* to do something then it isn't voluntarily. However Paul is saying he preaches the gospel voluntarily even though he is compelled. Being compelled doesn't mean by force and without a choice. Sometimes we are compelled by conviction or love.

THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

To explain his position on predestination Fred suggested I read *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* by Loraine Boettner, so I did. Reviewers hail this book as "*The Bible on Predestination.*" In the book Loraine Boettner decrees that there are *no* valid arguments to refute predestination/Calvinism, therefore rejecting all arguments for free will out of hand without consideration. Boettner was definitely not Berean...

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Acts 17:11

By refusing to examine the evidence for free will this tells me that Boettner is putting the writings of Calvin and his own on the same level as the Bible, as infallible and irrefutable.

Many of the general statements Boettner makes on the sovereignty of God I have no dispute with except, as stated above, I see *predestination*, and not *free will*, as limiting God's sovereignty.

Several times Boettner states that unbelief in predestination is unbelief in the Bible, referring to 1 Corinthians 2:14 to prove those who believe in free will are not convinced for a reason:

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14

The implication according to Boettner is those who reject predestination and don't believe in Calvinism *can't believe* because the Holy Spirit has not revealed the truth to them. Boettner states, "*To the non-elect, the Bible is a sealed book; and only the true Christian is it "given" to see and understand these things.*"³⁸ The logical conclusion, therefore, is unbelief in predestination doctrine is rejection of the scriptures, and therefore rejection of God, and Jesus.

1 Corinthians 2:14 has nothing to do with predestination but has everything to do with believing on Jesus and accepting Him. We receive the Holy Spirit when we believe and repent.

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:38-39

Calvinists love to pounce on the phrase *for all whom the Lord our God will call* claiming predestination proof. The call is for everyone, for black and white, for rich and poor, for people in North America and South America:

- *He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. John 1:7*
- *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16*
- *He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9.*
- *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. Titus 2:11*
- *For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. Romans 11:32*
- *[God] who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 1 Timothy 2:4*
- *[Jesus] ...gave himself as a ransom for all men. 1 Timothy 2:6*
- *...we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe. 1 Timothy 4:10*

The only way predestination works, as described in Boettner's book, is when Calvinists are allowed to determine the meaning of words like *believe, justice, faith, accept, gift, repent* and *all*. To Boettner *all* never means *all* when applied to free will, in which case it always refer to *all of a subset*, meaning predestined, even when it is clear from the context that *all* does mean *all*.

Boettner's rationalization of Predestination: "*Some have declared-- and rightly we believe-- that there is no consistent middle ground between Calvinism and Atheism.*"³⁹ He elaborates further, "*...As strict Calvinists we believe this to be the **only** system of Christian truth which is taught in the Bible and the only one that can be logically and respectfully defended before the world.*"

[Note: **only** was in bold by Boettner]

According to Boettner if you believe in free will you are not one of the elect and therefore not a believer. The logical conclusion is that those who believe in free will are destined to hell.

Many in Reformed Theology attempt to destroy those who believe in free will by misrepresenting them, sometimes in other areas. For example. Lorraine Boettner tries to discredit John Wesley by claiming Wesley "*was a believer in witchcraft.*"

Boettner had this to say of John Wesley, "*It should be said at this point that Wesley was a*

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

believer in witchcraft. Failure to believe in witches was looked upon by him as a concession to infidels and rationalists... In his Journal we read this report of a girl who was subject to fits: 'When old Doctor Alexander was asked what her disorder was, he answered, 'It is what formerly they would have called being bewitched.' And why should they not call it so now? Because the infidels have hooted it out of the world; and the complaisant Christians, in large number, have joined them in their cry.'"⁴⁰

Other Calvinists have jumped on the “*John Wesley believed in witchcraft*” bandwagon. Many Calvinist websites state, “*In his Journal, Wesley bemoaned the decline of superstition, the advance of human thought and the more peaceable reign of Christ on the earth, in the following words: ‘It is true likewise, that the English in general, and, indeed, most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere wives’ fables. I am sorry for it... The giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible!’*”⁴¹

OK, so John Wesley believed in witchcraft. *Believing* and *condoning* are not the same. Both John Calvin and Martin Luther believed in witchcraft as well and John Calvin had people burned at the stake on suspicious of witchcraft. Like John Wesley, they believed it existed and was dangerous.

As I said, John Wesley was neither condoning nor encouraging witchcraft. However, Wesley *did* believe that witchcraft was in the world and to deny it would deny the existence of evil and of Satan. I have seen surveys by Barna that show a significant number of Christians today, including many preachers, do not believe in a literal Satan or hell. That is what concerned Wesley.

In *Wesley’s Commentary* on the Bible *every* reference to *witchcraft*, while emphasizing that it is real and exists, condemned its practice. The Calvinists link of John Wesley to witchcraft is nothing more than an effort to discredit John Wesley for his belief in free will.

Loraine Boettner failed to mention Calvin and Luther’s position on witchcraft:

- Calvin and the other reformers (as well as Catholics) also believed in witchcraft.
- In 1522 Martin Luther, charged the “witches” with a litany of supernatural behaviors, including transformation into different animals.
- In 1545 twenty-three people were burned to death in Geneva under charges of practicing witchcraft and attempting to spread the plague.
- John Calvin mentions witches in the “Institutes of the Christian Religion.” Calvin was frank about his use of the witch craze to enforce the power of his own theocratic order, stating in the Institutes that he had brought up the entire issue “in order that we may be aroused and exhorted,” (i.e., rallied behind Calvin’s religious movement).

Apparently despite Boettner’s attempt to discredit John Wesley on the issue of witchcraft Wesley was in pretty good company!

I mention this to demonstrate the flawed logic that is used throughout Loraine Boettner’s 400-plus page book.

THE REFORMATION

The reformers were trying to show those who had grown up in the Roman Catholic church with the growing corruption and false teachings that they couldn't earn, pray, or pay their way into heaven. The reformers were trying to fight the corruption and emphasize the truth that one cannot do anything to earn salvation but accept God's gift by faith. Nothing else is required.

One point Loraine Boettner conveniently ignores is that during the Protestant Reformation not all of the early reformers always agreed with each other, sometimes their differences were bitter. For more history on the Reformation see *Radical Reformation vs. Magisterial Reformation* <http://www.freewill-predestination.com/radical.html>

There are points from the original Reform movement that we can all agree on:

sola gratia-we are saved from sin and destruction by the grace of God alone -- never by human works, no matter how good they might seem to be.

sola fide- our major responsibility toward God is to live through total faith alone in God and his "providence" or good care.

sola scriptura- all authoritative guidance for the Christian life comes from scripture alone -- not from human authority.

A PASSIONLESS GOD?

John Calvin commenting on Genesis 6:6 says that since we cannot comprehend [God] as he is, it is necessary that, for our sake, he should, in a certain sense, transform himself [by using figures of speech about himself]... Certainly God is not sorrowful or sad; but remains forever like himself in his celestial and happy repose: yet because it could not otherwise be known how great is God's hatred and detestation of sin, therefore the Spirit accommodates himself to our capacity....God was so offended by the atrocious wickedness of men [he speaks] as if they had wounded his heart with mortal grief.⁴⁰

Calvin contradicts himself on the one hand saying God "is not sorrowful or sad" but then goes on to say "God was so offended by the atrocious wickedness of men."

This idea of a God without passion is found in The Westminster Confession of Faith (II.1.):
"There is but one...true God, who is finite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts or passions..."

So many contradictions here... seems to be saying God hates the sin He (according to Reformed Theology) created and also saying that all the parts of God describing His emotions, glad, sad, anger, frustrated *are not real* and that God is either a passionless God or a perpetually happy God. Calvinism is full of contradictions and one doesn't have to look far to find them.

So which is it? God has no passion? God is eternally happy? Is the Bible erroneous when God says He gets angry or saddened by us?

I suppose if Calvinism were right that it would take a passionless God to create people for destruction for His own good pleasure... though it sounds more like Satan to me.

CONCLUSION

There are some who don't want to get involved in this debate partly because it is divisive and partly because they think the discussion is pointless because "you can prove anything by selecting the right Bible scripture." True enough but that can be a copout because that implies that the truth is not knowable. A common mistake many make in understanding what the Bible is telling us is *neglecting to interpret difficult passages in light of clear ones*. Another mistake is *basing a teaching on an obscure passage*.⁴¹

When you look at the Bible as a whole and consider why God created man, why God is angered by us, why Jesus came to earth to be a sacrifice for our sins, and why God delays in destroying the world and creating a new one it is clear God is giving every person every chance possible to repent and accept Him. Otherwise we can ignore our lost neighbors, criminals, or those struggling with various addictions, because the result of predestination is that is the way they were created and were meant to be.

God is not standing off in the distance, having wound us up and pre-programmed us, watching us and the rest of His creation wind down. No, God is actively involved with us on our life's journey and we are involved as well.

There is a difference between the biblical God and the Calvinist God:

The huge difference between the biblical God and the Calvinist God is clear. The biblical God punishes men for rejecting the salvation He provided for everyone, which all could have accepted by their free will-and punishes them for their sins, which are contrary to His will, none of which they had to commit but chose to do so.

*But the Calvinist God condemns to hell those whom He could save if He so desired but for whom He sovereignly chose not even to have Christ die and from whom He deliberately withholds the salvation He pretends to offer them-and punishes them for not accepting. Yes, that's a huge difference.*⁴³

One of the God's characteristics that is overlooked, ignored, or misrepresented by Calvinists and Reformed Theology is Love. The biblical God created us to have a relationship with each of us and "so loved the world" that He sent His Son to save the world by paying the penalty for our sins thereby demonstrating that those who are punished are those who, by their own free will, refuse the salvation provided by Jesus. The Bible tells us all have sinned and are without excuse. There is no one on earth that the angels wouldn't rejoice for if those people accept Christ as their savior and so enter heaven, no one. Peter said God doesn't want anyone to perish, but to come to repentance. Paul said that the grace of god has appeared to all men and that our Savior wants all men to be saved.

David Bennett
December 2005 (updated 27 December 2009)

References:

1. John Calvin- *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II,v.
2. John Calvin- *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III, viii
3. John Calvin- *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:xxi,1.

Predestined for Free Will ©

by David Bennett

4. John Calvin- *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:xxi,7.
5. John Calvin- *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:xxi,7.
6. John Calvin- *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:xxi, 5
7. <http://www.alliancenet.org/pub/mr/mr98/1998.06.NovDec/mr9806.faj.zwingli.html>
8. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/c/charlesspu181482.html>
9. Edwin Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 1999
10. R.C. Sproul, Jr., *Almighty Over All*
11. John 3:16-17
12. 2 Peter 3:9
13. Titus 2:11
14. 1 Timothy 2:3-4
15. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.v.iii.v.html>
16. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ignatius.html>
17. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/martyrdompolycarp.html>
18. Irenaeus *Against Heresies* (Adv. Haer.) III.3.4:
19. Irenaeus *Against Heresies* Book IV Chapter XXXVII [37]-
<http://www.bcbsr.com/topics/freewill.html#freewill>
Also see Irenaeus *Against Heresies* Book IV Chapter XXXIX [39]-
<http://www.bcbsr.com/topics/freewill.html#ability>
20. Justin Martyr *Second Apology*, 7
21. Justin Martyr *First Apology* chapter XLIII [43].
22. Justin Martyr Chapter CXLI [141].
23. Clement *Salvation of the Rich Man* chap. 21
24. Clement *Miscellanies* bk. 1, chap. 17
25. Archelaus *Disputation With Manes* sees. 32, 33
26. Methodius *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins* discourse 8, chap. 16
27. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1932), 365
28. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_will_\(theology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_will_(theology))
29. John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, III:xxi,1
30. John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, III:xxiii,1
31. John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, III:xxi,7
32. John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, III:xxiii,3
33. John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, III:xxiii,4
34. John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, III:xxi,7
35. <http://www.worldviewweekend.com/secure/cwnetwork/article.php?ArticleID=262>
http://www.josh.org/site/c.ddKDIMNtEqG/b.4886325/k.FB2B/Why_does_a_good_God_allow_evil_to_exist.htm
36. *Wesley's Commentary* See verse 5:
<http://eword.gospelcom.net/comments/ephesians/wesley/ephesians1.htm>
37. *Thru The Bible Commentary* on Exodus by J. Vernon McGee <http://www.ttb.org>
38. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 111
39. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 337
40. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 426
41. *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook On Bible Difficulties*, Norman Geisler & Thomas Howe 1992. Pages 17 & 18.
42. John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 22 vols., 1:1:249
43. <http://www.thebereancall.org/node/5573>
44. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 234

This page intentionally left blank