

Predestination, I

At last we come to Calvin's doctrine of election, for which he is famous, or infamous, depending on whom you are talking to. As I was looking over my notes for this lesson, I realized it is more than I can cover in one lesson. I am going to take my time on this issue. Even if I have to use another lesson, I want to spend some time with the issue. It is often understood, and we want to at least have Calvin's view of it exactly as Calvin taught it. Then we can make up our own minds as to whether he was right or not. So I will take my time on this topic. The next topic, which is resurrection, Calvin's eschatology, we can cover fairly quickly. Calvin is famous for his treatment of election but not so famous for his treatment of eschatology. It is not that it was unimportant, but much needs to be said about the topic of election.

With that introduction, let us turn to prayer, using a prayer from Calvin. It is an appropriate prayer for this subject, which we are going to be talking about in this lesson and the next. Let us pray.

“Grant, Almighty God, that as Thou hast been pleased to adopt us once for all as Thy people to this end, that we might be engrafted as it were into the body of Thy Son and so be made conformable to our Head; O, grant, that through our whole life we may strive to seal in our hearts the faith of our election that we may be the more stimulated to render Thee true obedience and that Thy glory may also be made known through us. And those others also whom Thou hast chosen together with us, may we labor to bring with us that we may with one accord celebrate Thee as the author of our salvation and so ascribe to Thee the glory of Thy goodness and, having cast away and renounced all confidence in our own virtue, we may be led to Christ as the only fountain of Thy election, in whom also is set before us the certainty of our salvation through Thy Gospel until we shall at length be gathered with Him into that eternal glory which He has procured for us by His own blood. Amen.”

I was reading a novel recently when I came across a sentence spoken by a character in the novel, which said, “I was like a lost soul in a Calvinist world—damned before birth, for no fault of my own, but nonetheless contemptible to the suspicious company of the elect.” You can frequently find statements like that in popular writing, because Calvinism is identified with election. It is not only identified with election, but it is also identified with a twisted view of election, such as we find in that quotation. I am teaching a Sunday school class at a church in which we are studying the *Institutes*. One of the members of the class told me that whenever he tells people at work that he is studying Calvin's *Institutes*, they are quite startled by that. If the person knows anything at all about Calvin, the person will say, “Is he not the fellow who believed in predestination?” So that is the reputation that Calvin has received.

Another thing to say about this issue is that Calvin's doctrine of predestination was quite unoriginal. The reputation that Calvin has as the person who invented predestination is quite a false one. If you studied the Reformers, you would see the exact same teaching in Luther, Melancthon, Bucer, and Zwingli. Each one put it in his own words. Nonetheless, all the same teaching with all the same essentials are present in all of those Reformers. If you go back to before the Reformers, to the radical Augustinians of the medieval period, such as Thomas Bradwardine or Gregory of Rimini, you can find the same with them. If you go back far enough and arrive at Saint Augustine, you will see that Calvin derived most of what he said from Augustine. Calvin said in Book III, chapter 22, section 8, “If I wanted to weave a whole volume from Augustine, I could readily show my readers that I need no other language than his.” In the nineteenth century, when Charles Hodge was teaching and writing at Princeton, he preferred to use the term “Augustinianism” to “Calvinism.” He believed the word Calvinism was so misused and misunderstood that he would call the system of theology that he was presenting, which was Calvinism, Augustinianism. As far as post-biblical authors are concerned, Calvinism comes from Saint Augustine.

Yet Saint Augustine got his teaching from the Bible. That is what Calvin maintained. Calvin said, "Let us imagine that these fathers are silent." In other words, if nobody in all of church history had taught this doctrine, we could still pay attention to the matter itself by turning to the Bible and to Apostle Paul. Thus Calvin was profoundly unoriginal in his teaching, even though not everyone in church history had taken that Pauline and Augustinian track. Yet Calvin followed in the footsteps of some great people who did. As you look at the sixteenth-century Reformers, Calvin was in good company there as well.

When we consider Calvin's doctrine, we realize that it is already present in 1536. It was not something he added as he made the revisions to his *Institutes*. By 1559, however, the doctrine has a much more developed place. There is a much fuller statement of it. Calvin wrote his commentary on Romans in 1540. That came after the first two editions of the *Institutes*, from 1536 and 1539. You can imagine how careful exegetical study of Romans gave further exegetical insight to Calvin on this teaching. Then throughout his career as a Reformer in Geneva, Calvin entered into a number of controversies with people related to this doctrine. There was controversy with Bolsec, Pighius, and others. In those polemical situations in which Calvin was forced to answer attacks on the doctrine of election, he developed his thought further than as well. So the doctrine of Calvin was present in 1536, but it was more developed and fuller in 1556.

Another point we need to make is the surprising location of the doctrine of election in the *Institutes*. I have anticipated this from time to time by saying that Calvin could have treated election at various other points. He could have treated it in Book I or Book II, but he treats it in Book III, and it is near the end of Book III. It is not in Book I, which is "The Knowledge of God the Creator." The way that election could have functioned in Book I would have been to start by saying there is a God. That God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass. That would include providence and predestination. Predestination would include predestination and reprobation. That is one way of considering this doctrine. God is an eternal God, and even before the doctrine of creation you can talk about the decrees of God. You can talk about the fact that God has planned all things. "All things" means "all things," which includes not just providence but also predestination.

Earlier theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas, had followed that pattern. In the *Summa* of Thomas, he treated predestination, in the doctrine of God, as a special application of providence. In the *Summa*, Thomas was covering the doctrine of God in Book I, chapter 22, when he treated the doctrine of providence. Then in chapter 23 he dealt with predestination. Providence was the bigger category for Thomas. God plans, decrees, and brings into action in time everything that comes to pass. Part of that is the election and reprobation of individuals.

Before Calvin, that was the way it was often done. Then after Calvin it was also often done that way. The prime illustration of that would be the Westminster Confession of Faith. Chapter 2 is "Of God and of the Holy Trinity." Then chapter 3 is "Of God's Eternal Decrees." That is all before the Confession treats creation. This is not an improper order, but it was not the order that Calvin chose.

In 1559, Calvin postponed the formal treatment of election until Book III. We should consider again something I mentioned before, which are the shifts in the material in the five chief Latin editions of the *Institutes*. In 1536, Calvin treated predestination in chapter 2 of the six chapters that were present in 1536, which was the chapter on faith. It was at the end of his treatment of the Apostles' Creed. Then in 1539 there was a separate section. In section 8, after treating the Old Testament and the New Testament, both their likenesses and differences, he treated predestination and providence. Those two doctrines were together in 1539, treating predestination first and then providence. In the editions of 1543 through 1550, he maintained that order, with predestination coming first and then the doctrine of providence. In

1559, however, the final edition that we use for this course, there was a dramatic shift in the material. In that edition, providence, which had followed predestination, was moved into Book I. We studied that very early on in the course when we talked about the doctrine of God. God is the creator, and God is the God of providence. At that point, Calvin said that he could have spoken about predestination there, but he said he was not ready to do so. Where he did treat it was near the end of Book III. There was a significant shift in his ordering of the material. Calvin told us, as you recall, that he was not satisfied with his order, or arrangement, until 1559. He was quite concerned about that. It was not until 1559 that he believed he had it right.

Where did predestination show up? It showed up in soteriology and not in theology proper. It was treated with soteriology, in the section titled "The Way in Which We Receive the Grace of Christ." The order of Book III was the Holy Spirit, faith, repentance, justification, and prayer. Then just before eschatology comes election.

Calvin was very aware of what he was doing. It was not just the place he chose to treat that doctrine because he had to choose some place. He put it under salvation, within the context of the Christian life. Remember that the last part of justification was the freedom of the Christian. From that he moved into prayer. From prayer he moved into election. That gives us a hint that Calvin intended for us to understand the doctrine of election within the context of the experience of the Christian life. It is linked to Christian living. It is part of Christian living. Thus, that is one place we can treat it. Calvin did not say we cannot talk about this doctrine in any other context, but in the *Institutes* that is where he wanted it to function.

I had not been aware of what seems to be a nice connection between prayer and election until reading through this material again. Book III, chapter 20 is about true prayer. In order to sum up what Calvin said in that long chapter, we might say that prayer casts away all thought of our own glory, worth, and self-assurance, and, in humility, gives glory completely to God. Calvin stressed humility, sincerity, and all of those topics related to prayer. We cannot be proud and boastful and pray at the same time. That is why we can kneel to pray. It sets forth the fact that God is everything, and everything we receive is from His good hand. When we move into election, it teaches the same thing. It teaches the gratuitousness of God's grace and our total emptiness before Him. There is not a jolt in the movement from prayer to election. Unless you read carefully through chapter 20, you might think that prayer and election were two quite different topics. Yet one relates carefully to the other.

The function of the doctrine of election in Calvin is an important issue. We do not want to say that predestination is the central dogma in Calvin. We really have not found a central dogma. We have found many crucial doctrines. Yet Calvin did not organize his theology around the decrees of God any more than he organized his theology around the doctrine of the covenant, although both were essential and crucial to his understanding of theology. I appreciate the quotation from Wendel's book on Calvin. He quoted someone else who said, "Predestination is a long way from begin the center of Calvinism [at least, of Calvin's Calvinism], much rather it is the last consequence of faith in the grace of Christ in the presence of the enigmas of experience." I will explain that quote, because I think it is a profound one.

Calvin's treatment of election completes the doctrine of salvation. Calvin talks about salvation, soteriology, in Book III. He completed it with the doctrine of election. There was one final note, which was eschatology, or heaven. In one sense, that was the completion, but even prior to that the completing doctrine is God's election. That doctrine says one thing, which is that salvation is totally of God. That is what Calvin was saying in these chapters. Salvation is totally of God. Calvin said in Book III, chapter 21, section, 1, "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." If we do not know this doctrine, we will not have confidence that God has saved us freely by His mercy. There will be the temptation to inject human effort and human desert into the doctrine of salvation. I appreciate the way Warfield explained it in an article he wrote on Calvin and the Reformation. Warfield said, "When you teach free grace, absolutely free grace, and mean it, you are a predestinarian." If you are going to teach free grace and really mean it, then you have to embrace the doctrine of predestination.

Earlier we considered one way in which this doctrine can be taught, which is to view it as part of the doctrine of God, among the decrees of God. That is not an improper way, but it was not what Calvin chose to do. Calvin talked about grace, which is soteriology. An implication of grace is election. An implication of election is reprobation. I will explain what I mean by that in either this lesson or the next. The context is grace, and if you really teach free grace, as Warfield said and Calvin would agree, then you are a predestinarian.

Complete salvation is understood by faith. Calvin wrote a separate book topic, called *On the Eternal Predestination of God*. So if you want more than you find in the *Institutes*, you can turn to Calvin's treatise *On the Eternal Predestination of God*. In that book, Calvin said, "Election precedes faith as to its divine order but is understood by faith." The divine order has election first, then faith. God elects and then gives the person faith, which is the chief work of the Holy Spirit, and that produces a believer. That is the divine order. We might say that is God's order. The human order, however, works the other way. There is first the person, and whether we want to call the person a believer or not at this point can be debated. The person is certainly not a believer until he has faith, but let us say that he is a potential believer. God opens his eyes to the truth of the Gospel. Then there is faith, and faith understands election. What Calvin was saying was that, as we come to the gospel, we see an invitation, and we accept it, which is faith. Then we realize that our faith was given to us by God, who has chosen us from all eternity. That is election. So the divine order moves from election to faith to the person. The human order moves from the person to faith to election.

For us, therefore, faith is the only opening into the doctrine of election. Calvin said in his commentary on John 6:40, "Take away faith and election is mutilated." In other words, you cannot talk about election abstractly. If you take away faith, then you damage, or destroy, the doctrine of election. No one but the Christian can even speak of God's decrees. That person can only speak of the decrees because he knows himself as elect through faith in Christ.

All of that means that, by putting the doctrine where Calvin put it, he has moved it outside the realm of debate or metaphysical thought. It is moved beyond debate about its fairness to the experience of the Christian. If he put it in Book I, which is what Calvin was wrestling with, then before even talking about God's creation he would be talking about God's decrees. Part of God's decrees is the election of some and the reprobation of others. That would produce a violent reaction on the part of some people who would say that such doctrine is unfair. They would say that if that is the kind of God Calvin is going to talk about, then they want nothing to do with the Calvinist God. Normally, that is the scenario that develops. If the doctrine is put where Calvin puts it, however, then it functions in quite a different way. It functions in the *Institutes* to answer a very specific question. That question is where did my faith come from? It is the Christian who has access to this teaching. The Christian has access to this teaching for a specific purpose. This doctrine is an *ex post facto* reflection on how, amidst the darkness and death of sin, God's grace came to me.

Where did my faith come from? The answer that Calvin would give in these chapters is that it came from God. God saved me. It was not my work. It was not even my faith as a human work. God gave me that faith through the work of the Holy Spirit. God saved me.

Regarding Calvin's order, you might say that Calvin gets a person saved, through justification by faith, which was presented earlier in Book III. Then he gets that person on his knees praying, which is chapter 20. Then he asks the question, where did your faith come from? The answer is the doctrine of election. In that context, the doctrine will not create dispute. The Christian is going to say that his or her faith came from God. All the glory goes to God. It creates humility and confidence in me, because I know it is the work of God, not myself, and all the glory goes to God. In that context, election is not an issue for argument. It is a call to doxology.

That does not mean that you cannot teach the doctrine of election in various contexts. It is also proper, as in the Westminster Confession of Faith, to see election as part of the doctrine of God. You could also see it as part of Christology. We are elect in Christ. That is a major point that Karl Barth made. I think there was wisdom in what Barth did, although he evaporated part of biblical teaching. You could also see it as Calvin did, in Book III, as part of salvation. The point I want to make is that Calvin wanted to be pastorally sensitive to the people who would read the *Institutes*. He believed this was the best place for those people at that time to come to grips with this teaching. That is a challenge to us as well, especially to pastors. It is not only important to preach truly what the Bible says, but also to use an order or sequence that will help people. You do not have to preach everything every Sunday. That is not even a good idea. Preach one thing each Sunday and lead people along step by step. One might want to keep Calvin's order in mind when planning preaching. That means it is probably not a good idea to preach on election on the first Sunday you preach at a new church. You might want to wait a while and preach it later. B. B. Warfield said, "It is not to cosmical predestination that Calvin's thought turned," which would be the kind of predestination that would have been talked about in Book I. It would be part of the doctrine of God. Warfield continued, "but rather to that soteriological predestination on which, as a helpless sinner needing salvation from the free grace of God, he must rest."

Complete salvation is understood by faith. Election answers the question of where my faith came from. It also explains experience. Calvin approached the doctrine of election, when he finally introduced it, from the standpoint of a practical question or concern. It is a problem occasioned by the preaching of the Gospel. When the Gospel is preached, what happens? Some people accept, and some do not. How do you explain that? Why do some respond and others do not? Calvin said in Book III, chapter 21, section 1, "In actual fact, the covenant of life is not preached equally among all men." That means not everybody in the world receives the Gospel equally. Some people never hear it. Some people hear it every Sunday. It is not preached equally among all people. Calvin continued, "Among those to whom it is preached, it does not gain the same acceptance, either constantly or in equal degree." That means that among those who hear the Gospel every Sunday, some receive it and some do not. Calvin continued, "In this diversity, the wonderful depth of God's judgment is made known." Calvin is saying that in the context of human experience, this is what happens. Some hear the Gospel, and some do not. Among those who hear, some receive, and some do not. Calvin's solution to that is the doctrine of election.

The Arminian solution does not succeed. The Calvinist solution is a difficult one in some ways. It is biblical but still difficult. The Arminian solution does not take the Arminian off the hook, so to speak. The Arminian would say that God has given grace to everyone. An evangelical Arminian approach says that universal grace enables everyone and anyone to accept the Gospel, but that person also has the ability to refuse. The evangelical Arminian does not teach salvation by works. We are dead in sin and there is nothing we can do unless we receive the grace of God. Yet everyone receives the grace of God

to enable them to make a response. Does that really help, however, when you think about it? So much of the world does not hear the Gospel. Even though there is that universal grace given, it does not seem able to come to fruition because the person will not know what to do with it. I cannot see how the Arminian solution answers the problem. It is a problem whether a person is an Arminian or a Calvinist.

Let us move to a description of the doctrine of election. We have seen where Calvin puts it, its function, and how he introduces it. We need to consider it in some detail. The doctrine of God's election and reprobation can be understood and described with three words. One word is "absolute." Another is "particular." The third word is more difficult, because I want to talk about double predestination. I will use the word "double," even though that is not a word Calvin used. He talked about election and reprobation. In order to use just three words to sum up the doctrine, I will use the words absolute, particular, and double.

The word absolute is one that we find continually in Calvin. In Book III, chapter 21, section 5, Calvin says, "God adopts some to hope of life and sentences others to eternal death." That is an absolute statement. God adopts some to life and sentences others to death. That is a definition of election and reprobation. In that same section, Calvin also talks about "God's eternal decree by which He compacted with Himself what He willed to become of each man." Then in Book III, chapter 21, section 7, Calvin says, "To whom God not only offers salvation, but so assigns it that the certainty of its effect is not in suspense or doubt." There could be many more sentences that illustrate the absolute character of election. God is the author of election. It is an eternal decree. It focuses on the individual. Election is "God's eternal decree by which He compacted with Himself what He willed to become of each man." God, in His eternal decree, has decreed the destiny of each person.

If you look into this topic in some detail, particularly in the sermons, Calvin often talks about a double election. We need to understand what he meant by that. He did refer to it in the *Institutes* as well, in Book III, chapter 21, section 6. He referred to a second, more limited degree of election. What do those terms mean? You will find an explanation of this in his sermon on Deuteronomy 10:15-17. Calvin was talking about the national election of Israel. God elects the nation of Israel. Calvin said, "God joined all Israel to His family as inferior members until they cut themselves off." There is a kind of general election, represented by Israel. Those who are part of that election are not necessarily eternally saved, because they can cut themselves off. Calvin said in Book III, chapter 21, section 7, "...a kind of middle way between the rejection of mankind and the election of a small number of the godly." So there is the group of all people. There is also a particular kind of election of Israel. Then there is another kind of election of the godly.

Calvin did use the phrase "small number." He is sometimes criticized for teaching that God has only elected a few and that the vast majority of the human race goes to hell. That is not necessarily the way we should explain Calvin. Yet he did refer to a "small number of the godly." The Princeton theologians, Hodge and Warfield, particularly Warfield, wrote on the question of whether there would be few that will be saved. Hodge's and Warfield's view was that huge portions of humanity would be saved. We do not have that idea in Calvin. It is not in Turretin either. It is in the nineteenth-century Princetonians. They believed that many people, and even most people, would be saved. A quotation like the one from Calvin that speaks of a small number of the godly should be balanced by other things that he said. I do not think, however, that he ever reached the optimism of Hodge and Warfield that vast numbers would be saved. Hodge and Warfield have a point, however, in emphasizing the triumph of the cross. As you look at what the New Testament says about the Gospel, it seems to say that not just a few people will be saved, but there will be a triumph, a victory. That is especially evident in the book of Revelation.

While Calvin did refer to that more general election, in Book III, chapter 21, section 6, he refers to “a second, more limited degree of election.” Then in Book III, chapter 21, section 7 he says, “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.” For a long time, I struggled with that sentence because I did not understand what it meant. Calvin refers to a covenant, and perhaps he was referring again to the more general election. Then he said that God does not at once give the people in that covenant the Spirit of regeneration. That seems to say that God makes the covenant and then at some later point he gives the Spirit of regeneration that enables people to persevere in the covenant to the very end. What does that mean?

The Latin word in the 1559 edition is *protinus*. That has been translated by Battles as “at once.” Anthony Hoekema, however, in his article, “The Covenant of Grace in Calvin’s Teaching,” argues that the word should be translated “invariably.” That would make Calvin’s statement say, “God does not invariably give the Spirit of regeneration.” Or we could read it as, “To those with whom God makes a covenant, He does not to all of them give the Spirit of regeneration.” That makes much more sense to me, both in Calvin’s context and in my understanding of his theology. God made a covenant with Israel, but He did not give the Spirit of regeneration to everyone in Israel. There is an Israel within Israel. There is the elect nation, and there are the elect people who are part of that elect nation. Hoekema pointed out that in the French 1560 version, which Calvin wrote, translating his own Latin into French, this sentence reads, “To those with whom God makes a covenant, He does not give to all of them the Spirit of regeneration.” So the French version seems to agree with the Hoekema translation of *protinus* as “invariably.”

Calvin said there are two elections. You could also say two covenants, but Calvin talks about two elections. In referring to a general election, Calvin was talking about Israel. The context was the Old Testament nation of Israel. Calvin then said that within that general covenant there is a particular covenant, or a special election. It is to those elect people that God gives the Spirit of regeneration. So Calvin was commenting on what was going on in the Old Testament era. Paul also dealt with this in Romans. It is one of the passages that people use who want to deny individual election. They would say that election is national and that God chose Israel, so it has nothing to do with individuals within Israel. This was Calvin’s way of saying that there is a national election of Israel, but it did not void the individual election. Romans also says, “Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated.” That seems to be quite individual. It is the way Calvin would read the Old Testament. Calvin said in Book III, chapter 21, section 7, “God was continually gathering His church from Abraham’s children rather than from profane nations.” God set up the covenant with Abraham, and then He elected from within that first election those to whom He would give the Spirit of regeneration. All of that, of course, was done in eternity past. It is not a present-tense activity. In Calvin’s commentary on Luke 1:55, he said, “God had all mankind in mind from the first.” So when Calvin said that God was calling people from Israel, He did not forget the rest of humanity. Calvin continued, “But now that Christ has come, the adoption has been extended to all nations.” In a sense, that more general covenant, which was made with Israel, can be viewed as a kind of universal covenant that was made with all nations.

When Calvin explained the difference and similarity between the covenants, one difference he asserted was that the Old Testament was for Israel. Then he said that now the New Testament is for everyone. There is a move from one nation to all nations. Calvin would not deny, however, that even though God is gathering His elect from Israel, He has not forgotten about or become disinterested in the nations. The quote, from Calvin’s commentary on Luke 1:55, was, “God had all mankind in mind from the first.” Those were rare individuals. Then Calvin continued, “But now that Christ has come, the adoption has been extended to all nations.” Calvin was not even using the term election there, but adoption. He seems

to say that all nations are adopted. That does not mean that every person in all of those nations is regenerated, or is elect, but God now gathers His elect from all the world equally. The general covenant is extended from one nation to all nations. God gathers His elect from all nations, whereas in the old covenant, He gathered His elect from Israel, mostly. We have to make a qualification there. Calvin said in his commentary on Acts 3:25, "Although the common election be not effectual in all, yet it may set open a gate for the special elect." So even in the New Testament, Calvin was thinking in terms of common election and special election. That is not a theme that the Reformed faith has developed. We may need to consider whether that is a helpful way of seeing things or not. I did want to get into that issue so you would understand it to some degree when you are reading Calvin.

What has been said about election so far is that God is the author. It is eternal. It is individual, despite these references referring to common election. We now understand what that means. The special election, secret election, or second, more limited degree of election, focuses on the individual.

Now we come to the topic of reprobation. As I said already, Calvin defines election and reprobation as that decree by which God compacts within Himself. Calvin means that there is no extraneous or external compulsion. It is God's own decision, not affected by anything beside God's will. God compacts within Himself what will happen to each person. We can call that double predestination. That is not Calvin's term. The first person to use the idea of double predestination was Isidore of Seville, a medieval theologian who stood in the full Augustinian tradition.

Calvin said in Book III, chapter 21, section 5, that "God adopts some to hope of life and sentences others to eternal death." Remember that election is defined as "God's eternal decree by which He compacted within Himself what He willed to become of each person." Calvin also said in Book III, chapter 21, section 7, "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." You cannot deny that Calvin held to double predestination, even though he did not use the term. He did not only talk about election to salvation and ignore the rest. That would be single predestination. Nor did he always, although he did do it at times, say that God elects some and passes over others. He used that language. But he also used the language of the quotations I have just given, which emphasize God's positive decree, both in terms of the elect and the damned.

That poses some huge problems. There is one thing in particular that we need to say. Calvin repeatedly spoke about reprobation, as he did in Book III, chapter 23, section 7. In the context of that idea, Calvin says, "The decree is dreadful indeed." That is sometimes translated "awful indeed." We need to understand what Calvin meant. The Latin word is the word that looks like "horrible." So the decree is "horrible" indeed. When Calvin said that the decree is horrible, however, he did not mean what we generally mean by the word horrible. It is not an accusation against God. Battles translated the word "dreadful." That is probably as well as we can do. The word "awesome" would be another possibility. Calvin certainly did not draw back from saying what he thought he had to say based on his understanding of Scripture. Yet he certainly did not rejoice in it. He felt the force of what he was saying. It is an awesome, dreadful thing to think of the reprobation of people.

We have considered definitions of election and reprobation. With reprobation, God is the author, and it is eternal and individual. That is just as it is with election. God is the author, and it is eternal and individual. A major question, however, is whether Calvin gave equal ultimacy to both election and reprobation. In other words, as we finish this study in the next lesson, we will want to answer that question. Do these doctrines hang perfectly balanced, like a mobile for a child's crib with everything

balanced? Are these two doctrines equally ultimate? That is one question. Are these two doctrines equally balanced? That is another question.

In the next lesson, we will spend time looking at the cause and ground of election and reprobation. Then we will consider the goal of election and reprobation. We will cover some objections to predestination. We will consider uses of this doctrine. What is its use for us in our spiritual lives and in our preaching? Finally, we will consider a critique of Calvin's teaching. Was he right or wrong? We will have to think about that.