

Articles and Sermons :: Great article on "election" by J.C. Ryle – It's worth reading...it may surprise you

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Election

Extract from a sermon by Bishop J. C. Ryle

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." 1 Thes. 1:4

"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Peter 1:10.

I. I have firstly to state the doctrine of Election. What is it? What does it mean? Accurate statements on this point are of great importance. No doctrine of Scripture perhaps has suffered so much damage from the erroneous conceptions of foes, and the incorrect descriptions of friends, as that which is now before us. The true doctrine of Election I believe to be as follows. God has been pleased from all eternity to choose certain men and women out of mankind, whom by His counsel secret to us, He has decreed to save by Jesus Christ. None are finally saved except those who are thus chosen. Hence the Scripture gives to God's people in several places the names of "God's Elect," and the choice or appointment of them to eternal life is called "God's election." Those men and women whom God has been pleased to choose from all eternity, He calls in time, by His Spirit working in due season. He convinces them of sin. He leads them to Christ. He works in them repentance and faith. He converts, renews, and sanctifies them. He keeps them by His grace from falling away entirely, and finally brings them safe to glory. In short God's eternal Election is the first link in that chain of a sinner's salvation of which heavenly glory is the end. None ever repent, believe, and are born again, except the Elect. The primary and original cause of salvation, is God's eternal election. The doctrine here stated, no doubt, is peculiarly deep, mysterious, and hard to understand. We have no eyes to see it fully. We have no line to fathom it thoroughly. No part of the Christian religion has been so much disputed, rejected, and reviled as this. None has called forth so much of that enmity against God, which is the grand mark of the carnal mind. Thousands of so-called Christians profess to believe the Atonement, salvation by grace, and justification by faith, and yet refuse to look at the doctrine of Election. The very mention of the word to some people is enough to call forth expressions of anger, ill-temper, and passion. But, after all, is the doctrine of Election plainly stated in Scripture? This is the whole question which an honest Christian has to do with. If it is not in the Book of God, let it be forever discarded, refused, and rejected by man, no matter who propounds it. If it is there, let us receive it with reverence, as a part of Divine revelation, and humbly believe, even where we are not able to understand completely or explain fully. What then is written in the Scriptures? "To the law and to the testimony—*if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*" (Isaiah. 8:20.) Is Election in the Bible, or is it not? Does the Bible speak of certain people as God's Elect, or not? Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ says, "For the Elect's sake the days shall be shortened." (Matt. 24:22.) "If it were possible they should deceive even the Elect." (Mark 13:22.) "He shall send His angels, and they shall gather together His Elect." (Matt. 24:31.) "Shall not God avenge His own Elect?" (Luke 18:7.) Hear what Paul says. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30) "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's Elect?" (Rom. 8:33.) "God has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." (Ephes. 1:4.) "Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works—but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9.) "God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. 2:13.) Hear what Peter says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:2.) "Give diligence to make your calling and Election sure." (2 Peter 1:10.) I place these eleven texts before my readers, and I ask them to consider them well. If words have any meaning at all, they appear to me to teach most plainly the doctrine of personal Election. In the face of such texts I dare not refuse to believe that it is a Scriptural doctrine. I dare not, as an honest man, shut my eyes against the plain, obvious sense of Bible language. If I once began to do so, I should have no ground to stand on in pressing the Gospel on an unconverted man. I could not expect him to believe one set of texts to be true, if I did not believe another set. The eleven texts above quoted seem to my mind to prove conclusively that personal Election is a doctrine of Scripture. As such I must receive it, and I must believe it, however difficult it may be. As such I ask my readers this day to look at it calmly, weigh it seriously, and receive it as God's truth. After all, whatever people may please to say, there is no denying that God's Election of some men and women to salvation is a simple matter of fact. That all professing Christians are not finally saved—but only some—that those who are saved owe their salvation entirely to the free grace of God and the calling of His Spirit—that no man can at all explain why some are called unto salvation and others are not called—all these are things which no Christian who looks

around him can pretend for a moment to deny. Yet what does all this come to but the doctrine of Election? Right views of human nature are certain to lead us to the same conclusion. Once admit that we are all naturally dead in trespasses and sins, and have no power to turn to God—once admit that all spiritual life in the heart of man must begin with God—once admit that He who created the world by saying, "Let there be light," must shine into man's heart, and create light within him, once admit that God does not enlighten all professing Christians in this manner—but only some, and that He acts in this matter entirely as a Sovereign, giving no account of His matters—once admit all this, and then see where you are. Whether you know it or not, you admit the whole doctrine of Election! Right views of God's nature and character, as revealed in the Bible, appear to me to bring us to the same position. Do we believe that God knows all things from all eternity—that He governs all things by His providence, and that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without Him? Do we believe that He works all His works by a plan, like an architect of perfect knowledge, and that nothing concerning His saints, as His choicest and most excellent work, is left to chance, accident, and luck? Well, if we believe all this, we believe the whole doctrine which this paper is meant to support. This is the doctrine of Election. Now what can be said in reply to these things? What are the principal weapons of argument with which Election is assailed? Let us see. Some tell us that there is no such thing in Scripture as an Election of people and individuals. Such an Election, they say, would be arbitrary, unjust, unfair, partial, and unkind. The only Election they admit is one of nations, churches, communities—such as Israel in ancient times, and Christian nations, as compared to heathen nations, in our own day. Now is there anything in this objection that will stand? I believe there is nothing at all. For one thing, the Election spoken of in Scripture is an Election attended by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. This certainly is not the Election of nations. For another thing Paul himself draws a clear and sharply-cut distinction between Israel itself and the Elect. "Israel has not obtained that which he seeks for; but the Elect has obtained it." (Rom. 11:7.) Last, but not least, the advocates of the theory of national Election gain nothing whatever by it. How can they account for God withholding the knowledge of Christianity from 350 million Chinese for 1800 years, and yet spreading it over the continent of Europe? They cannot, except on the ground of God's sovereign will and His free Election! So that, in fact, they are driven to take up the very same position which they blame us for defending, and denounce as arbitrary and uncharitable. Some tell us that at any rate Election is not the doctrine of the Church of England. It may do very well for dissenters and presbyterians—but not for churchmen. "It is a mere piece of Calvinism," they say, "an extravagant notion which came from Geneva, and deserves no credit among those who love the Prayer-book." Such people would do well to look at the end of their Prayer-books, and to read the Thirty-nine Articles. Let them turn to the 17th Article, and mark the following words, "Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He has constantly decreed by His counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He has chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor. Therefore, they who are endued with so excellent a benefit of God are called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season—they through grace obey the calling—they are justified freely—they are made sons of God by adoption—they are made like the image of His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ—they walk piously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity." I commend that Article to the special attention of all English Churchmen. It is one of the sheet-anchors of sound doctrine in the present day. It never can be reconciled with baptismal regeneration! A wiser statement of the true doctrine of personal Election was never penned by the hand of uninspired man. It is thoroughly well-balanced and judiciously proportioned. In the face of such an Article it is simply ridiculous to say that the Church of England does not hold the doctrine of this paper. In controverted matters I desire to speak courteously and cautiously. I wish to make allowance for the many varieties of men's temperaments, which insensibly affect our religious opinions, and for the lasting effect of early prejudices. I freely concede that Wesley, Fletcher, and a whole army of excellent Methodists and Arminians, have always denied Election, and that many deny it to this day. I do not say that to hold Election is absolutely necessary to salvation, though to be one of God's Elect undoubtedly is necessary. But I cannot call any man my master in theological matters. My own eyes see the doctrine of personal Election most clearly stated both in Scripture and the 17th Article of the Church of England. I cannot give it up. I believe firmly that it is an important part of God's truth, and one which to godly people is "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort."

II. The next thing that I wish to do is to fence the doctrine of Election with cautions, and to guard it against abuse. This is a branch of the subject which I hold to be of vast importance. All revealed truth is liable to be wrested and perverted. It is one of Satan's chief devices to make the Gospel odious by tempting people to distort it. Perhaps no part of Christian theology has suffered so much damage in this way as the doctrine of personal Election. Let me proceed to explain what I mean. "I am not one of God's Elect," says one man. "It is no use for me to do anything at all in religion. It is waste of time for me to keep the Sabbath, attend the public worship of God, read my Bible, say my prayers. If I am to be saved, I shall be saved. If I am to be lost, I shall be lost. In the mean time I sit still and wait." This is a sore disease of soul. But I fear it is a very common one! "I am one of God's Elect," says another man. "I am sure to be saved and go to heaven at last, no matter how I may live and go on. Exhortations to holiness—are legal. Recommendations to watch, and crucify self—are a re bondage. Though I fall, God sees no sin in me and loves me all the same. Though I often give way to temptation, God will not let me be altogether lost. Where is the use of doubts and fears and anxieties? I am confident I am one of the Ele

ct, and as such I shall be found in glory." This again, is a sore disease. But I fear it is not altogether uncommon. Now what shall be said to people who talk in this way? They need to be told very plainly that they are wresting a truth of the Bible to their own destruction, and turning food into poison. They need to be reminded that their notion of Election is a miserably unscriptural one. Election according to the Bible is a very different thing from what they suppose it to be. It is most intimately connected with other truths of equal importance with itself, and from these truths it ought never to be separated. Truths which God has joined together no man should ever dare to put asunder.

(a) For one thing, the doctrine of Election was never meant to destroy man's responsibility for the state of his own soul. The Bible everywhere addresses people as free agents, as beings accountable to God, and not as mere logs, and bricks, and stones. It is false to say that it is useless to tell people to cease to do evil, to learn to do well, to repent, to believe, to turn to God, to pray. Everywhere in Scripture it is a leading principle that man can lose his own soul, that if he is lost at last it will be his own fault, and his blood will be on his own head. The same inspired Bible which reveals this doctrine of Election is the Bible which contains the words, "Why will you die, O house of Israel?" "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (Ezek. 18:31; John 5:40; 3:19.) The Bible never says that sinners miss heaven because they are not Elect—but because they "neglect the great salvation," and because they will not repent and believe. The last judgment will abundantly prove that it is not the lack of God's Election, so much as laziness, the love of sin, unbelief, and unwillingness to come to Christ, which ruins the souls that are lost.

(b) For another thing, the doctrine of Election was never meant to prevent the fullest, freest offer of salvation to every sinner. In preaching and trying to do good we are warranted and commanded to set an open door before every man, woman, and child, and to invite everyone to come in. We know not who are God's Elect, and whom He means to call and convert. Our duty is to invite all. To every unconverted soul without exception we ought to say, "God loves you, and Christ has died for you." To everyone we ought to say, "Awake—repent—believe—come to Christ—be converted—turn—call upon God—strive to enter in—come, for all things are ready." To tell us that none will hear and be saved except God's Elect, is quite needless. We know it very well. But to tell us that on that account it is useless to offer salvation to any at all, is simply absurd. Who are we that we should pretend to know who will be found God's Elect at last? No! indeed. Those who now seem first may prove last, and those who seem last may prove first in the judgment day. We will invite all, in the firm belief that the invitation will do good to some. We will prophesy to the dry bones, if God commands us. We will offer life to all, though many reject the offer. In so doing we believe that we walk in the steps of our Master and His Apostles.

(c) For another thing, Election can only be known by its fruits. The Elect of God can only be discerned from those who are not Elect by their faith and life. We cannot climb up into the secret of God's eternal counsels. We cannot read the book of life. The fruits of the Spirit, seen and manifested in a man's conversation, are the only grounds on which we can ascertain that he is one of God's Elect. Where the marks of God's Elect can be seen, there, and there only, have we any warrant for saying "this is one of the Elect." How do I know that yon distant ship on the horizon of the sea has any pilot or steersman on board? I cannot with the best telescope discern anything but her masts and sails. Yet I see her steadily moving in one direction. That is enough for me. I know by this that there is a guiding hand on board, though I cannot see it. Just so it is with God's Election. The eternal decree we cannot possibly see. But the result of that decree cannot be hidden. It was when Paul remembered the faith and hope and love of the Thessalonians, that he cried, I "know your Election of God." (1 Thess. 1:4.) Forever let us hold fast this principle in considering the subject before us. To talk of anyone being Elect when he is living in sin, is nothing better than blasphemous folly. The Bible knows of no Election except through "sanctification;" no eternal choosing except that we should be "holy;" no predestination except that we should be "conformed to the image of God's Son." When these things are lacking, it is mere waste of time to talk of Election. (1 Pet. 1:2; Ephes. 1:4; Rom. 8:29.)

(d) Last—but not least, Election was never intended to prevent people making a diligent use of all means of grace. On the contrary, the neglect of means is a most suspicious symptom, and should make us very doubtful about the state of a man's soul. Those whom the Holy Spirit draws He always draws to the written Word of God and to prayer. When there is the real grace of God in a heart, there will always be love to the means of grace. What says the Scripture? The very Christians at Rome to whom Paul wrote about foreknowledge and predestination, are the same to whom he says, "Continue instant in prayer." (Rom. 12:12.) The very Ephesians who were "chosen before the foundation of the world," are the same to whom it is said, "Put on the whole armor of God—take the sword of the Spirit—pray always with all prayer." (Ephes. 6:18.) The very Thessalonians whose Election Paul said he "knew," are the Christians to whom he cries in the same Epistle, "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17.) The very Christians whom Peter calls "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," are the same to whom he says, "Desire the sincere milk of the Word—watch unto prayer." (1 Pet. 2:2; 4:7.) The evidence of texts like these is simply unanswerable and overwhelming. I shall not waste time by m

making any comment on them. An Election to salvation which teaches people to dispense with the use of all means of grace, may please ignorant people, fanatics, and Antinomians. But I take leave to say that it is an Election of which I can find no mention in God's Word. I know not that I can wind up this part of my subject better than by quoting the latter part of the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England. I commend it to the special attention of all my readers, and particularly the last paragraph. "As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly people, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it does greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it does fervently kindle their love towards God—so, for curious and carnal people, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil does thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation. "Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture and, in our doings, that will of God is to be followed which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God." These are wise words. This is sound speech that cannot be condemned. Forever let us cling to the principle contained in this statement. Well would it have been for the Church of Christ, if the doctrine of Election had always been handled in this fashion. Well would it be for all Christians who feel puzzled by the heights and depths of this mighty doctrine, if they would remember the words of Scripture, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God—but those which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deut. 29:29.)

I will now conclude the whole subject with a few plain words of personal APPLICATION.

(1) First of all let me entreat every reader of this paper not to refuse this doctrine of Election, merely because it is high, mysterious, and hard to be understood. Is it reverent to do so? Is it treating God's Word with the respect due to revelation? Is it right to reject anything written for our learning, and to give it hard names, merely because some misguided people have misused it, and turned it to a bad purpose? These are serious questions. They deserve serious consideration. If people begin rejecting a truth of Scripture merely because they do not like it, they are on slippery ground. There is no saying how far they may fall. What after all do people gain by refusing the doctrine of Election? Does the system of those who deny Election save one soul more than that of those who hold it? Certainly not. Do those who hold Election narrow the way to heaven, and make salvation more difficult than those who deny it? Certainly not. The opponents of Election maintain that none will be saved except those who repent and believe. Well—the advocates of Election say just the same! The opponents of Election proclaim loudly that none but holy people go to heaven. Well—the advocates of Election proclaim the same doctrine just as loudly! What then, I ask once more, is gained by denying the truth of Election? I answer, Nothing whatever. And yet, while nothing is gained, a great deal of comfort seems to be lost. It is cold comfort to be told that God never thought on me before I repented and believed. But to know and feel that God had purposes of mercy toward me before the foundation of the world, and that all the work of grace in my heart is the result of an everlasting covenant and an eternal Election, is a thought full of sweet and unspeakable consolation. A work that was planned before the foundation of the world, by an Architect of almighty power and perfect wisdom, is a work which will never be allowed to fail and be overthrown.

(2) In the next place, let me entreat every reader of this paper to approach this doctrine of Election from the right end, and not to confuse his mind by inverting the order of truth. Let him begin with the first elements of Christianity—with simple repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and so work his way toward Election. Let him not waste his time by beginning with inquiries about his own Election. Let him rather attend first to the plain marks of an Elect man, and never rest until these marks are his own. Let him break off from all known sin, and flee to Christ for pardon, peace, mercy, and grace. Let him cry mightily to God in prayer, and give the Lord no rest until he feels within him the real witness of the Spirit. He who begins in this fashion will thank God one day for His electing grace, in eternity if not in time. It is an old and quaint saying—but a very true one, "A man must first go to the little Grammar-school of Repentance and Faith, before he enters the great University of Election and Predestination." The plain truth is, that God's scheme of salvation is like a ladder let down from heaven to earth, to bring together the holy God, and the sinful creature, man. God is at the top of the ladder and man is at the bottom. The top of the ladder is far above, out of our sight, and we have no eyes to see it. There, at the top of that ladder, are God's eternal purposes—His everlasting covenant, His Election, His predestination of a people to be saved by Christ. From the top of that ladder comes down that full and rich provision of mercy for sinners, which is revealed to us in the Gospel. The bottom of that ladder is close to sinful man on earth, and consists of the simple steps of repentance and faith. By them he must begin to climb upwards. In the humble use of them he shall mount higher and higher every year, and get clearer glimpses of good things yet to come. What can be more plain than the duty of using the steps which are close to our hands? What can be more foolish than to say, I will not put my foot on the steps at the bottom, until I clearly understand the steps at the top? Away with such perverse and childish reasonings! Common sense alone might tell us the path of duty, if we would only make use of it. That duty is to use simple truth

s honestly, and then to believe that higher truths will one day be made plain to our eyes. How, and in what manner the love of the eternal God comes down to us, may have much about it which is hard for poor worms like us to understand. But how we poor sinners are to draw near to God is clear and plain as the sun at noonday. Jesus Christ stands before us, saying, "Come unto Me!" Let us not waste time in doubting, quibbling, and disputing. Let us come to Christ at once, just as we are. Let us lay hold and believe!

(3) In the last place, let me entreat every true Christian who reads this paper to remember the exhortation of Peter, "Give diligence, to make your calling and Election sure." (2 Pet. 1:10.) Surer in the sight of God than your Election has been from all eternity, you cannot make it. With Him there is no uncertainty. Nothing that God does for His people is left to chance, or liable to change. But surer and more evident to yourself and to the Church, your Election can be made; and this is the point that I wish to press on your attention. Strive to obtain such well-grounded assurance of hope that, as John says, you may "know that you know Christ." (1 John 2:3.) Strive so to live and walk in this world that all may take knowledge of you as one of God's children, and feel no doubt that you are going to heaven. Listen not for a moment to those who tell you that in this life we can never be sure of our own spiritual state, and must always be in doubt. The Roman Catholics say so. The ignorant world says so. The devil says so. But the Bible says nothing of the kind. There is such a thing as strong assurance of our acceptance in Christ, and a Christian should never rest until he has obtained it. That a man may be saved without this strong assurance I do not deny. But that without it he misses a great privilege, and much comfort, I am quite sure. Strive, then, with all diligence, "to make your calling and Election sure." "Lay aside every weight and the sins that most easily beset you." (Heb. 12:2.) Be ready to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye, if need be. Settle it firmly in your mind, that it is the highest privilege on this side the grave to know that you are one of the children of God. Those who contend for place and office in this world are sure to be disappointed. When they have done all and succeeded to the uttermost, their honors are thoroughly unsatisfying, and their rewards are short-lived. Seats in Parliament and places in Cabinets must all be vacated one day. At best they can only be held for a few years. But he who is one of God's Elect has a treasure which can never be taken from him, and a place from which he can never be removed. Blessed is that man who sets his heart on this Election. There is no election like the Election of God!

Re: Great article on "election" by J.C. Ryle – It's worth reading...it may surpr - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/5/16

Quote:

tjservant wrote:

For one thing, the doctrine of Election was never meant to destroy man's responsibility for the state of his own soul. The Bible everywhere addresses people as free agents, as beings accountable to God, and not as mere logs, and bricks, and stones. It is false to say that it is useless to tell people to cease to do evil, to learn to do well, to repent, to believe, to turn to God, to pray. Everywhere in Scripture it is a leading principle that man can lose his own soul, that if he is lost at last it will be his own fault, and his blood will be on his own head. The same inspired Bible which reveals this doctrine of Election is the Bible which contains the words, "Why will you die, O house of Israel?" "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (Ezek. 18:31; John 5:40; 3:19.) The Bible never says that sinners miss heaven because they are not Elect—but because they "neglect the great salvation," and because they will not repent and believe. The last judgment will abundantly prove that it is not the lack of God's Election, so much as laziness, the love of sin, unbelief, and unwillingness to come to Christ, which ruins the souls that are lost.

Re: Great article on "election" by J.C. Ryle – It's worth reading...it may surpr - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/5/26

Quote:

-----For another thing, the doctrine of Election was never meant to prevent the fullest, freest offer of salvation to every sinner. In preaching and trying to do good we are warranted and commanded to set an open door before every man, woman, and child, and to invite everyone to come in. We know not who are God's Elect, and whom He means to call and convert. Our duty is to invite all. To every unconverted soul without exception we ought to say, "God loves you, and Christ has died for you." To everyone we ought to say, "Awake—repent—believe—come to Christ—be converted—turn—call upon God—strive to enter in—come, for all things are ready." To tell us that none will hear and be saved except God's Elect, is quite needless. We know it very well. But to tell us that on that account it is useless to offer salvation to any at all, is simply absurd. Who are we that we should pretend to know who will be found God's Elect at last? No! indeed. Those who now seem first may prove last, and those who seem last may prove first in the judgment day. We will invite all, in the firm belief that the invitation will do good to some. We will prophesy to the dry bones, if God commands us. We will offer life to all, though many reject the offer. In so doing we believe that we walk in the steps of our Master and His Apostles.

Re: Great article on "election" by J.C. Ryle - It's worth reading...it may surpr - posted by BeYeDoers (), on: 2008/5/27 7:19

Quote:

-----For one thing, the doctrine of Election was never meant to destroy man's responsibility for the state of his own soul.

If God did not elect this totally depraved man, he CANNOT take responsibility...there is nothing he can do about it...God has made him as a vessel of wrath and is hopelessly doomed.

Quote:

-----To every unconverted soul without exception we ought to say, "God loves you, and Christ has died for you."

So we are supposed to lie? Christ MAY NOT have died for them and God MAY NOT love them.

This is one of the problems I have with Calvinism. They want to eat their cake and have it too. They realize that the end of their theology results in contradictions to scripture, so they do one of three things:

- 1) say, "Well, God's ways are not our ways" and just ignore it.
- 2) claim that their theology is misunderstood and that there really isn't a contradiction...it's only in the minds of the unlearned non-Calvinist (whom they will ALWAYS call a liberal Arminian, even though neither of which may be true, but they have been conditioned to accuse this of all who disagree with their brand of "Calvinism"); of course this does nothing to explain the problem, it just diverts attention and for some reason they think that reiterating a belief over and over somehow makes it more true.
- 3) redefine scriptural terms to make them fit their theology.

All three things are very poor hermeneutic, and violate sound reason.

I'm sorry if this sounds at all bitter. I actually have a history of attending Reformed churches and some of my best friends are Calvinist in their thinking. I respect them highly and think they are more prone to exalt God and his word and do things rightly, I just disagree with their soteriology.

Re: - posted by bonni (), on: 2008/5/27 7:19

I know that Jesus said, "no man comes to the Father unless the Spirit draws Him". Jesus also said that "If I be lifted up (crucified) I will draw all men unto me".

God, through the preaching of the cross of His Son, draws every man, it is just a matter of when is your time of visitation. Jesus wept because of those who did not respond to Him in their day of visitation. He said "How oft would I have gathered you up like a hen gathers her chicks. but..YE would not." THEY resisted His call because THEY loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

I confess I am not reformed theology, but I love a quote from a book on church history, The testimony of the Torch, it was concerning a day of open air preaching for George Whitefield and John Wesley, this man said, "Well today I heard Wesley preach and hundreds chose to follow Christ, I also heard Whitefield preach and God chose hundreds to be saved"

I too fellowship where there are those who are of reformed theology and those who are not. By God's grace we have sweet fellowship and are praying that God would bring us together in one heart and mind in His perfect time. Until then we will have unity over the agreement that Christ's blood cleanses us from all our sin, and above all things brethren ..." Have a fervent love toward one another".

blessings bonni

:~)

Re: - posted by Fuegodedios (), on: 2008/5/27 9:10

I must admit also that I am not a man that has been molded by the hand of reformed theology and don't know everything. However, I do feel that this was a more balanced approach to the doctrine of election. Mr Ryle did not cut any corners as some have. For example, he says that we still need to preach the gospel to every man, woman, and child which I totally agree with. Some people that I know of who hold to the doctrine of election kind of sit back and watch the masses go to Hell or feel that because they are elect they can live Godless lives. So in my opinion I feel that his approach to the subject was very balanced. God bless :-)

Re: - posted by BeYeDoers (), on: 2008/5/27 17:09

I would agree that it was "balanced" but it is not consistent.

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/5/30 21:41

Quote:

BeYeDoers wrote:

I would agree that it was "balanced" but it is not consistent.

There are many things in the Bible I do not fully grasp...yet I believe they are true. Spurgeon said it better than I...

Spurgeon didn't try to reconcile every paradox or apparent contradiction in the Bible. He said:

"That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring." (New Park Street Pulpit, 4:337)

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/5/31 11:39

Quote:

-----This is one of the problems I have with Calvinism. They want to eat their cake and have it too. They realize that the end of their theology results in contradictions to scripture, so they do one of three things:

1) say, "Well, God's ways are not our ways" and just ignore it.

I do not believe it fair or true to lump all Calvinist into the same pile by saying they ignore certain scriptures. But as for the rest of the comment...the "God's ways are not our ways" is it not true?

Isaiah 55:8 (ESV)

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

He is infinite--we are finite.

He knows the end from the beginning while we see just a short part of the now.

He knows the whys, while we grasp for wisdom.

Examples through scripture and experience clearly illustrate that His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts

I do not see this article or J.C. Ryle's theology as inconsistency as much as simply accepting of paradox. My take on it..for what its worth.

I have posted an article that may shed some light on the topic of biblical paradox
(https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id23799&forum34) here

Grace and peace brother

Re: - posted by BeYeDoers (), on: 2008/5/31 18:12

Quote:

-----I do not believe it fair or true to lump all Calvinist into the same pile by saying they ignore certain scriptures.

I didn't lump all Calvinists together...hence the 1, 2, 3.

As far as Spurgeon, Ryle, and their "paradoxes" are concerned...it proves my point exactly about how Calvinists deal with the problems THEY create. So thanks for helping me, TJ :-P The scriptures are not paradoxical, but rather understood when read plainly. They become paradoxical when the Calvinist forces his theology into them.

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/5/31 18:44

Quote:

-----I didn't lump all Calvinists together...hence the 1, 2, 3.

I understand the 1,2,3...thanks for clarifying :-)

Sorry for not being more clear. I was speaking of the ones that say, 'God's ways are not our ways', that were lumped together in the first (1) category with those that ignore certain scriptures.

Quote:

-----The scriptures are not paradoxical, but rather understood when read plainly.

****edit**** added content

I myself find paradox and mystery in the Bible and I am not a Calvinist. Maybe my understanding will change as I grow in the Lord.

I enjoyed this article and hope others read it and enjoy it as well.

Grace and peace

I will take my leave with the words of A.W. Tozer who said:

"God will not hold us responsible to understand the mysteries of election, predestination and the divine sovereignty. The best and safest way to deal with these truths is to raise our eyes to God and in deepest reverence say, "O Lord, Thou knowest." Those things belong to the deep and mysterious Profound of God's omniscience. Prying into them may make theologians, but it will never make saints." A.W.Tozer - The Pursuit of God

Re: - posted by BeYeDoers (), on: 2008/5/31 20:31

Quote:

-----Do you believe the Bible is without paradox?

But of course...the very gospel is a paradox, my brother!

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/5/31 20:33

Sorry for removing the question. I was just not wanting to get into anything :-)

Grace and peace brother

Re: - posted by BeYeDoers (), on: 2008/5/31 21:05

You are not a Calvinist and yet you have been heartily defending their core doctrines for the past 2-3 weeks? interesting.

..

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/5/31 23:05

Quote:

BeYeDoers wrote:

You are not a Calvinist and yet you have been heartily defending their core doctrines for the past 2-3 weeks? interesting...

I have only been involved in threads dealing with very limited aspects of the doctrines of grace and I would not call myself a defender of "Calvinism" even though I may believe in some of the issues being discussed.

If you were to ask a room of one hundred people to picture a clown in their minds do you think any of them would look alike? Oh, I'm sure there would be similarities but I bet there would be a vast array of difference. I hope you get my point . I believe the same can be said of Calvinism...ask a hundred people...get a hundred answers.

I know it is positively stereotypical...but I truly believe that many of those who come against Calvinism do not fully understand it (and I am not claiming to be an authority). I have no problem with simply not believing it or differing opinions but the gross misrepresentation is saddening. It has been so completely and utterly perverted that many only know it through beastly caricatures. Many preachers and authors have not helped in this regard.

I am not fond of labels and would object to being saddled with the handle "Calvinist" even if I were one. Man has cast his labels from the beginning...I don't think it will end any time soon. I do see much truth in what is called reformed/Calvinistic theology...not from studying theology...but from studying the Word. I am young in the Lord. Perhaps one day I will stand in one camp more than the other and will be placed under one of those "labels", but it will only be for the sake of theological discussion...I prefer to simply be called a Christian.

Grace and peace my brother

Re: - posted by BeYeDoers (), on: 2008/5/31 23:38

I too hate labels. I don't even understand how we think that after 1500 years, Calvin is the one that got it right. Or Arminius. Or whomever. Calvin himself was a "4-pointer" by the end of his life, so it doesn't even make sense. Many "Calvinists" are 4- and 3-pointers, so they basically only pick the ones that they think are compatible with scripture, and end up throwing out most of what he taught anyway. I think the reason Calvinism is so "misrepresented" is because of what you said...everybody has their own brand, so no matter what is said, you can be "putting words in their mouths". If some baptist can reject 2 points because they're not biblical, I can reject all of them.

If must choose a label for me, call me a zero-point Calvinist

:-P

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/7/17 18:51

Quote:

BeYeDoers wrote:

I would agree that it was "balanced" but it is not consistent.

I am not attempting to rekindle...just thought this word from C.H. Spurgeon fit the topic of inconsistency well and felt it would be a good edition to the thread.

Charles Spurgeon On August 1, 1858, sermon entitled, "Sovereign Grace and Man's Responsibility."

"I see in one place, God presiding over all in providence; and yet I see and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions to his own will, in a great measure. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act, that there was no precedence of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to Atheism; and if, on the other hand, I declare that God so overrules all things, as that man is not free enough to be responsible, I am driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring You ask me to reconcile the two. I answer, they do not want any reconciliation; I never tried to reconcile them to myself, because I could never see a discrepancy.... Both are true; no two truths can be inconsistent with each other; and what you have to do is to believe them both."