

***Chosen By God*** by R. C. Sproul  
Excerpt from Chapter 1: *The Struggle*

Baseball. Hot dogs. Apple pie. Chevrolet. These are all things American. To complete the mix we must add the great American motto: "We will not discuss religion or politics."

Mottoes are made to be broken. Perhaps no American rule is broken more frequently than the one about not discussing religion or politics. We embark on such discussions repeatedly. And when the topic turns to religion it often gravitates to the issue of predestination. Sadly, that often means the end of discussion and the beginning of argument, yielding more heat than light.

Arguing about predestination is virtually irresistible. (Pardon the pun.) The topic is so juicy. It provides an opportunity to spar about all things philosophical. When the issue flares up we suddenly become super-patriotic with more zeal and tenacity than Patrick Henry ever dreamed of. The specter of an all-powerful God making choices for us, and perhaps even against us, makes us scream, "Give me free will or give me death!"

The very word predestination has an ominous ring to it. It is linked to the despairing notion of fatalism and somehow suggests that within its pale we reduced to meaningless puppets. The word conjures up visions of a diabolical deity who plays capricious games with our lives. We seem to be subjected to the whims of horrible decrees that were fixed in concrete long before we were born. Better that our lives were fixed by the stars, for then at least we could find clues to our destiny in the daily horoscopes.

Add to the horror of the word predestination the public image of its most famous teacher, John Calvin, and we shudder all the more. We see Calvin portrayed as stern and grim-faced tyrant, a sixteenth-century Ichabod Crane who found fiendish delight in the burning of recalcitrant heretics. It is enough to cause us to retreat from the discussion altogether and reaffirm our commitment never to discuss religion and politics.

With a topic people find so unpleasant, it is a wonder that we ever discuss it at all. Why do we speak of it? Because we enjoy unpleasantness? Not at all. We discuss it because we cannot avoid it. It is a doctrine plainly set forth in the Bible. We talk about predestination because the Bible talks about predestination. If we desire to build our theology on the Bible, we run head on into this concept. We soon discover that John Calvin did not invent it.

Virtually all Christian churches have some formal doctrine predestination. To be sure, the doctrine of predestination found in the Roman Catholic Church is different from that in the Presbyterian Church. The Lutherans have a different view of the matter from the Episcopalians.

The fact that such variant views of predestination abound only underscores the fact that if we are biblical in our thinking we must have some doctrine of predestination...