

WEC # 17 – Historical Introduction to Tulip

- There are more things that a Calvinist and an Arminian agree on than they disagree about
- There are many good Arminian theologians
- There are many good Arminian Christians and pastors
 - Both hold to:
 - Inerrancy Infallibility and the Inspiration of Scripture
 - Literal historical Jesus and His bodily Resurrection
 - Substitutionary Atonement
 - Deity of Christ
 - The Trinity
 - Heaven, Hell, and Eternal Punishment
 - In regards to the Providence and the Sovereignty of God:
 - We both agree they are taught in Scripture
 - But - each group defines them differently
 - Here is where the differences come in between the groups
 - How a person views the sovereignty and providence of God will determine their theological position in this debate

The Doctrine of Grace Is at the Heart of the Matter

- *If we don't understand that there is no one who is righteous, there is no one who does good, there is no one who seeks God, we don't understand our need for grace.*
- **Grace** - *the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, bestowed on sinners who deserve wrath, brought about through the agency of the Holy Spirit.*
 - What is meant by “unmerited?”
 - Since all sinners deserve God's wrath
 - If God decides to withhold it from some and give it to others
 - He is NOT unjust for doing this
- We must understand the nature of God's grace
 - Do we all possess God's grace and choose to control its operation?
 - Or does God sovereignly administer His grace on whoever He chooses?

Questions to Consider: How is Salvation by Grace Achieved?

- Is salvation accomplished by God alone?
 - Or by cooperation of both God and us?
- Is God sovereign over salvation:
 - Or do we have the final say if we will be saved or not?
- Is a person's salvation based solely and completely upon God and absolutely nothing from us:
 - Or is one's salvation conditional upon foreseen faith that God saw in us?
 - Does God look down the corridors of time to see who will believe in Him
 - And then as a result elect that person?
- Does the unregenerate person have the ability or the desire to choose Christ?
 - Or does God have to give His grace and work faith in the person to believe?
- Is Jesus a potential savior or an actual savior
 - Meaning:
 - Did Jesus die to actually achieve salvation for those in whom He died?
 - Or did Jesus die to make it a possibility for all to be saved?
- Can our freewill stop the efficacious effect of the blood of Christ?
- Was Christ's death enough to save us, or is our approval still needed?
- If God has elected you:
 - Can you refuse and say no?
- If God has saved you, can you choose to walk away from Him and forfeit your salvation?
- Does God predestine people both to heaven and hell?
- Does God love everybody equally?
- Is God completely sovereign over all aspects of salvation
 - Or does God limit His sovereignty in a way where our freewill is the determining factor in salvation
- What is libertarian freewill?
 - Do we have libertarian freewill?
- Are we influenced in his decision-making process by our own human nature and/or by God Himself?
 - Or are we completely free from any external influences?
- What is compatibility?
 - Can we still make choices and God still be sovereign at the same time?
- Does God foreordain all things?
 - If so, can anything that happened in the past have occurred differently than it had?
 - Is the future already set?
 - If so, then how can man be responsible for the choices he makes?
 - Does this mean we are pre-programmed to act as we do?
 - If so, then doesn't this make God the author of sin and evil?

The History of the Debate Between Calvinism and Arminianism

- The theological differences that separate the Calvinist from the Arminian go back over 1,500 years
- The debate did not begin with John Calvin and Jacob Arminius
- **John Calvin (1509-1564)** was the greatest theologian to come out of the Reformation
 - The acronym “TULIP” is often attributed to him, but it did not originate from him
 - Calvin and the Reformers were the ones who held to the theological positions that Augustine (354-430) held in regard to predestination, human nature, and the character of God
 - The Reformers held to *Monergism* – salvation being completely an act of God
- **Jacob Arminius (1560-1609)** came at the end of the Reformation and challenged the Reformer’s interpretation of Predestination and the Sovereignty of God
 - Arminius and his contemporaries held to *Synergism* – salvation being an act of God and the cooperation of man
 - Monergism – saving faith is a result of being united to Christ
 - God does all the work
 - Man simply believes as a result of God’s grace alone
 - We believe because we have first been saved
 - Synergism – saving faith is the act that unites one to Christ
 - Belief is the required for salvation
 - One cannot be saved unless they cooperate with God
 - We have been saved because we first believed
- The theology of the Reformers did not originate with John Calvin or Martin Luther
 - They simply went back to the Scriptures
 - And with the emergence of “Humanism”
 - they went back to the original languages (Greek and Hebrew, moving away from Latin)
 - and studied the works and writings of the early church fathers.
- In doing so, they arrived at a systematic theology from Scripture that
 - honored the covenantal structure (Works and Grace)
 - and the sovereignty of God in all things.
- The theology that emerged from Jacob Arminius and the Remonstrance did not originate with them either
 - Rather, church history demonstrates that both Monergism and Synergism go back to the early days of the church.

The Remonstrance

- Jacob Arminius died in 1609
- In 1610, the Arminian party issued a document or Remonstrance, and thereafter was commonly known as Remonstrants.
- After Arminius's death, forty-six leading Dutch ministers and laymen composed a document known as the "Remonstrance" that summarized Arminius's and their own opposition to rigid Calvinism in five points.
- The document itself contains five articles dealing with the issues under debate.
- **The first article** defines predestination in ambiguous terms, for it affirms that God determined before the foundation of the world that those would be saved who believe in Christ.
 - We are not told whether this means, as Arminius taught, that God knew who would believe, and predestined those particular people;
 - or simply that God determined that whoever would later come to believe would be saved
 - what later came to be called the **Open Decree of Predestination**.
 - Reformed Doctrine of Predestination –
 - God having, out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, *elected some* unto everlasting life, and entered into a Covenant of Grace with them, to redeem them out of an estate of sin and misery, and bring them into an estate of salvation through a Redeemer.
 - Arminian Doctrine of Predestination –
 - All who God foresees will accept his offer of salvation through Christ by not resisting the grace that extends to them through the cross and the gospel.
 - Thus, predestination is conditional rather than unconditional;
 - God's electing foreknowledge is *caused by the faith of the elect*.
- This ambiguity is consistent with the final paragraph of the Remonstrance, which declares that this is all that is needed for salvation, and that "*it is neither necessary nor useful to rise higher nor to search any deeper.*"
 - In short, that needless speculation regarding the cause of the divine decree of predestination is to be rejected.
- The Remonstrants simply responded that biblical teaching on this point is not clear, and that they would need clearer scriptural proof before committing themselves in one direction or the other.

The Canons of the Synod of Dort

- Affirmed five doctrines the Remonstrants could not accept, and from that point on those five doctrines have become the hallmark of orthodox Calvinism.
- That assembly, known as the Synod of Dort, met from November 1618 to May 1619.
- In calling it, the Estates General was seeking the support, not only of Dutch Calvinists, but also of those in other parts of Europe.
- Invitations were extended to other Reformed churches, and a total of twenty-seven delegates attended from Great Britain, Switzerland, and Germany
- The Dutch were almost seventy, of which roughly half were ministers and professors of theology, a quarter were lay elders, and the rest were members of the Estates General.
- The main purpose of the gathering was the condemnation of Arminianism, necessary in order to end the strife that was dividing the Netherlands and to secure the support of other Reformed churches.

Augustine and Pelagius

- Many who attempt to refute or discredit Reformed theology, particularly the Reformed doctrine of Predestination, claim that this doctrine can be found nowhere in church history, and started with Augustine in the fifth century.

Clement of Rome (96-100 A.D.)

- *Day and night ye were anxious for the whole brotherhood, that the number of **God's elect** might be saved with mercy and a good conscience*
- *Let us then draw near to Him with holiness of spirit, lifting up pure and undefiled hands unto Him, loving our gracious and merciful Father, who has made us partakers in the blessings of **His elect***
- *May God, who seeth all things, and who is the Ruler of all spirits and the Lord of all flesh—**who chose** our Lord Jesus Christ **and us** through Him to be a peculiar people*

Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.) –

- *“But in proportion to the adaptation possessed by each, He has dispensed His beneficence both to Greeks and Barbarians, even to those of them that were **predestinated**, and in due time **called**, the **faithful** and **elect**.”*

Augustin of North Africa (354-420)

- *“He (God) has appointed them (people condemned in Adam) to be regenerated, before they die physically, whom he **predestined to eternal life**, as the most merciful giver of grace. To those whom he has **predestined to eternal death**, however, he is also the most righteous awarder of punishment, not only on account of the sins which they add in the indulgence of their own will, but also because of their **original sin**, even if, as in the case of infants, they add nothing to it.”*

Pelagius - was presumably born in Ireland in 354 A.D., and became a monk and a eunuch.

- The Pelagian controversy broke out in either 411 or 412 in Carthage.
- *Pelagianism* derives its name from a British monk who engaged in a fierce debate with Augustine during the early fifth century.
- He was stirred in his soul to call the church to a vigorous pursuit of virtue and moral perfection.
- The controlling principle of Pelagius's thought was the conviction that God never commands what is impossible for man to perform.
- Sin, Grace, and Predestination According to Pelagius
 - Sin was simply bad habits
 - There is nothing wrong with human nature
 - Neither Adam's sin nor his guilt was transmitted to all of humanity.
 - All men are created as Adam was before the fall.
 - We have free will and full moral choice
 - Free will is the ability to choose either good or evil.
 - This ability or possibility to do this is the very essence of free will itself
 - By his own effort man can achieve whatever is required of him in morality and religion.
 - For Pelagius, the command to obey implies the ability to obey.
 - This would be true, not only of the moral law of God, but also of the commands inherent in the gospel.
 - Salvation is entirely by works
 - God gave us the ability, we just need to do it
 - Because perfection is possible, it is mandatory
- Pelagianism was condemned at the **Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D.**

Augustine - Born in 354 A.D. in Northern Africa

- His influence is still felt today, being the most quoted church father by John Calvin
- Martin Luther and John Calvin were heavily influenced by many of Augustin's teachings which helped spark the Reformation
- Sin, Grace, and Predestination According to Augustine
 - Inability of the will to choose to repent
 - Original sin – we are all condemned in Adam
 - Connects Adam's sin to all of humanity - humanity is unable not to sin
 - We make free choices according to our desires
 - We do not have libertarian free will
 - Our will is broken and desires evil
 - It is not inclined to good
 - Grace is necessary and sufficient to change our hearts
 - It is God's free grace by means of predestination in which God chooses to redeem a specific people
 - Perfection is not achievable without it

Semi-Pelagianism – (Jerome / John Cassian)

- While not denying the necessity of Grace for salvation:
 - Semi-Pelagianism maintains that the first steps towards the Christian life are ordinarily taken **by the human will**
 - Grace supervened only later
- Arminianism teaches that the **first steps of grace are taken by God.**

The Synod of Orange (529 A.D.)

- This synod attempted to put an end to the Semi-Pelagian controversy.
- The Synod of Orange (529) affirmed that:
 - *Man is not only under Original Sin, but has lost all power to turn to God, so that "it is brought about by the infusion of the Holy Spirit and His operation in us that we wish to be set free."*
 - *It is "by the free gift of grace, that is, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit," that people have "the desire of believing" and "come to the birth of holy baptism."*
 - *All good in humanity is the work of God.*
 - The Synod of Orange did not affirm Augustine's insistence on the irresistibility of divine grace, and diluted the concept of irresistible grace by associating grace with baptism, saying,
 - *"grace having been received in baptism, all who have been baptized, can and ought, by the aid and support of Christ, to perform those things which belong to the salvation of the soul, if they will labor faithfully."*

The Middle Ages (500-1500)

- **Thomas Aquinas** (1225-1274) - the most prominent theologian of the Middle Ages
 - *"Thus, as men are ordained to eternal life through the providence of God, it likewise is part of that providence to permit some to fall away from that end; this is called reprobation...."*
 - *Therefore, as predestination includes the will to confer grace and glory, so also reprobation includes the will to permit a person to fall into sin, and to impose the punishment of damnation on account of that sin."*
 - Summa Theologica: Question XXIII: Of Predestination – Third Article: Whether God Reprobates Any Man?
 - Citing Ephesians 1: 4, - Aquinas closely associated love with God's election of people.
 - *Accordingly, God's foreknowledge of people's faith and good works is ruled out as the basis for the divine election.*
 - Appealing to Titus 3: 5, he reasoned:
 - *"As he [God] saved us, so he predestined that we should be saved.*
 - *Therefore, foreknowledge of merits is not the cause or reason of predestination."*

Luther and Erasmus

- **Bondage of the Will (1525)** –
 - Martin Luther debates Catholic scholar Desiderius Erasmus in regard to *whether or not human beings are free to decide on good or evil*.
 - Luther holds to the Reformed doctrine of predestination = Monergism
 - Erasmus holds to the cooperation of both man and God for salvation = Synergism
 - According to Luther:
 - *I praise and commend you highly for this also, that unlike all the rest you alone have attacked the real issue, the essence of the matter in dispute, and have not wearied me with irrelevancies about the papacy, purgatory, indulgences, and such like trifles (for trifles they are rather than basic issues), with which almost everyone hitherto has gone hunting for me without success. You and you alone have seen **the question on which everything hinges**, and have aimed at the **vital spot**; for which I sincerely thank you, since I am only too glad to give as much attention to this subject as time and leisure permit.*
 - For grace to be grace, there must be predestination, or else some form of human merit is being smuggled back into the picture.
 - Luther states that the entire Reformation is based upon how one views the will of man
 - Either free or in bondage
 - Rome held to synergism
 - Question – would there have even been a Reformation if the Reformers did not hold to Monergism?
- Rome without the sacraments –
- To be truly Protestant one must be Reformed in their theology