

“Reformation Theology and the Battle of the Wills!”

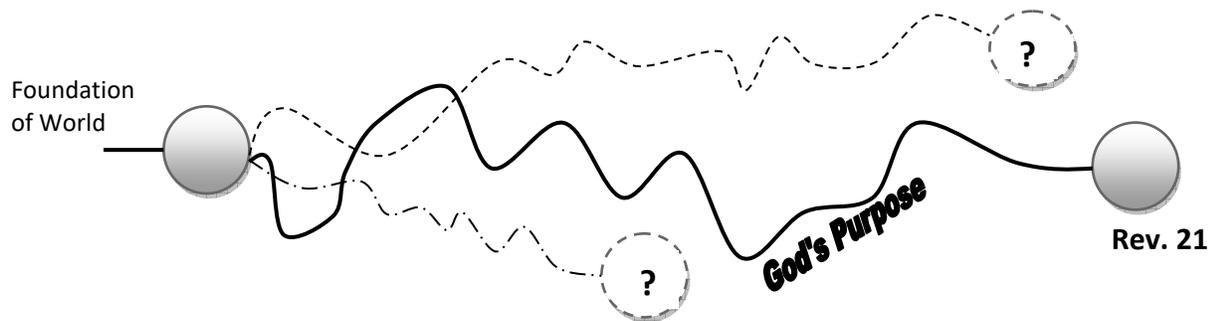
“Ripples of the Reformation” (Pt. 2)

November 19, 2017

INTRO ...The BATTLE of the WILLS!!

...If “life is a journey”—then one has to answer, “Who’s Steering this Great Human Drama” toward its destination.

Illust - ‘Human Destiny’



All churches, preachers, and individuals have “EMPHASIS...” “Reformed Theology” places the emphasis on GOD rather than man or any other created power or influence. This is what is meant by the term “God-Centered”. It provides the answers to Big Questions about what is ‘Steering’ Human Destiny—**Man’s free will or God’s sovereign will?**

- *What is the highest and ultimate cause in all of creation and human history?*
- *What receives the praise and glory for all that is praiseworthy and good and redemptive?*
- *What is the highest determinative influence or force in the future of humanity’s condition and outcome and in the daily spaces of our lives?*
- *What rules the boundaries of good and evil—providentially governing and determining the daily and personal extent or limitations and the final end of each?*
- *Which of these is revealed and praised as determinative in scripture?*
- *Which of these provides any ability for us to take shelter in and have Hope?*

What ‘Will’ will you treat as Creation’s Ultimate Will?

Today, there would be many situations that arise that get explained by Christians in daily conversations by what they will treat as THE ULTIMATE Governing Force in explaining the created order, it is —“Well man has a free will”

Erasmus' Free Will vs Luther's Bondage of the Will

“It is in the highest degree wholesome and necessary, for a Christian to know whether or not his will has anything to do in matters pertaining to salvation. Indeed let me tell you, that is the hinge on which our discussion turns. . . . For if I am ignorant of the nature, extent, and limits of what I can and must do with reference to God, I shall be equally ignorant and uncertain of the nature, extent, and limits of what God can and will do in me. . . . Now, if I am ignorant of God's works and power, I am ignorant of God himself; and if I do not know God, I cannot worship, praise, give thanks, or serve Him, for I do not know how much I should attribute to myself and how much to Him.” Martin Luther (quoted in [Luther Selections](#), 179)

“...how much to attribute to myself and how much to Him”

—THIS is the great dilemma of your Christian life that awaits your answer to what is at the center of your theology—God's Will or Human Will.

— the Bible teaches the Total Depravity of Man, that the fall so utterly and completely damaged man, that his will is NOT FREE, but it is enslaved to sin, it is blind and unable to see, it is hostile to the mind of God and CANNOT submit to His Will

Rom 8:5-7 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

Clear Statement: *I am going to place God's Will at the Center of my theology and the universe and say that God will fully and completely accomplish everything according to His will and that will, will be unthwarted by any other will, power, or personality. ...However, this does not mean that human choices are meaningless or inconsequential, because that's not how the System of the Bible treats them... and how these 2 realities interact and resolve is a mystery to me. Thus, I treat God's will as ultimate and my will as meaningful—which calls forth biblical HOPE and biblical RESPONSIBILITY.*

The 'Purpose of God' from Foundation to Heavenly City

Ephesians 1:3-11

- There is a "Purpose" in the millenniums and centuries and decades and days of our lives!...that was orchestrated from the foundations of the world!

...So why am I 'blessed' ... 'holy and blameless' ... 'adopted as sons'...etc. —because of decisions God made 'before the foundation of the world'

...But what about when things look 'bad' or 'off course'?

Rom 8:18-20 ...*Explaining 'Affliction'* ...the human experience and bitter taste of 'Futility'

— YET, this 'Futility Scenario' is traced back to God's Purpose!

Rom 8:28-30

— Here again is this "Governing Purpose" that is traveling into every moment of our existence. ... Each Person that he has chosen makes it all the way to eternal glory (no one falls out along the way—either by their own will, the power of sin, or the activity of the devil!)

Rom 8:31, 35 ...*In a world that can feel "out of control"—these verses assure us that God's Purpose will go Unthwarted! ...NOTHING will separate us!!*

Rom 9:6-13 ...This is the answer given to the "appearance" that God's purpose through Israel failed.

- **NOTE:** there is this ongoing "steering mechanism" that is "Ultimately Determinative" —don't just get distracted by "Esau I hated"

Deut 29:29 *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

..."Behind the Scenes" insights...

Rom 9:15-16 ...God's Will to have mercy is ultimate—NOT man's will to receive it!!
...Because Fallen Man would not come to desire it apart from God!!

Rom 9:27-29 ...it was God's 'behind the scenes purpose' that kept Israel's story from being another 'Sodom & Gomorrah'

Rom 10:19-11:6

- v. 19 ...God's Strategic Purpose at work!
- v. 20 ...God bringing to pass His Purpose—in an Uncooperative People!!
- v. 4-6 ... "I have kept for myself"—it is God's Will NOT man's will that gets the Feature Spotlight!! ...the Remnant exists because of God's Choice in His GRACE!!

Rom 11:11, 25 ...Behind the scenes ('this mystery')—God was bringing Salvation to the Gentiles!!

Rom 11:33-36 ...In the end it is God's Will & Purpose that gets the glory!! ...even if our heads are spinning with questions we can't answer!!

You and I have an Intellectual Dilemma on our Hands!

- The Bible clearly depicts a God who has a purpose. (Agree or disagree?)
- The Bible clearly depicts a God who is all knowing, all powerful, and always working to bring His purpose to pass. (Agree or disagree?)
- Life sometimes contains moments, events, and seasons that simply don't fit any available definition that we have for using the word "good". (Agree or disagree?)

When life appears "bad"... how do you explain it?

- Do I attempt to 'rescue' God from appearing unloving, uncaring, or in any way associated with evil or suffering by shifting the emphasis to "human free will"?
 - **"My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" = NOT GOOD**
 - Yet, **Acts 4:23-30** explains it as "God fulfilling His purpose that has existed from the foundation of the world!"
- I understand that God's will/purpose interacts with corruption, evil, sin, and human choices in a mysterious way—while still fully accomplishing His Will and Purpose! ...Even when I cannot see His Great Purpose in a piece of my life or in this "momentary affliction" that I'm staring at.