

## BIGGER THAN ANY SYSTEM

Often, people tend to be very consistent with a particular human system of theology instead of being consistent with the tensions of the Word of God. This, in reality, puts the thinking of men over the revelation of God.

Often, people dogmatically assert that their “system” de facto represents the whole truth of Scripture. But the fact is that God and His truth is BIGGER than any human system. To try and force God’s truth through the strict grid of any particular system invariably results in the compromise of God’s truth.

I, too, champion the sovereignty of God, but not at the expense of what the Bible says about human responsibility. Charles Spurgeon was very definitely Calvinistic through and through. However, he was of the ilk that put Scripture ahead of his systematized theology when he saw a conflict. That is why both Calvinists and Arminians alike selectively quote Spurgeon approvingly at various points.

I believe that the spirit of Spurgeon at this point is humble and godly and one we should seek to emulate.

“My love of consistency with my own doctrinal views is not great enough to allow me knowingly alter a single text of Scripture. I have great respect for orthodoxy, but my reverence for inspiration is far greater. I would sooner a hundred times over appear to be inconsistent with myself than be inconsistent with the word of God.” --**C.H. Spurgeon** as quoted by Iain Murray in SPURGEON V. HYPER-CALVINISM, p. 151

“It is the duty of every theologian to subordinate his theories to the Bible, and teach not what seems to him to be true or reasonable, but simply what the Bible teaches.”--**Charles Hodge** – SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, II, p. 559

“Indeed there is significant evidence that John Calvin did not consistently hold to what passes today for Calvinism, especially in his later years, and that Jacob Arminius never really became fully ‘Arminian’ before his untimely death. Thus, it was their followers who polarized the traditions significantly.”  
– **C. Gordon Olson** – BEYOND CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM, p. 29

“We like to tie up everything into neat intellectual parcels, with all appearance of mystery dispelled and no loose ends hanging out. Hence we are tempted to get rid of antinomies from our minds by illegitimate means:

to suppress, or jettison, one truth in the supposed interests of the other, and for the sake of a tidier theology. ...The temptation is to undercut and maim the one truth by the way in which we stress the other: to assert man's responsibility in a way that excludes God from being sovereign, or to affirm God's sovereignty in a way that destroys the responsibility of man. Both mistakes need to be guarded against." -**J.I. Packer** – EVANGELISM & THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, p. 25

"For hundreds of years, people have wrestled with two seemingly incompatible teachings of the Bible: God's overarching, omniscient determining of all that happens in His creation (called 'providence' or 'foreknowledge') and man's freedom and responsibility to choose his own path (called 'free will'). The biblical antinomy presents divine sovereignty and human responsibility as a both/and situation. But human reasoning seeks an either/or." -**Richard Emmons** – ISRAEL MY GLORY, Jan/Feb 2005 – p. 18

"Nothing is more damaging to the truth of God, more withering to the soul, or more subversive of all spiritual growth and progress than mere theology, high or low – Calvinism or Arminian. It is impossible for the soul to make progress beyond the boundaries of the system to which it is attached." – **C.H. Mackintosh**, ONE-SIDED THEOLOGY – The Mackintosh Treasury

Leaders, labels, and libels. Regarding the age-old debate over God's sovereignty and human responsibility, undoubtedly, eternity will reveal many errors and shortcomings. Indeed, "*Eternity shall be at once a great eye-opener and a great mouth-shutter.*" (Jim Elliot) People tend to put great stock in leaders whom they admire, and seemingly quote and follow them as the final authority.

However, the true Biblicist will faithfully hold to the "tensions" of Scripture as presented in the Scriptures without altering anything that God has revealed.

## **2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)**

**15** Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.