

# The Sovereignty of God and the Responsibility of Man - Part 2

by Bob Hoekstra

---

*The sermon explores the coexistence of God's sovereignty and human responsibility, emphasizing the call to preach the gospel and make disciples despite the complexities of theology.*

**Scripture:** Luke 24:46-47, Romans 11:33

**Topics:** "Great Commission", "Sovereignty Of God"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of spreading the gospel to all nations. He quotes Luke 24:46-47, where Jesus instructs his disciples to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations. The speaker acknowledges that there may be debates and complexities surrounding theological issues, but argues that the focus should be on bringing the gospel to the world. He quotes Pastor Chuck to emphasize that all arguments should not distract from the real issue of spreading the gospel to every person. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the authority of Jesus and the command to make disciples of all nations.

---

## Transcript

We've looked at A, the election by God, B, the free choice by man, man's responsibility. Now let's look at C, the apparent paradox, the apparent paradox. Our key verse there is Romans 11, just to note it.

We'll read it later and comment on it. I have a little quote here by Pastor Chuck. He sent along some thoughts a couple years ago when we started this class.

Quote, we believe in both the sovereignty of God and the free choice or human responsibility of man. And really a quick response to that might mean, might be impossible. Well, impossible for man, not impossible for God at all.

C, the apparent paradox. Acts 2:23, Acts 2:23, Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost says, Him, speaking of the Lord, Him being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified and put to death. It's interesting how often in scripture you can find the sovereign purposes of God and the responsibility, accountability, choices of man brought right together on issues.

Certainly can see it here. Him being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God. Why did Jesus Christ go to the cross? Well, you could say in this sense, He was delivered to the cross by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God.

God ordained that His Son go to the cross and the Son was willing to go and He came. But you could also say, why did Jesus go to the cross? Because men took Him with lawless hands and crucified and put Him to death, the worst crime humanity ever committed. They're both true.

God was totally sovereignly at work, but man was absolutely involved and completely accountable to God. Those lawless hands were going to face judgment for that. You can find often in scriptures, the sovereignty of God and the responsibility, the choices of man brought to bear simultaneously in issue after issue after issue.

No surprise really, God is God. He's overall and in charge, but man is also obviously involved every day, every step of the way with choices, decisions, and an accountability to God. An apparent paradox, a paradox being two truths, they don't seem like they can possibly coexist.

They look like they're mutually exclusive, but they're both taught in the scripture. You can see often like in Acts 2.23, the sovereignty of God and the choices of man coming to bear on the same issues of history and of salvation history. Here's an interesting one.

This one ought to provoke an hour of discussion. 1 Peter 1, verses 1 and 2. Think they can get at it in Romans and Matthew? Come on, we can get it. 1 Peter 1, 1 and 2. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia.

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. This introduces another factor into the whole discussion and picture. Elect yes, but elect how? According to what frame of reference? According to the foreknowledge of God.

Now, I am not going to suggest that I in any way fully grasp precisely how the foreknowledge of God, that is God knowing ahead of time everything. I'm not going to presume to suggest that I've got a full grasp on how that fits in, but it is a fascinating issue that it does fit in. And it depends again whether you're heavily influenced or inclined toward a Calvinistic perspective where the sovereignty of God basically settles it all.

Or whether you're more inclined toward, oh, the final issue is man's got to make those choices. Depending on where you are in that framework, you will explain the foreknowledge of God differently. But the Scriptures don't really explain it to us.

It just introduces that so we know it's a part of the spiritual equation, you might say. Let's go a little further. There's a couple more things we ought to get out on the table and surely, oh yeah, look, we'll have it totally settled by the time we're through with these verses.

No one's buying that. Romans 8, 29. Romans 8, 29.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined. There you go, chew on that one. To be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Here the foreknowledge of God and the predestinating work of God. You know, predestining, setting in motion something beforehand. Well, what are we, robots? I guess not because it's something to do with

foreknowledge.

God knowing back then something of what is going to take place yet ahead. Romans 11, 2. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. The foreknowledge of God, knowing ahead of time, beforehand, foreknowledge, knowing before it happens, is a significant part of the work of God in salvation, including these issues of sovereignty and responsibility.

Now, here's an interesting verse. And I'll tell you personally, this is a verse I've gotten a lot of comfort from on this subject. Ephesians 1, 11.

Ephesians 1, 11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. Our God who does elect and choose and make sovereign choices and from eternity affects time and yet obviously leaves a baffling arena of human latitude for choice and responsibility.

Here's the interesting thing to me in this verse. Our God works all things according to the counsel of His will. Some of the implications in this language, I think, are this.

God's choosing is not haphazard or arbitrary. The Godhead reasons out all of the divine will and plan of God. We're trying to help each other understand something that is so huge.

It's like trying to push a 3,000-pound elephant into your wallet. It's like, boy, this is hard. Yeah, very hard.

But here's a wonderful encouragement to us. Every aspect of this issue that you could ever imagine or comprehend or bring to bear and beyond those has fully been brought to bear by God on the whole thing. Perfect wisdom, perfect knowledge, perfect love, and yes, plans and ordinations, but still in that a whosoever will.

And it exercises our mind until it just wants to get in knots. One of the great comforts to me is, hey, this is nothing arbitrary. This is nothing haphazard.

This is not just, well, I could have done it that way, but that's fine. We'll do it this way. Everything.

He works all things according to the counsel of His will. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with infinite wisdom, love, knowledge, control, patience, caring. He's put it together perfectly.

And one of the great exercises of our faith is to let it rest there. Let's read what I think is actually, as already inferred, is actually the ultimate biblical response to this whole area. And that's Romans 11.

At the end of the most astounding proclamations of God's sovereignty, maybe in the word of God, Romans 9, 10, 11, which by the way, though, we've already shown included some amazing whosoever language. So there you have it, kind of compressed in three chapters. God choosing, God sovereign, God having the right, and yet whosoever will call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The conclusion of maybe the most powerful biblical, what, collision, confrontation, or paradox. Here's the biblical response of the Apostle Paul as led by the Spirit of God. And I think this is the bottom line for us.

I found through the years, the more my heart went through this issue and settled in these verses, I pressed on with peace. Let's read them. Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out.

For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has become his counselor or who has given to him and it shall be repaid to him for of him and through him and to him are all things to him be glory forever. Amen. How do we ultimately view these issues? How do we ultimately respond to this apparent paradox? I have found again and again, when I exercise my mind in this area, if I cannot ultimately turn to these verses and agree with them, I'm striving.

I'm striving. I'm demanding that I can't go on with God unless I've got it all clear. Well, okay, then just stall out a while.

We'll catch up later. You know, and I'm not saying it's wrong to think on this. If it was wrong to think on it, we wouldn't have all this input in the Word of God.

But if at any given time, we look at the data God gives us, the input, and maybe it's time to move on to something else, like, you know, you're in 15 minutes, it's time to move on. I know some of you are going to want to stay. Okay.

But even after that, it's going to be time to move on. There are other things to attend to. And if we can't take it from where it is to these verses and say, okay, I can rest in that and await further insight, then maybe we're not right where God wants us on the subject.

The reason we're studying these things is because they're in the Word. God must want us to be addressing them, aware of them. And why? For our own personal need, but also for those who are reaching out to.

D, the gospel for all. Mark 16. We'll read in a minute.

Let's start with Matthew 28, 18. Matthew 28, 18, and 19. Let me tell you guys something.

A little aside here just came to my mind. I believe it's of the Lord. You know how this area is commonly, not commonly, but often dealt with? You just become a devotee of Calvinism or Arminianism.

And it's amazing how the loose ends get all tied up. You just don't give extended serious attention to the other verses. You almost say, I know those verses are there, but these verses virtually explain them away.

And it ties the package up a lot neater to just be able to say, I know this free choice, but listen, that's like immaterial. I mean, here's the verses that rule over it all, and you concentrate on the election and sovereignty of God. And it's kind of an oversimplified perspective on Calvinism, but that would characterize a lot of Calvinism.

And there's another approach, which is often in the Pentecostal world and Baptist world and others, is more Arminian. Hey, I know God's sovereign, but man, that's way up there and out there. And anyway, this is what all boils down to.

You just got to make the right choices. And it ties the package much more neat. So much less hanging out of your systematic theology box, that you're always trying to stuff in.

Oh man, oh, this is not a very clean package. No, but personally, I'll tell you why my own heart can't go that direction. Because I don't think the Bible does that.

I think the Bible is so forcefully strong on both, and it leaves you kind of hanging in between. And yet, hey, really, what is the problem? Sovereign God came and knocked on my heart. And I did, and I had to eventually, I responded.

Well, those are the powerful kind of summaries that you'll see changing life, after life, after life, the rest of your ministry. Where does it leave us? D, the gospel for all. Matthew 28, Matthew 28, 18.

And Jesus came and spoke to them saying, all authority has been given to me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. When the Lord is about to leave the leaders of what would be the early church, He reminded them He had all authority.

He's sovereign. And on His sovereign commission, He says, based on my authority, get out there, and you concentrate on making disciples of all the nations. Now, you might tuck in, in our context, yeah, these other issues are going to come up.

You're going to want to know some more. People are going to ask you, but here's where you're aiming. He didn't say go out and resolve every stretching theological problem before you ever make a move.

This is early on what the church should be aiming at. Just get out there and make disciples. Be a follower of me and help others do the same.

Luke 24, 46 and 47. Then He said to them, Jesus, speaking again, thus it is written and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. We're not sent out to preach the perfect reconciliation between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

Can you imagine that? If our commission was, go out everywhere now and reproduce those stretching debates in Romans, Matthew, and biblical theology. People, people, come here. You think life's complex? Let us blow your mind.

We're not sent out to spread this message. This is just part of a disciple's quest to understand and to be prepared. So where are we left? What do we concentrate on? Oh, if God wants to give us any insight on this, fine.

If not, we can actually day by day leave it with Romans 11, 33 through 36. We can just say, oh, the depths of the riches of God's wisdom and God's knowledge. How unsearchable.

I'll never get to the bottom of this. The bottom of this is past finding out, because who has known the mind of the Lord or who has become His counselor? So what do we concentrate on? Get out there and make disciples. What needs to be preached? Repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ.

That's where we concentrate. Though right now this is a real big issue. Oh, there's a far bigger issue.

Get out there and make disciples. Compared to disciple making for the church, this is a side issue. Not a non-issue and not an invalid issue to explore biblically.

But where are we left? Get the gospel out there for all. Mark 16, 15. Mark 16, 15.

And he said to them, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Preach the gospel to every human being. That's what we need to concentrate on.

Every person. Go into all the world. Preach the gospel.

What's that? Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth, died on the cross for our sins, paid the debt, opened the door to come to the Father. And those who believe will find life in His name. How about you? You know, they might be not elect.

Well, then don't worry about it. They won't respond. And yet, every creature is to hear.

Why? Because God's not willing that any should perish. Get the gospel to every person. 2 Thessalonians 2, 13-14.

2 Thessalonians 2, 13-14. But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, God's sovereign choosing from eternity past is involved.

But how do we enter into that? What are we to do with that, really? Get out there and preach the gospel to every creature. And through the gospel, God will call people to salvation. John 20, 21.

Then Jesus said to them again, Peace to you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you. Jesus sent into the world to reach humanity, to share the love of God, to reveal the Father, to preach the truth.

We're sent in the same way. In conclusion, another quote from Pastor Chuck, All argument on the subject is a tool of the enemy to take our focus off of the real issue of bringing the gospel to the world. I agree with that very much.

All argument. Good, energetic, searching, quizzing, questioning, sharpening. Yeah, but what about this? That's fine.

One more quote from Pastor Chuck. We may not understand how these two can be reconciled, but it's because we're not as smart as God, he says. The scriptural evidence exists for both positions, so I believe them both.

Since both are taught in the word, they're not mutually exclusive. I agree totally with that. He added further, men fall into error when they hold one side of the truth, the exclusion of the other.

Do you know, Chuck listed an occurrence, you know, why do we study things like this? Here's another example. Some people at a Greg Laurie Harvest Crusade rally had t-shirts on, protesting with the word choice, and then the circle with the line drawn through it. They basically were saying, don't go to this meeting, this man is emphasizing the choices of men.

Choice, no choice. And their tracks gave that same implication. Well, that's bizarre.

That's not a biblical approach. Also, Chuck recounted some churches he had come across early in his ministry that would not put a scripture of salvation on the bulletin board, lest, quote, some poor hapless soul not predestined for salvation might read it and try to believe. Well, that's pathetic.

I mean, that's pathetic. See, it's because there are things like this in the church world, you want to address things like this to find a biblical ground. Another verse, Deuteronomy 29, 29.

Deuteronomy 29, 29. Listen to this verse now. The secret things belong to the Lord, the Lord our God.

But those things which are revealed belong to us and our children forever. Whatever God's revealed to you on this subject, live by it, draw upon it. But let's face it, there are some secret things in this, things you can't grasp, things you can't settle fully into.

Well, let the secret things belong to the Lord in glory. You know how long it's going to take us to catch this in glory? We're talking a nanosecond, you know. We'll walk into heaven and go, oh my goodness, of course.

Man, why didn't I just wait a little, you know? Of course, how else could it work? Oh, yeah. The secret things belong to the Lord. Another verse to tuck in here, Hebrews 12, 1 and 2. Along the way, what should we do? Just fix your eyes on Jesus.

That's how you run the race with endurance. Don't wait to press on. Do you get what you think is perfect understanding on this? Run with endurance the race that's set before you.

Fixing your eyes on Jesus, He always, always is the ultimate issue. And Colossians 1, 28 says, we proclaim Him. We don't go out proclaiming, I've got the perfect resolution to the greatest theological perplexity man's ever faced.

Oh, if anybody wants to know, we can share any insight God's given, but we proclaim Him. What to do with all this? If we don't understand part of it, let it be a secret thing that belongs to the Lord. We've got plenty clear enough to press on.

Preach Christ. He authors faith, He finishes it. Call lives to Him.

Seek Him. Get to know Him. And our hearts won't be perplexed, even as our mind might be waiting for more answers.

Let's pray together. Lord, what a subject. For any peace and rest You've given any of us, and I thank You for my own heart, the new measures You've put there.

It's just good to rest with You and agree with Paul. Oh, the depths of the riches and the wisdom of God, the knowledge of God, the truth of God. Your ways are past finding out fully.

Thank You for what You've let us know. For what You've given us today, Lord, equip us by it for those that might come across our path struggling with it, seeking a word of biblical correlation, integration. Lord, give us a view that takes in the whole counsel of God, even if it stretches our mind to the breaking point.

We thank You for that which is so clear. Be disciples. Make disciples.

Proclaim Jesus. And we ask that You would pour out Your Spirit and motivate our hearts to that very end. In Jesus' name, amen.

---

Audio: [http://archive.org/download/SERMONINDEX\\_SID18289/SID18289.mp3](http://archive.org/download/SERMONINDEX_SID18289/SID18289.mp3)

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/bob-hoekstra/the-sovereignty-of-god-and-the-responsibility-of-man-part-2/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**