

# GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN OUR SALVATION

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UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL  
APPENDIX ONE

## THE ISSUE

Welcome to the subject of God's sovereignty in man's salvation. The following is not a presentation of several views. It is a simple presentation of the Reformed view. The purpose, beyond seeking to inform you of the Reformed view, is to drive you to the scriptures. If you have another view, and have scripture to back it up, great. If not, go to the scriptures. What we *want* to believe is not what is important. What is important is what the *scriptures* teach.

The issue of God's sovereignty in our salvation tends to polarize people. Although it may call attention to our differences, *it should not cause division*. If we are mature, we ought to be able to disagree without being disagreeable. We ought to be able to recognize differences without being divisive.

God's sovereignty in man's salvation is an important and foundational issue. One's understanding of these things will have direct practical implications in one's lifestyle.

Why? One's belief on this issue will reveal to whom one looks as his or her source of strength and power to live the Christian life.

For example, you may say it makes no difference whether a car runs on gas or electricity, so long as it gets you where you want to go. However, if it runs on gas, when you need power, you go to a gas station. If it is electric, you plug it into a source of electricity to recharge your batteries. There is a difference.

The same is true with this doctrine: If God is in control—you go to Him for power. If man is in control—you must rely on yourself for power.

## SOME FACTS

The first thing we must understand is that God is sovereign. That means He has supreme rank and power, that He is Self-governing, totally independent, and superlative in strength. It means that nothing or no one can overrule Him. These descriptions can only be used correctly when talking of God.

The second thing we must understand is that man is not only *not* sovereign, but that he is *fallen*. This means that because of sin, man is estranged from, and

at enmity with God (Romans 8:7). This condition has grave and eternal consequences: **HELL**.

God has provided a way—the *only* way—for man to be reconciled to God. Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin so that all who believe in Him, and seek to turn from their sin, will not suffer the consequences of sin, but receive Christ's righteousness and have eternal life. If a person—any person—will believe in Christ, have a true desire to turn from sin, and follow Jesus, he or she will be saved from God's wrath.

Virtually all Christians agree up to this point. However, it is at this point that the disagreement begins. The disagreement concerns the matter of choice. The question we will seek to answer is this: Did we, as fallen people, choose to be saved, or have we been chosen by God and saved by His sovereign grace alone?

There are two biblical truths that must be grasped if we are to have a biblical understanding of the subject.

## #1 MAN IS SPIRITUALLY DEAD

The first is taught in Ephesians 2:1-3. What is man's condition before he is saved? Dead. What can a dead person do about his condition? Nothing. What does he know about his condition? Nothing. What choices does a dead man make about anything? None. Why? Because he is dead!

Some say that before a person is saved, he is like a man who is drowning in sin. They say God throws a life preserver in the form of the cross. Those who reach out are saved. Those who do not, drown.

There is only one problem with this illustration. It is not biblical! Why? Because lost man is not *drowning* spiritually—he is *dead*. Throwing all the life preservers in the world to a man who is already dead will not help him.

Ephesians 2:4-6 say that while we were dead, God made us (we who are now saved) alive. The Bible says those who are lost are dead, and that those who are saved have been made alive. There is never any mention of a state in between alive and dead where man can decide to accept or reject salvation. It sounds as though it is a work of God—not of fallen man's will. So, the first biblical truth that needs to be

understood is that before we were saved, we weren't *drowning* in sin—we were already *dead* in sin!

## #2 DESIRE DETERMINES CHOICE

The other of these two important biblical truths concerns a concept that man is a *free moral agent*. This idea is accepted by many Christians who believe it is taught by scripture. You have probably heard this term. You have probably heard Christian teaching that says all men are free moral agents. Can you quote the book, chapter, and verse where these words are found in the Bible? You cannot because these words do not appear in the Bible. The concept is not even taught in the Bible, when speaking of man. The only Free Moral Agent in existence is God Himself! Some people will do anything to cling to this doctrine. Why? Because in our sin and rebellion, we want to believe that we are in control, but we are not.

What choice does man have in the matter? Man is free to choose what he wants. However, he is free to choose *only* what he wants.

Those words contain a universal principle that unlocks the whole issue. Man's choice is *always* determined by his desire.

For example, I love ice cream. When given the choice I will always choose ice cream over other desserts. Why? Because I desire it. As much as I love ice cream, I hate bananas. I will not choose to eat banana-flavored ice cream. Why? Because even though I do like ice cream, I do not like bananas. Given the option of banana ice cream or chocolate, I will always choose chocolate. Why? Because I love chocolate ice cream and hate bananas, in any form.

But, what if I was a guest in someone's home, and without asking whether I wanted some banana ice cream, I was served some? Would I eat it? Yes. "There," you say, "you have just chosen against your desire!"

No, I haven't. Because at that moment, I have a stronger desire to keep from embarrassing my host than I do to abstain from eating the bananas. So, once again my choice is determined by my desire. I have challenged many and have never found one person who can make up a hypothetical situation where anyone would ever choose against his or her desire. The challenge still stands.

Man's desire will *always* determine his choices. This ought to be convicting for us as Christians. When I choose to sin, at that moment my desire for sin is greater than my desire to obey the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, to see how man will *choose*, we need to see what man *desires*. Look up each of the following, and read them carefully:

<b>Genesis 6:5</b>	Universal wickedness.
<b>Psalms 14:1-3</b>	Universal wickedness. No desire for God — only self.
<b>Isaiah 53:6</b>	Universal self-centeredness.
<b>Romans 3:10-18</b>	Universal wickedness. No desire for God.

These verses point out one thing very clearly: THERE IS NO ONE WHO HAS ANY HEART OR DESIRE FOR GOD—NO ONE! Man will always choose to do as he pleases.

The Bible does address the issue of man's free moral agency. It says that when man is left to himself, he will *always* choose contrary to God. Man is *not* a free moral agent because he is immoral and a slave to sin. (Romans 6:6,16-18)

Does this mean that God doesn't offer us a choice? No. Salvation is offered to all men, and repentance is commanded of all men. The problem is, no one in his fallen state will respond.

To summarize this point: God is Sovereign. Man is fallen. Salvation is provided for by Jesus Christ and offered by God to all men. However, since no one in a fallen state desires God, no one will choose to receive salvation. ALL MEN WILL BE LOST! Or will they?

## GOD HAS THREE CHOICES

We know that all men are not lost—some are saved. How did they get that way? Only one way: since man will not choose against his desire, if he is to be saved, GOD must do it. Because salvation rests solely with God, He has three choices:

- 1. He allows all to perish.** Will all be lost? NO.
- 2. He saves everyone.** Will all be saved? NO. There are those who believe that all will be saved. This is called universalism. Besides the fact that the Bible teaches otherwise, there is a logical reason that this cannot be so. Salvation is by grace. Grace means that there is no obligation on the part of the giver. If all were to be saved, then God would be under obligation to save people *simply because they exist*.
- 3. He saves some,** while allowing the rest to have what they desire. Are some going to be saved while others are lost? YES! This, then is the option God has exercised.

If any are to be saved, they must *choose* to be saved. However, since *no one* will choose to be saved, if *anyone* is to be saved, God would have to do one of two things in order to save those who are saved:

1. **Save some against their will**, dragging them kicking and screaming into heaven. Does scripture tell us that there will be people in heaven who do not want to be there? NO.
2. **Save some by giving them the desire for Him**, and for salvation. Do those who are saved want to be saved? YES! Then, this is how God saves those He saves. He doesn't save anyone against their wills, He graciously changes our hearts.

Some, who deny the biblical doctrine that those who are not saved are spiritually dead, believe God *persuades* some to choose to be saved. This view is different from forcing salvation or changing a person's desire. This view says God will do whatever is necessary to convince a person that the best thing to do is receive Christ. There are three problems with this:

1. How can you persuade a dead man to do anything?
2. This would allow for boasting in heaven since those who are there could say they saw the sensibility of being saved, whereas others, who were not as wise, did not.
3. What do you do about Acts 13:48? Those who believe were *appointed* to do so.

### WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Do you desire the things of the Lord? Why? Because God has placed that desire in you. Why does *anyone* desire the things of the Lord? For the same reason. 1 John 4:10 & 19 says we love Him because He first loved us. Philippians 2:12-13 tells us that we desire Him because He put that desire into us. There is a difference between saving people against their will and giving people the will to believe and repent. God has done the latter of the two.

Knowing human nature, what if God did not give you the desire for Him? You would be lost. What if God gave you *less* desire for Him than you naturally have for sin? You would be lost. What if God gave you *equal* desire for Him as you have for sin? You would never choose and therefore die in your indecision and sin. You would be lost!

What if He gives you *more* desire for Him than you have for sin? You will be saved.

Are you saved? Why? Because God gave you the desire. God caused you to desire Him—to choose Him—and to be saved. You had to choose to be saved, but you made that choice only because God graciously changed your heart toward Him. He gave you the desire (Philippians 2:12-13), He gave you the faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) and He gave you the gift of repentance (Acts 11:18).

### RESPONSIBLE FOR CHOICE

What does this say about personal responsibility? Does it remove personal responsibility? NO. All men are responsible for the choices they make. Those who choose to serve God, do so because of Him.

Those who do not choose God are lost due to their own sin, not God's choice or lack thereof. No one will be able to blame God for being lost. We are lost due to our own sin and refusal to call on the Lord. **We** are responsible.

### "IT JUST DOESN'T SEEM FAIR!"

When we say that God chooses to save some, and not others, there is always the temptation to say, "That is not fair!"

Scripture asks and answers the question of God's fairness. Romans 9:14 says, "*Is there any unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!*"

Righteousness means justice. When we question God's fairness, we are questioning His justice—or righteousness. What we need to see is that while not all men receive justice, with God, justice is always served.

Those who do not believe in Christ and will not turn from their sins receive absolute justice. They are justly condemned for their own sins. Those who are saved do not receive justice. Nevertheless, justice is served since when Jesus died on the cross, He received the just punishment for the sins of those who believe on His name for salvation. The lost receive justice. The saved receive grace, and Christ receives the just penalty for their sins.

### WHY ME?

Why did God choose some and not others? No one knows why He chose certain of us to be saved, while allowing others to continue in their desire to sin. The answer to this question is not revealed to us—it belongs with God. We do know, however, that His choice was **not** based upon anything in us that deserved salvation.

## ARE SOME CHOSEN TO BE LOST?

This brings up the question of “Double Predestination.” If God is responsible for the salvation of those who are saved, is He also responsible for the damnation of those who are lost? No. While we could say that God chose some to be lost because He did not choose them to be saved, God is not responsible for the evil that results in damnation. God is responsible for grace that saves, but He is not in any way responsible for the sin that condemns. Those who are lost are lost due to their own sin—not God’s choice. The same offer of salvation and command to repent is given to the lost as is given to the saved; but the lost reject it.

We who are saved also rejected it—until God changed our hearts and gave us His grace. That gift of grace included the following: a desire for Him where there was none; understanding of spiritual things where there was none; spiritual life where there was spiritual death; faith; and repentance.

While the redeemed are given grace—the lost are allowed to continue in sin, following their own fleshly desires.

## IS THIS JUST FOREKNOWLEDGE?

Some believe that God chose those He foreknew (or knew in advance) would choose Him. Is this true?

NO.

First, the passage that *seems* to say this, (Romans 8:29-30) does not say it at all. It does not refer to an *action* that was known about in advance, but rather a *group of people* who were known. If the passage is allowed to speak for itself, it will be seen that those *people* God knew, He predestined. Those He predestined He called, those He called He justified, and those He justified He glorified. This says He knew all of those whom He was going to save—and He has guaranteed that they will be saved completely.

Secondly, how is the word “foreknowledge” used in the New Testament? Does it mean God makes a choice based on His ability to peer into the future and see the *choice* of another? 1 Peter 1:20 says Jesus was “foreordained before the foundation of the world.” The word “foreordained” is the exact Greek word translated “foreknew” in Romans 8:29.

If Romans 8:29 means that God makes His choice based on His ability to look into the future and see how we would *choose*, then 1 Peter 1:20 teaches that Jesus was chosen to be the Savior because the Father looked into the future and saw that *He would die on*

*the cross*. Of course, this is preposterous! He is not the Messiah because He chose to die on the cross; rather He chose to die on the cross because He is the Messiah. In the same way, we are not elected to salvation because God saw that we would choose to follow Christ; rather we chose to follow Christ because we were elected by God unto salvation.

Thirdly, Jesus’ words in the gospel of John teach us that our choice was dependent on His choice—not the other way around:

**John 6:44** Those who come to Jesus, come because God caused them to. He chose first.

**John 15:16** He chose us—we didn’t (in a fallen state) choose Him.

A choice determined by the choice of another, is really no choice at all. For example, suppose you take me to a restaurant, (you are buying) and order me a hamburger, fries and a coke. Then I say to the waitress, “I’ll have a hamburger, fries and a coke.” What choice did I make?

NONE! You made it!

So, either God chose first or we did. If we did—He didn’t. If He did—we didn’t. Either He is bound by our choice—or we by His.

Fourth, God *does* know who will respond—no one! We have already seen that scripture teaches that all men are lost, and because of their prevailing desire to sin, are unwilling and unable to choose God. So, if God was choosing those He knew would choose Him, He would not choose anyone.

If God’s choice was based on my choice, it wasn’t His choice at all! This reasoning puts man in control, not God.

## BUT CAN’T I REJECT GRACE?

There are those who agree with everything I’ve said up to a point, but here they balk. They say man cannot choose for God, so God brings them to a place where they are able to decide for God, but still able to reject as well. Here are five reasons why this is incorrect:

1. There is no such state of decision ever mentioned in the Bible. Neither is there even one person who was brought to a place where he could choose either way. If a person chooses to remain in sin, it is because he or she is not saved. If that person chooses to follow Christ, it is because he or she is born again.
2. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says the lost man does not understand the things of God and they are

foolishness to him. Only a spiritual (saved) man can understand. So, how can a person who still has no understanding of spiritual things understand enough to choose the way of salvation? He can't.

3. Ephesians 2:1-5 says the lost man is dead in sin, and the saved man is alive in Christ. As we have seen, dead men do not decide anything. Those who are alive are *already* saved. There is no mention in scripture about a state of being in-between dead in sin and alive in Christ.
4. Those who hold this position point to scriptures that say we are to seek the Lord and/or choose whom we will serve. It is true that we must seek the Lord and choose to be saved if we are to be saved, but our seeking and choosing are a result of His having chosen us first. Further, most of the passages that say "Seek the Lord" are not referring to salvation, but to growth in the Christian faith. Christians can and must choose whether to obey the spirit or the flesh once they are saved, but not in order to be saved.
5. Those who hold this position generally do so based on what they want to believe, having no scriptural basis for it whatsoever. Our beliefs are not the basis for doctrine—God's Word is!

The bottom line of this whole issue is that salvation is of the Lord. In his sinful state man is unwilling and therefore unable to save himself. Every man is in that sinful state until he is born again. Man can do nothing to save himself, *assist* God in saving him, or *add* anything to the saving work of God—including choosing (while lost) to be saved. If anyone is to be saved, it has to be the work of God. If salvation is in any way the work of man, then when he gets to heaven he would have reason to boast that he was good enough, or smart enough to be saved. However, the Bible clearly teaches that we are saved by grace [God's gift] through faith, and that [our faith] is not of ourselves—it is the gift of God, not of works [human effort] lest anyone should boast! (Ephesians 2:8-9)

### WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

There is another issue that stems from this one: The eternal security of the believer. For those of us who believe that our salvation is of God and not of ourselves, it naturally follows that since we did not earn it—we cannot lose it. If it wasn't given to us on the basis of our works—we do not retain it on the basis of our works. Does scripture teach this?

YES. Look at the following passages of scripture:

**John 10:27-28** Those who are sheep have eternal life—nothing can take it away from them.

**Romans 8:33-39** Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

What about those who *seem* to be saved, but later fall away completely?

**1 John 2:19** clearly says *none of them were really saved!*

**Matthew 7:21-23** clearly says that Jesus *never* knew them.

But, doesn't this open the door for reckless living, seeing that our works aren't what keeps us saved? NO. There are two basic motivations to live holy lives:

1. **FEAR** of losing salvation—which is works—which leads to legalism.
2. **LOVE** for the One who saved you and has commanded that you be holy! (1 Peter 1:15-16)

Paul said in Titus 2:11-12 that grace teaches us to be holy. Those who think it is perfectly acceptable for Christians to continue to live ungodly lives, or that true Christians habitually do live ungodly lives, *do not understand and have not been taught by grace!*

Those who want the world more than they want the Lord ought to be warned that those who love Jesus will have a desire to obey Him and live for Him.

What if sin forfeits salvation? *All are lost* because all continue to sin. If it were true, grace isn't enough, and salvation is by works.

But, if God's grace saves us and keeps us, why is anyone saved? Those who make it to the end will be saved *because of God's faithfulness, not their own.* God gets all the glory—*not man!*

### SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

What are some of the practical implications of this doctrine? Understanding these things will result in more of each of the following:

1. **Humility.** There is no room for pride.
2. **Worship.** God gets the glory—not man!
3. **Obedience.** Motivated by love and gratitude.
4. **Prayer.** Motivated by love, obedience and a desire to be a part of God's plan.
5. **Evangelism.** Motivated by love, obedience and a desire to be used by God to reach the lost. Greater boldness knowing that it is ultimately up to Him—not our powers of persuasion.

## THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM

It is somewhat unfortunate that Reformed teaching regarding salvation is commonly known as Calvinism. John Calvin did not invent this doctrine. It is taught in the scriptures and was affirmed by the early church fathers. Saint Augustine, a 4th century bishop of the church in North Africa called attention to this doctrine long before Calvin did. But, it is not Augustinian either. It is *Christian*!

Here are the five points of Calvinism presented with alternate names that are more descriptive than the common terms that are often misleading. The original terms are in parenthesis. A brief definition follows each.

1. **PERVASIVE EVIL** (*Total Depravity*) All men are sinners, and therefore under condemnation. This does not mean men are as sinful as they could be, but rather that a) mankind is totally sinful, and b) every area of man's being has been adversely affected by sin. All men are sinners, and therefore are sinful. (Is. 64:6; Ps. 14:1-3; Rom. 3:10-23)
2. **SOVEREIGN ELECTION** (*Unconditional Election*) Those who are elected by God to be saved were not chosen on the basis of any personal merit, but by God's sovereign will. (Acts 13:48)
3. **PARTICULAR REDEMPTION** (*Limited Atonement*) Every individual that God has elected to be saved, will be saved. This does not mean that Christ's death cannot atone for the sins of all men, but that it *will* not atone for the sins of those who reject Christ and ultimately are lost. Jesus didn't die in hopes that some would believe. Jesus died for a specific group of people: the elect. This point refutes both universalism and the notion that salvation is left to the choice of unregenerate men. (Jn. 6:39-44; 10:26-28)
4. **EFFECTUAL CALLING** (*Irresistible Grace*) The sinful nature of the elect is not greater than the grace of God. Those whom God has chosen to save will be saved. (Jn. 6:39-44, 10:26-28; Acts 13:48)
5. **FAITHFULNESS OF GOD** (*Perseverance of the Saints*) Those who are truly saved will persevere to the end—none of them will fall away—because God is faithful to keep those whom He has saved. This is due to *His* faithfulness, not *ours*! (Jn. 6:40, 10:27-28; 1 Jn. 2:19)

## HOW THE EXPERTS LINE UP

The Reformed view is not some strange heresy, as some opponents allege. Many of the greatest men of God throughout the history of the Church have

believed and taught the doctrines of grace as presented in this document. St. Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, Matthew Henry, Jonathan Edwards, Martyn-Lloyd Jones, Francis Schaeffer and R.C. Sproul are but a few of the reformed theologians whose names are familiar to many.

We would not allege that Christians who do not embrace these doctrines of grace are not in Christ. We would simply say, with respect, that they are mistaken in their understanding of grace and its implications.

## QUESTIONS OFTEN POSED

It is interesting that the passages of scripture that *seem* to teach that salvation is of man and by our choice can be explained clearly from the Reformed viewpoint. However, the passages that clearly teach that salvation is of God, cannot be explained from the non-Reformed viewpoint. The way many opponents of the doctrines of God's sovereignty deal with the clear teachings from scripture that salvation is of God (i.e., Acts 13:48) is to ignore them and turn instead to a verse that *seems* to support their view.

Here are a few of the most often asked questions on this subject:

### 1. ***Doesn't this make us mindless, emotionless robots?***

NO.

- a) God has put into your being the desire to breathe, drink, eat, and sleep. That has not reduced you to a mindless, emotionless robot.
- b) God has not taken away our ability to make choices. He has merely insured that there would be some who choose to be saved by giving those who are saved the desire to be saved. There are four kinds of people and four possibilities of choice.

PRE-FALL MAN	POST-FALL MAN	REBORN MAN	GLORIFIED MAN
able to sin	able to sin	able to sin	
able <i>not</i> to sin		able <i>not</i> to sin	able <i>not</i> to sin
	unable <i>not</i> to sin		
			unable to sin

Man still has decisions to make. The Post-fall man can choose to what degree he will live for himself, while continuing to choose to reject God's offer of salvation. The Reborn man is able to choose to fulfill the desires of his flesh (which is sin), or those of the Spirit.

**2. If God sovereignly controls all things, is He not responsible for sin?**

God is light and in Him, there is no darkness at all. He is so holy that there is not even the potential for corruption in Him. Therefore, God is not responsible for sin, even though He does decree, and use even the sinful acts of men for the accomplishment of His eternal purposes (Romans 8:28).

God's eternally decreed plans and purposes will happen as He has determined. God allows man to make choices that may or may not be according to His will. But God is so great that we know that all things (including man's sin that is not according to God's will, and for which man, not God is responsible) work together for good, and towards the accomplishment of His eternal purpose. Man's sin cannot thwart God's eternal purpose.

For example, God decreed that Jesus be betrayed by Judas, but God is not responsible for Judas' sin. God's decree that Jesus be betrayed (first cause) was accomplished by Judas acting according to his own sinful nature (secondary cause.) In that instance, God used what was possibly the worst sin of all time, the betrayal of Christ, to accomplish His eternal purposes (first cause) to save His people from their sins.

**3. Why pray or evangelize if God is going to accomplish His plan and save the elect whether or not I pray or evangelize?**

Because God has commanded us to pray and to be His instruments for evangelism. God has ordained the ends (how things will turn out) and He has also ordained the means (the way the ends are to be accomplished). God has elected specific people to believe and to be saved, and He has commanded His people to preach the gospel as the means by which the elect come to faith. We therefore must evangelize. The same is true concerning the God-ordained means to accomplishing other aspects of God's will—prayer.

**4. If God makes men sinful, and if they can not choose to be saved because they are sinful, how can God hold me responsible? Isn't God, therefore, responsible for my sin?**

God did not make man sinful. He made man sinless and declared man to be very good. Man brought sin into the world, not God. Therefore, God is in no way responsible for man's fallen state,

man is.

**Here are a few of the scriptures that are most often asked about:**

**1. Doesn't 2 Peter 3:9 say that "God is not willing that any should perish?"**

YES. There are two ways of understanding this.

a) The book is written to those who are in the faith (1:1). This is mentioned again in 3:1, where Peter addresses himself to "beloved." The immediate context (3:8) is again the "beloved." The context reveals that God is not willing that any of His *elect* should be lost. That is why He has delayed His coming as long as He has. The whole passage is referring to the elect.

b) There is a sense in which God does not desire the wicked to perish. That Christ died on the cross, and that all men are commanded to believe and repent demonstrates that God "desires" all to be saved. That God has compassion even on those who are lost is demonstrated by the fact that Christ wept for Jerusalem, knowing that they were going to reject Him and be lost. There is, however, a difference between God's general love for man and His redemptive love for the elect.

**2. Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 10 contain verses that seem to say that it is possible to fall away and lose one's salvation. Please explain.**

a) Both passages conclude by saying that these hypothetical arguments do not refer to true believers. (See Heb. 6:9, & 10:39.)

b) Hebrews 6 describes the religious man who knows about the Lord and has benefited from his relationship with the church, but not one who has been born again. (See 1 John 2:19)

c) If Hebrews 10:26-ff. were saying that willful sin would cause one to lose his salvation—we all are lost, for which of us has not sinned willfully?

## ONE FINAL THOUGHT

Whether a Christian agrees totally with what has been presented in this paper is not what is paramount. What is most important is that all Christians understand *what* they believe concerning the issue of their salvation and *who* obtained it. We must have *scriptural* support for our beliefs, and be willing to accept the *implications* of those beliefs.

**RECOMMENDED FOR  
FURTHER READING**

If salvation is a matter of *fallen man's* choice, then besides having room to boast in heaven for having been smart enough, or spiritual enough to have made that choice, a whole avalanche of "therefores" *must* naturally follow. The conclusions that must be inevitably drawn, and the implications that must be accepted when one embraces this man-centered theology are that God is not sovereign or just. Man becomes sovereign and God becomes dependent upon man for everything. This is a grave error.

On the other hand, we want to avoid the error of fatalism. God is not a cruel and terroristic autocrat who toys with His creation, delighting in arbitrarily making some suffer. Neither is man a mindless, emotionless robot. Rather, we who believe that the Bible teaches that salvation is of God must come to another set of conclusions. Some of these are that since God is in control, the success or failure of His plan is not dependent on men, and it will not fail. We know that since He loved us so much that He saw to it that we would be saved, He will ensure that we remain saved. We then are motivated to serve Him, not by fear of being cast into Hell, but by love.

You decide which side of the issue you will embrace. Ask God for understanding. Search the scriptures in order to have a biblical basis for your belief. And be sure you think through and are ready to accept the inevitable implications of your belief.

1. R.C. Sproul, [Chosen By God](#), Very readable and understandable while thorough. Many of the ideas expressed on these pages are borrowed from Dr. R. C. Sproul.
2. A.W. Pink, [The Sovereignty of God](#), Much more complex in its presentation; extremely thorough.
3. Roger Devinish, [Who Is In Control?](#), A very easy to read abridgment of The Sovereignty of God by Pink.
4. J.I. Packer, [Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God](#), After introducing the subject, Packer shows the practical application of God's sovereignty in evangelism.
5. Charles Spurgeon, [Election](#), A booklet containing six sermons on the subject by the "Prince of Preachers."
6. Albert Martin, [The Practical Implications of Calvinism](#), Just what the title implies, a very helpful little booklet.
7. David & Randall Basinger, [Predestination & Free Will](#), A debate in book form. Four different views are presented by four different men. They range from mildly Reformed to Process Theology.

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