



## God's Sovereignty

### Part 2 - God's Sovereignty over Salvation

Sunday 16 November 2025

#### Introduction

How does someone / did you become a Christian? What needs to happen?

We can answer these questions from at least two directions

- What \_\_\_\_\_ did
- What \_\_\_\_\_ did

#### Recap Part 1: God's Sovereignty is Supreme

God doesn't rule over a little

God doesn't rule over a lot

**GOD RULES OVER THE LOT!**

#### Overview

**Sunday 9 November – God's Sovereignty is Supreme**

**Sunday 16 November – God's Sovereignty over Salvation**

**Sunday 30 November – God's Sovereignty over Sin and Suffering**

## 1. Our plight before we are saved

If we want a proper picture of how BIG God's sovereignty over salvation is, we need to see how the Bible describes us before God saves us. This look is uncomfortable, because we find humanity is a spiritual basket case without God's intervention.

Bible ref. (page)	What's affected? What's the problem?	Who is affected?
John 9:39 (1076) 2 Corinthians 4:4 (1161) Revelation 3:17 (1236)	Eyes Blindness	People in the world, unbelievers.
Mark 7:21-23 (1010) Jeremiah 17:9 (777) Proverbs 10:20 (644)		
Titus 1:15-16 (1198) Romans 1:28-31 (1129) Colossians 1:21 (1182)		
Psalm 5:9 (544) Romans 3:12-14 (1128) James 3:9-10 (1215)		
Romans 1:24-27 (1128) Proverbs 21:10 (657) John 3:19 (1066)		
Romans 5:12 (1132) 1 John 5:12 (1228) Proverbs 8:36 (642)		

How would you sum up the picture from the table above?

But the picture gets bleaker the more we look...

(a) People are unable to choose what's right

*Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you,  
everyone who sins is a slave to sin.’  
**John 8:34** (NIV 2011)<sup>1</sup> (cf. 2 Peter 2:19)*

*Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,<sup>26</sup> and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

**2 Timothy 2:25-26**

(b) People are unable to understand anything about God

*The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. **2 Corinthians 2:14** (cf. Deuteronomy 29:4)*

*[Jesus] told them, ‘The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables<sup>12</sup> so that, “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”*

**Mark 4:11-12**

---

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations will be from the NIV 2011 unless stated otherwise.

(c) People are like this from the very start

*Surely I was sinful at birth,  
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*  
**Psalm 51:5**

Given all we've seen, how much do you think you could contribute to your salvation? Give yourself a score out of 10.

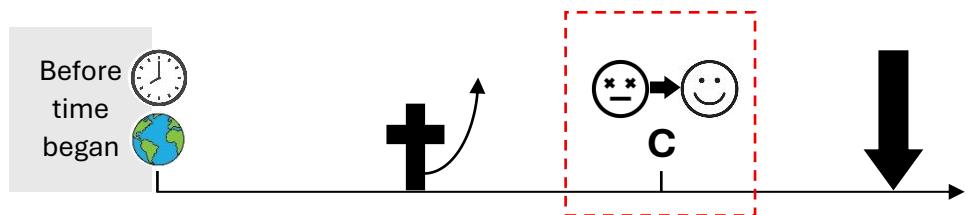
**Blind, deaf, dumb, enslaved,  
on our own we can't be saved!**

*God alone knows the nature and extent of the disease of sin. And he alone knows how his providence works to bring us to faith. He tells us enough of this great work to humble our pride, exalt his grace, give us hope, empower our obedience, and preserve us to the end.*

**John Piper, Providence, 526.**

## 2. How conversion and salvation came about

We are going to start thinking about how God saves us from the middle before looking back to the beginning. And we are going to do this by thinking about this question: **What happened at your conversion?**<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup>This idea of starting at conversion is taken from *Providence* by John Piper, 515.

### (a) How is conversion described?

Bible ref. (page)	How is salvation described?
John 3:3,5-6 (1065) Titus 3:4-6 (1199) 1 Peter 1:3-4b (1217)	
1 Corinthians 1:22-24 (1144) Romans 8:28, 30 (1135)	
Rom. 1:7; 9:24; 1 Cor 1:2, 8-9; Heb. 9:15; 1 Pet. 2:9; 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 1	(How are Christians described)
2 Corinthians 4:4-6 (1161) 2 Corinthians 5:17 (1162) Galatians 6:15 (1172) Colossians 3:9-10 (1184)	

### (b) Why give us impossible commands?

At least two of the above are “commandments” that we cannot do! So, why does God command us to do it?

1. Because it is right and good to obey God’s command, love what’s lovely and believe in his Son.
2. Because there is a kind of command that **creates** the very response commanded.

*When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’<sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth round his face.*

***John 11:43-44***

### (c) How does God call us (effectively)?

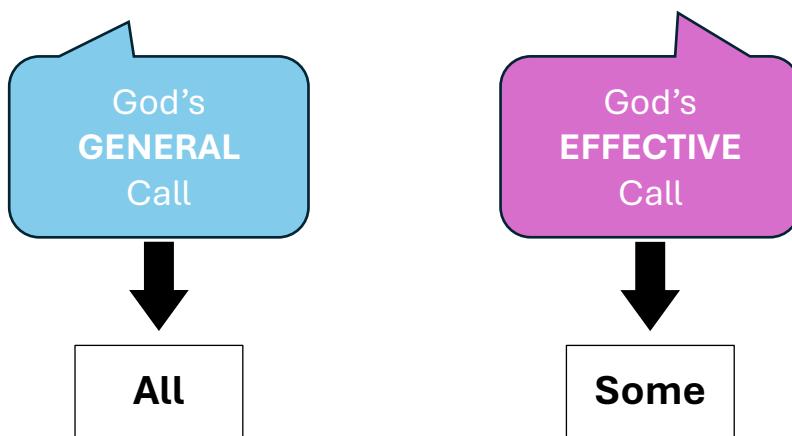
God's call comes to people through the gospel proclaimed.

*'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'<sup>14</sup> How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup> And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'*

**Romans 10:13b-15**

*For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ...And this is the word that was preached to you.*

**1 Peter 1:23, 25b**



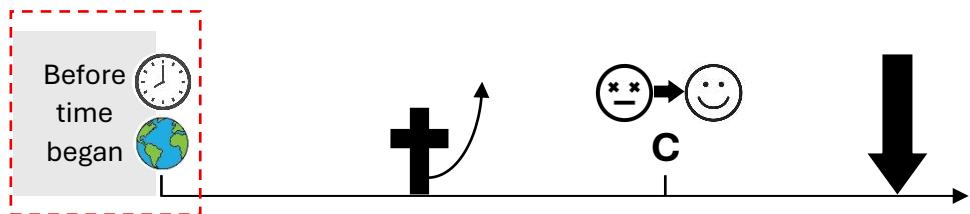
Those who receive God's **EFFECTIVE** call demonstrate it through **repentance** and **faith**. And even these are described as gifts from God (see Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 2:25-26).

**Although we are all lost in sin,  
God's gospel call does break in!**

Think back to when you became a Christian, how can you see God's hand at work?

### **3. Sovereignty over salvation before time began**

We've thought about our conversion in time. We've seen God is sovereign over this. However, to understand God's sovereignty over salvation fully we need to consider what happened before time began.



*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.<sup>29</sup> For those God **foreknew** he also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.<sup>30</sup> And those he **predestined**, he also **called**; those he **called**, he also **justified**; those he **justified**, he also **glorified**.*

*Romans 8:28-30*

**foreknew** → **predestined** → **called** → **justified** → **glorified**

## (a) Foreknew

What is foreknowledge?

- Sometimes it is God knowing the future (Psalm 139:1-6; Isaiah 46:10).
- To “know” speaks of relationship between God and people or between one person and another, especially marriage.
  - Moses is known by God – a description of friendship (Exodus 33:17).
  - Adam knows his wife Eve, a description of having sex with. (Genesis 4:1).
  - Christians, who love God, are known by God (1 Corinthians 8:3)
- To know can simply mean to choose.

*Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.<sup>19</sup> For I have chosen [literally “known”] him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord...*

**Genesis 18:18-19** (cf. Amos 3:12)

- Foreknowledge is **NOT** God foreknowing that someone would come to choose him.

Bible Ref. (page)	Relationship started by whom?	God's actions described as...	Who is the object of God's action?	Any reason for a rel'ship?
<b>Deut. 7:6-8</b> (189)	The LORD	Choosing	People of Israel (Treasured Possession)	Not 'cos they're numerous
<b>Deut. 4:37</b> (183)	God	Choosing	Descendants of those he loved	Loved their forefathers
<b>Deut. 14:2</b> (193)				
<b>1 Ki. 3:8</b> (338)				

Bible Ref. (page)	Relationship started by whom?	God's actions described as...	Who is the object of God's action?	Any reason for a rel'ship?
<b>1 Chr. 16:13</b> (419)				
<b>Neh. 9:7</b> (492)				
<b>Ps. 33:12</b> (561)				
<b>Ps.135:4</b> (626)				
<b>Isa. 41:8-9</b> (727)				
<b>Ez. 20:5</b> (847)				
<b>Mark 13:20</b> (1019)				
<b>John 13:18</b> (1081)				
<b>John 15:16</b> (1083)				
<b>Acts 22:14</b> (1119)				
<b>Eph. 1:4</b> (1173)				
<b>Col. 3:12</b> (1184)				
<b>Jam. 1:18</b> (1213)				
<b>1 Pt. 2:9</b> (1218)				
<b>Rev. 17:14</b> (1245)				

What have we learnt about foreknowledge?

## (b) Unconditional Election

Theologians often describe this teaching as “unconditional election.”

- **Election** = choosing
- **Unconditional** = choosing that doesn’t depend on something outside of God himself.

*The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. <sup>8</sup>But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

**Deuteronomy 7:7-8**

### Definition

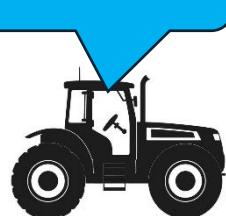
**Unconditional Election**  
Election is an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any good they would do, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.

(Adapted from Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 670)

This can be a difficult doctrine to get our heads round and to accept personally. But it's clearly taught in the Bible.

A tale of Tom and his tractor...

“What do you mean when you call him God?”



## (c) Human responsibility

### **Personal Faith**

Unconditional election does not mean that salvation is unconditional. There are things that we must do to be saved. We must believe in Christ. We must follow him. But faith is not the condition of election. Election is the condition of faith.

### **Prayer for Gospel spread**

Paul believed in God's sovereignty over salvation (see Romans 8:29), and he urged prayer for gospel progress.

*And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.*

**Colossians 4:3-4** (cf. Ephesians 6:19-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:1)

### **Evangelistic Preaching**

Peter believed in God's sovereignty over salvation (see 1 Peter 1:2), and he urged people to respond to the gospel on the Day of Pentecost.

*With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.'*

**Acts 2:40**

## (d) Piecing it all together

How do we work out how all this goes together?

**Hyper-Calvinism:** God is so sovereign over salvation that we mustn't do evangelism, because if we did we'd make a mess of things and get in God's way.

**Arminianism:** God's "prevenient grace" makes us able to either respond to the gospel or reject it. Sometimes called a "partial regeneration".

*Classical Arminian theology... attributes the sinner's ability to respond to the gospel with repentance and faith to prevent grace the illuminating, convicting, calling, enabling power of the Holy Spirit working on the sinner's soul... makes them free to choose saving grace (or reject it). Roger Olson, Against Calvinism, 67.*

**Calvinism:** God is sovereign over salvation and calls us to respond to the gospel with repentance and faith, but even these responses are his gifts to us.



Charles Simeon & John Wesley, an example of godly difference of opinion.

### (e) Why does all this matter?

*That massive security is rooted in the eternal planning of providence. It may be distant. Many people may argue about it. Many may treat it as theoretical or academic. But it is not. It is a glorious reality. It is precious truth. It is immediately relevant, because our faith (right now) hangs on God's faithfulness to his eternal plan. John Piper, Providence, 573*

- A ground of **ASSURANCE** (Philippians 1:6)
- Reason to **PRAISE** (Ephesians 1:5-6)
- Encouragement to **EVANGELISM** (Acts 18:9-10)
- Prompt to **PRAYER** (2 Thessalonian 3:1)