

The Gospel of John

Sovereignty and Free Will

John 10:22-31

INTRODUCTION:

As we continue in the Gospel of John open your Bibles to the tenth chapter. I don't know about you, but it doesn't seem very long ago we began our study in John. And yet we have been in it now for over a year. If you just do the math, there are 21 chapters in the gospel of John, and this is chapter 10, and we have already gone through the first 21 verses out of 42. So, mathematically we are halfway through the book of John. Currently we are three months from the end of Jesus' life. Starting in chapter 11 we will be studying events during the last two weeks of His life and His appearances after the resurrection.

Our message this morning is going to be more topical by nature than expository (a verse by verse study). This is a message that God has given me from our passage. We will be examining two concepts.

- 1) The **sovereignty of God** which is **His right and ability of having supreme power and authority**.
- 2) The **free will of man** which is the limited ability of man to make his own decisions concerning God.

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 10:22-31 (NASB)

²² At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; ²³ it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴ The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." ²⁵ Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. ²⁶ But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

Prayer

Verse 1 refers to the "Feast of Dedication. If you would search the Old Testament for this feast, you would not find it. It commemorates a time in history between the writings of the Old and New Testaments. It is the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah, which celebrates the Israelite victory over the Syrian leader Antiochus Epiphanes, who persecuted Israel.

In 170 B.C. he conquered Jerusalem and immediately desecrated the Jewish temple by going inside the holy of holies and sacrificing a pig and erecting a statue of Zeus there.

In 167 B.C., he made a law in an attempt to standardize the everyone's religion. The Jews would not worship a Pagan God, so he brutally persecuted them.

Under the leadership of an old priest named Mattathias, the Jews fought the Maccabean Revolt against Syria between 166-142 B.C. They successfully freed the temple and the land from Syrian dominance in 164 B.C. during the winter.

John 10:23 (NASB)

²³ it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon.

This is the occasion and the place where we find ourselves as we once again hear the Jews and Jesus conversing with each other.

John 10:24 (NASB)

²⁴ The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."

They were not seeking clarity and understanding regarding who Jesus was. They wanted Jesus to distinctly say that He is God so they would have something solid to accuse Him of and have justification for attacking Him. Let's look at Jesus' answer.

John 10:25 (NASB)

²⁵ Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.

There should be no question at all of Who He Is. Not only has Jesus told them over and over, but the miracles that they saw Him do should have left absolutely no doubt that He was the Messiah.

Verses 26 & 27 clearly indicate that God has **chosen** His sheep and it is they who believe and follow. This is where today's message starts to take root. Jesus is once again explaining to the Jews **why** they do not believe.

From the perspective of **divine sovereignty** they did **not believe because** they were **not of** the Lord's **sheep**, which were given to Jesus by the Father. But from the standpoint of **human responsibility** and **man's free will**, the hostile Jews did not believe because they had deliberately and willingly rejected the truth.

John 6:37 (NASB)

³⁷ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

John 6:44 (NASB)

⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

A full understanding of exactly how divine sovereignty and human responsibility work together lies beyond human comprehension. But this is not a problem in the infinite mind of God. Significantly, the Bible does not attempt to harmonize them. For me this is a clear indication that the scriptures are inspired by God and the Holy Spirit. If it were from man, we would try to make a full explanation of their harmonization.

BODY:

I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

When we read scriptures concerning the sovereignty of God, it is very easy for us to become concerned with our salvation. The scripture is clear that God determines who will be saved.

Romans 8:29-30 (NASB)

²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

The Bible repeatedly describes believers as the “chosen”.

Ephesians 1:4 NASB)

⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

According to John, in the book of Revelation, those who were chosen before the foundation of the world will have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Revelation 21:27 (NASB)

²⁷ and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

We also see the sovereignty of God through various individuals throughout the scripture.

ESAU:

The scriptures tell us that God **hated** Esau.

Malachi 1:2-3 (NASB)

² “I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have You loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob's brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob; ³ but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and *appointed* his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”

PHARAOH:

Moses repeatedly asked Pharaoh to "**Let MY People Go!**" And Exodus tells us that God hardened his heart and Pharaoh would refuse. Paul even gives us God's purpose.

Romans 9:17-18 (NASB)

¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Then I want you to see the verses that follow:

Romans 9:19-21 (NASB)

¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹ Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

These scriptures concerning the sovereignty of God could scare you. What if you are not one of the predestined? If God chooses those who will be saved, then what difference does it make for man to believe? Why preach the gospel? Furthermore, if God elects according to His sovereign will, then how can we be responsible for our actions? What if you were chosen to act against God like Esau, Pharaoh, or even Judas? These are all good and fair questions that need to be answered.

II. THE FREE WILL OF MAN.

Now that we have seen examples of the sovereignty of God, the following question would be "Do human beings truly have a free will?"

If "free will" means that God gives humans the opportunity to make choices that genuinely affect their destiny, then yes, human beings do have a free will. The world's current sinful state is directly linked to choices made by Adam and Eve. God created mankind in His own image, and that included the ability to choose.

However, free will does not mean that mankind can do anything he pleases. Our choices are limited to what is in keeping with our God given abilities. For example, a man may choose **to walk** across a bridge **or not to walk** across it; what he cannot choose is to **fly** over the bridge. That is because he does not have the ability to fly like a bird. In a similar way, a man cannot choose to make himself righteous. His sinful condition prevents him from canceling his guilt. So, free will is limited by our God given abilities.

However, this limitation does not take away our accountability. The Bible is clear that we not only have the **ability** to choose, we also have the **responsibility** to choose wisely.

Even those who have not had the gospel preached to them are without excuse.

Romans 1:20 (NASB)

²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

III. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOVEREIGNTY AND FREE WILL.

It is impossible for us to fully understand the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's free will and responsibility. Only God truly knows how they work together in His plan of salvation. Although God is sovereign, the Bible also says that we are responsible for receiving Christ as Savior. We must believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

Romans 10:9-10 (NASB)

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

God knows who will be saved and God chooses who will be saved, and we must use our free will to choose Christ in order to be saved. How these facts work together is impossible for a finite mind to comprehend.

Romans 11:33-34 (NASB)

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?

We should leave foreknowledge, election, and predestination up to God and simply be obedient in sharing the gospel.

John 10:27 (NASB)

²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

Here is the question:

- 1) Is the emphasis on the fact that ONLY the predetermined sheep will be able hear His voice. Or...
- 2) Is the emphasis on the fact that ONLY those who hear His voice and follow Him will be His sheep.

I believe the answer to both is YES!

John 10:28-30 (NASB)

²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.²⁹ My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

When the sovereignty of God and the free will of man to accept Christ goes hand in hand, God draws us to Himself and we are given eternal life. His sheep are offered promises of security: They will never perish and no one shall ever snatch them out of His hand. The devil, as the thief whose only intention is to steal and kill and destroy, may at times be permitted to test and even oppress the Christian, but he cannot snatch us away from the Good Shepherd.

God the Father called the sheep to Himself and handed the sheep over to Christ. Christ has promised that He will not lose a single one of them. And this promise is backed up by the greatest of them all, God Himself. No one is able to ever snatch the sheep out of their hand!

CONCLUSION:

If your name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that indicates to me to you will die rejecting Jesus. It will be of your choosing. You will be without excuse and you will be responsible for your ultimate judgment. God's sovereignty offers no excuses for your decisions.

John 10:31 (NASB)

³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

The Jews continued to reject Jesus as the Messiah. For the third time John records that the Jews attempted to stone Jesus. Yet even they were given another chance to repent on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:36-39 (NASB)

³⁶ Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus **whom YOU crucified.**”

Peter is telling them that they were responsible for the crucifixion of God's Son. Now they had to act upon their free will and depend on the sovereignty of God for their salvation.

³⁷ **Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart,** and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, **“Brethren, what shall we do?”** ³⁸ Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will **call to Himself.**”

You see, even some of the Jews who were shouting "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" had their names in the book of life. How do I know?

Acts 2:41 (NASB)

⁴¹ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

If Jesus is not your Shepherd, then I invite you to walk to the front during the invitation hymn and accept Jesus in your life. Or talk to me after the service. Jesus will place you in the flock of God. He will replace your sin with His righteousness and your severed relationship with God, due to sin, will be restored.. He will secure you in His hand and give you eternal life. Will you come to Him this morning?

This is the Day.