

If God's Already Chosen His Own, Why Do Missions and Evangelism?

Romans 10:14-21

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How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" - Romans 10:14-15, ESV

One of the things we foolish and sinful human beings like to do is manipulate the truth. We have many ways of doing this, but one common way is to take one truth and try to use it as a weapon to attack some other truth. When we do this, we set brother and sister truths against each other in a vain effort to manipulate things according to our own preferences.

In his classic *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God*, J. I. Packer says that all true Christians know in their hearts that God is sovereign in salvation, otherwise we would never pray for someone's salvation. The very fact that we ask God to save lost loved ones shows that we know God is the One who saves. He also says that we must embrace the truth of God's sovereignty and of human responsibility as both being true, even if we cannot reconcile them perfectly in our logical thinking. We pray for God to save people, but we also know they must repent and believe. God must save them, and they must respond to the Gospel. Both are true.

Holding both of these truths together is vital to doing missions and evangelism well. Some people who have objected to "Calvinism" have said that believing in election and predestination undermines evangelism and missions. I think they should tell that to the Apostle Paul, the hardest working and most successful missionary evangelist in history, who taught election and predestination very clearly in Romans and Ephesians.

Sadly, on the other side of the debate, some professed Calvinists have used predestination as an excuse to be lazy and apathetic about missions and evangelism. When William Carey was interested in taking the Gospel to those who had never heard of Jesus, he was told by one so-called Calvinistic minister, "When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your help or mine!" Carey could have easily retorted simply by quoting Romans: *"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?"*

People must believe in the Lord Jesus to be saved. They cannot believe unless they hear the Gospel. But they also cannot believe unless their hearts are changed by the Holy Spirit and are given the gift of saving faith. The means of preaching the Gospel is necessary and the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit is also necessary. The Spirit alone works faith in the heart of a dead sinner, but He does so through the word of Christ!

If we are going to honor God, we need to hold all of His truth together. We need to know that He is sovereign, and we are responsible. His sovereignty makes our responsibility possible and fruitful, for His eternal glory! So, let's never stop praying for people's salvation, and let's never stop proclaiming the Gospel God uses to bring them to faith in Jesus.