

"FINDING FREEDOM IN THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD"

(Romans 10:1-21)

(Chuck Swindoll)

God is sovereign in the choosing of His people: Abraham out of all the Chaldeans; Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob over Esau; a believing remnant out of a non-believing majority. Nevertheless, each person is responsible to respond to God's offer of grace and is blameworthy for refusing it. Those who suffer the penalty of eternal torment for sin will do so without excuse. The gospel is within reach of all people (10:8-10), no one is exempt from the offer of eternal life (10:11-15), receiving the gift requires no human effort (10:16-20), and this free gift of eternal life remains available (10:21).

God is sovereign; people are responsible. These two truths must be held simultaneously or evangelism suffers. The Lord's sovereignty gives me great comfort in two respects. First, I rest secure in the fact that my relationship with Him cannot be severed by my unfaithfulness. Inhibited? Yes. Grievous to both of us? Undoubtedly. But dissolved? Not a chance! That's because He has chosen me and will faithfully equip me to enjoy eternal life with Him.

Second, I rest secure in the fact that the salvation of others is His accomplishment, not mine. I can only imagine the unbearable pressure of holding the eternal destiny of another in my feeble hands. I would continually worry that a slip of the tongue, a poorly chosen word, or a zig instead of a zag in my approach would push someone closer to the edge of damnation. I think I would be paralyzed by the awesome consequences of failure on my part and then fail to speak a word.

Because the sovereign control of God determines the destiny of another, I can boldly proclaim the truth without fear. I am not responsible for the salvation of people; however, my responsibilities are considerable . . . as are yours, if you are a believer. And those responsibilities are vital to the success of God's plan. While He does not need us, He has given us a genuine stake in His redeeming the world. He is omnipotent, but we have three fundamental tasks:

1. We must *care* enough for the souls of others to go out of our way, to leave our comfort zones, to lay aside our desires in order to proclaim the gospel where it would not otherwise be heard.
2. We must *share* the good news faithfully, freely, and often. Preferably with competence; even better, within the context of an obedient life.
3. We must *pray* that the gospel will penetrate guarded minds and then resonate in the hollows of empty souls. As we faithfully and competently offer them the free gift of



justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, we must submit their destinies to the loving care of their Creator. Pray that blind minds will see and deaf souls will hear.

I am frequently reminded of how our responsibility and God's sovereignty work together to accomplish this great enterprise called evangelism. Once a man approached me, stuck out his hand, and said, "Chuck, I want you to know that I started listening to you on the radio years ago." He shook my hand firmly, held his grip, and put another hand on my shoulder as he continued. "I had no idea what you looked like. Had no idea where you were. Didn't know you from Adam. I listened to your message and I thought, 'Well, that sort of makes sense.' And it was completely different from what I'd ever believed. I listened a little further, tuned you in the next day, listened some more, and tuned you in again. And you know what?"

He released my hand and threw both arms out. "Come here! You're my spiritual father." Then he wrapped me in a crushing bear hug that nearly squeezed the life out me.

Why was he so happy? Because I cared, shared, and prayed. I didn't even know him. Now, he's a genuine son of God.

Thanks to the vision of a few people many years ago and the labors of many more today, I have the rare privilege of addressing unknown multitudes through the medium of radio and through other technological media. I never know from day to day who will hear the good news and then respond in faith. And, believe it or not, the same is true for you, even if you never stand behind a microphone or a pulpit a day in your life. Megawatts and local congregations will never compare to the measureless, supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to carry your faithful proclamation of the good news to ears that need to hear it.

By the sovereign will of God, let me urge you to care, share, and pray. Stay faithful. Be diligent. And may the rewards of your faithful diligence return to hug you, too.