

## PAST FINDING OUT

Calvinism champions the sovereignty of God and Arminianism champions human responsibility. The “problem” is that the Bible teaches both. As I read both sides of the debate, I find men who think they have it pretty much figured out. I can follow their reasoning and if I keep in step with their neat little DEDUCTIVE SYSTEM(S), it all seemingly makes sense. But when I read the Bible INDUCTIVELY, I find tensions that are beyond what I can comprehend. Inductive Bible study trumps deductive reasoning based on proof-texting. The mystery remains and our three-pound brains just can’t fathom it.

**Romans 9:** When I read Romans 9 deductively, I clearly see the Calvinist slant of things – clearly God sovereignly controls all things. If I stop at Romans 9 I may emphasize ONLY the “God side” of things.

**Romans 9:16 (NKJV)** So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

***Footnote:*** The Calvinist overplays his hand when he puts the emphasis singularly on individual election in Romans 9-11 when in fact the major emphasis throughout is on NATIONAL ELECTION related to Israel which is grounded in headship realities as seen in the patriarchs.

Jeremiah 18 has application to this discussion. For example, in Jeremiah 18:5-6 the emphasis is on God in His sovereignty molding and shaping the nation of Israel. God is sovereign in matters of judgment and none can thwart Him. He alone determines what He is going to do in relation to the nations (Jer. 18:7-8). However, Jeremiah 18 also shows that in His sovereignty God often makes provision for people to repent, and if they do, God will forego the judgment that He has threatened. Thus, in Jeremiah 18 there is a fascinating interplay between an emphasis on God’s sovereignty in relation to the nations but at the same time on human responsibility involving human choice within that context. This is significant because Paul in Romans 9:20-21 borrows from Jeremiah 18:6 to make his point (also see Isa. 64:8).

I am convinced that there are some New Testament scholars who hone in so tightly on passages like Romans 9 that they get tunnel vision. Balance and wisdom bring to the table Old Testament revelation, and then build New Testament doctrine upon the foundation of previous revelation. This is what Paul did in Romans 9. It is good to study the whole counsel of God instead of just camping on a few select text-proof verses. This is the stuff of being a “BIBLICIST” who rightly divides the Word (2 Tim. 2:15).

“As to the scope of the passage [in Romans 9], it will become obvious that it is all about God’s dealings with men and nations historically and dispensationally, and is not about individual salvation and destiny beyond the grave.” – **J. Sidlow Baxter**, *Explore the Book*, Vol. VI. pp. 88-89

Yes, God is sovereign! No one can argue with sovereignty! But the sovereign God Himself says that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11).

**Ezekiel 18:32 (NKJV)**

**32** For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”

“There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’” – **C.S. Lewis**

**Romans 10:** When I read Romans 10 deductively, I clearly see the slant of human responsibility that the Arminian wants to argue. If I only read this chapter, I may emphasize the “human side” of things.

**Romans 10:13 (NKJV)** For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

**Romans 11:** When I get to Romans 11 and INDUCTIVELY consider the whole discussion of Romans 9-11 - I discover two things. 1) All these things are under the sovereign hand of God - “His ways” and, 2) they are “past finding out”.

**Romans 11:33 (NKJV)** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

I once had a wise old theology professor (now in heaven) who used to say to us: “God **promotes** some things; God **permits** some things; and God **prevents** some things; but all these things are under the sovereignty of God.” The longer I study the Bible INDUCTIVELY the more convinced I am that the old professor was right. Exactly how it all fits together I don’t know and according to Romans 11:33 neither does anyone else – no matter what they say.

“The Scripture furnishes numerous instances where God’s sovereignty and man’s free will interplay with each other. Both are biblical teachings. For

man to try to alter either one to find a reconciliation is an attempt to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree, an attempt of man to escape his finitude so as to become like an infinite God. ...

The best we as humans can do is to accept the Bible's teaching about both the absolute sovereignty of God and freedom of men to make their own moral decisions whether to believe in Christ or not, without changing either teaching. From the standpoint of human logic and philosophical reasoning, the two teachings are in conflict, but from a biblical standpoint they are not." **-Robert Thomas – In The Master's Seminary Journal – Fall 2001, pg. 202**

"It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. Yet – 'whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely.'" -- **Charles Spurgeon** (Spoken at the end of his sermon titled "God's Will and Man's Will" – delivered on March 30, 1862)

"When a half truth is presented as the whole truth, it becomes an untruth."  
– **Walter Chantry**, Today's Gospel – Authentic or Synthetic? – pg. 17.