

# Romans 9

God's sovereignty and man's responsibility

# Ground work

Epistemology: How do we get to truth?

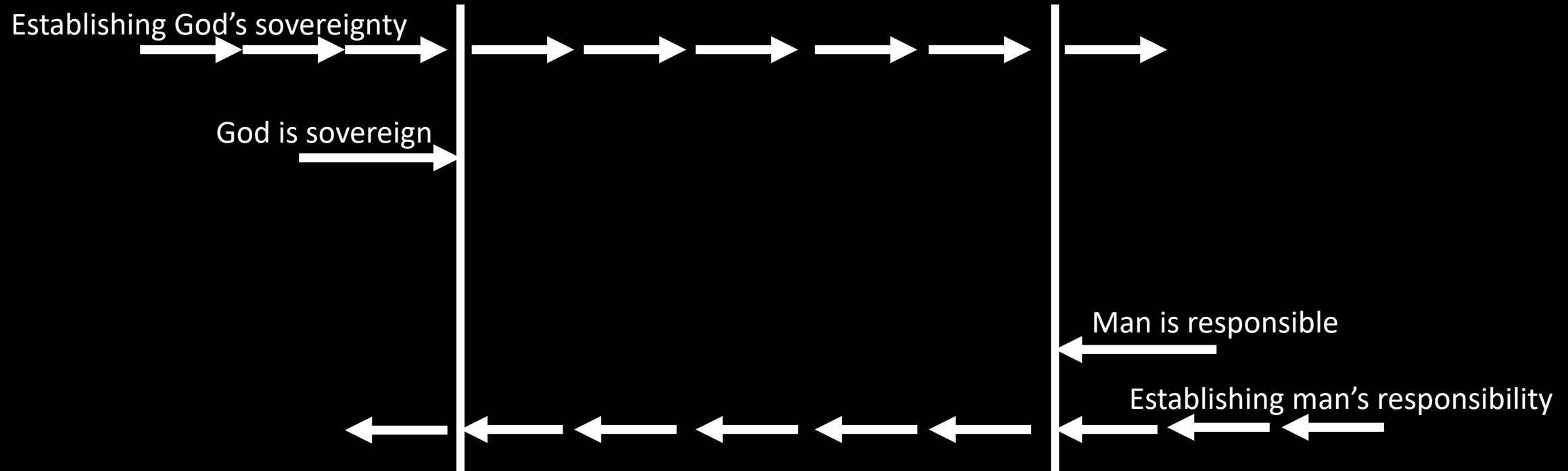
1. Scripture: God's word
2. Tradition: The Church both past and Present
3. Reason: Our thinking capacities
4. Experiences: Our sensing capacities (The scientific method)

# Ground work

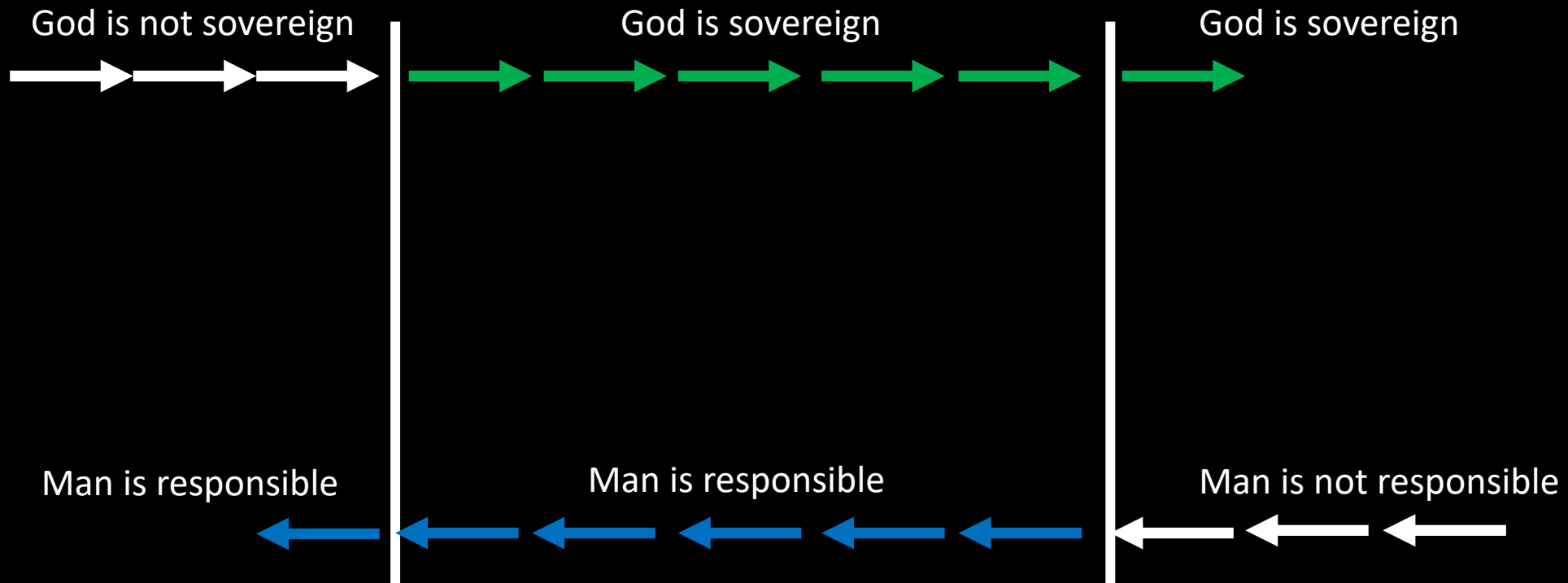
Hermeneutics: How do we read scripture

- Inerrant: Scripture is without error in all that it affirms.
  - Scripture affirms all that the inspired, original authors intended to communicate to their original audience.

# God's sovereignty and man's responsibility



# God's sovereignty and man's responsibility



# Potential Issues

God is not sovereign

Man is responsible

God is sovereign

Man is responsible

God is sovereign

Man is not responsible

What keeps us from ruining history for ourselves and others?

Who is in control? Anyone?

Are God's promises trustworthy? Is he just hoping for outcomes?

Who gets the credit and therefore glory for good outcomes?

Why pray? Thank? Petition?

How does this work? Doesn't the presence of the one negate or conflict with the other?

Do each sides questions bleed into this one or does the presence of both somehow answer the questions brought up by the individual beliefs held in isolation?

Is sin rebellion from God's will or design?

Do we really have a will or is it just perception?

Is God making me sin?

Is God simply acting when He gets angry, sad, or pleased?

Why does God give commands or exhortations?

Why pray?

# Reasonable Dispositions

God is not sovereign  
Man is responsible

**Fear**

God is sovereign  
Man is responsible

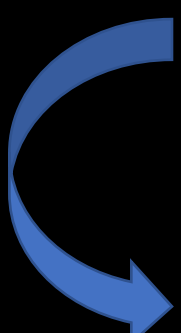
**Mystery**  
Confusion

God is sovereign  
Man is not responsible

**Apathy**

# Pause ...

## Epistemology: How do we get to truth?

- 
1. Scripture: God's word
  2. Tradition: The Church both past and Present
  3. Reason: Our thinking capacities
  4. Experiences: Our sensing capacities (The scientific method)

Isaiah 55:8-9

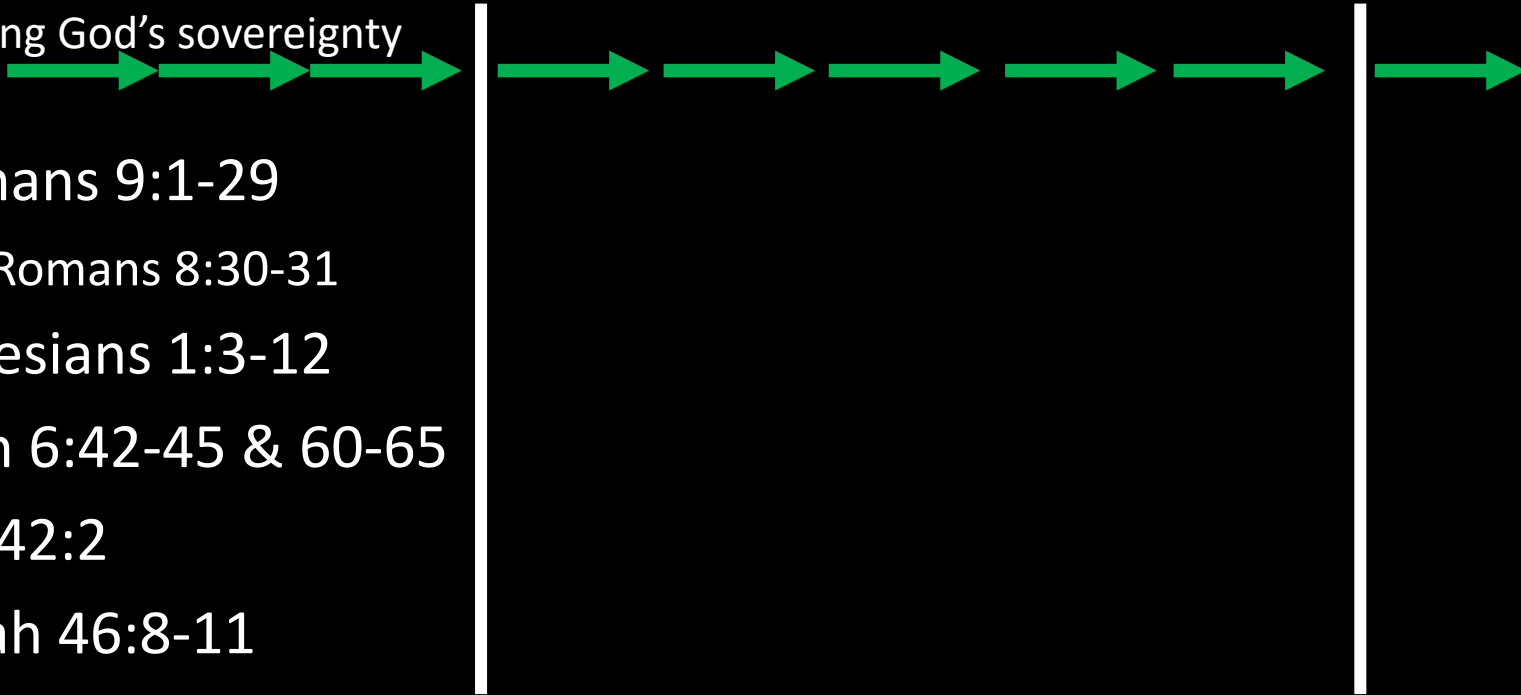
<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

# God's sovereignty in scripture

Establishing God's sovereignty

- Romans 9:1-29
  - Romans 8:30-31
- Ephesians 1:3-12
- John 6:42-45 & 60-65
- Job 42:2
- Isaiah 46:8-11



# Man's responsibility in scripture



# God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in scripture

... at the same, mind-blowing, time



# God's sovereignty in scripture

- **Ephesians 1:3-12**

<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. **In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption** to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, **according to the purpose of his will**, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> making known to us **the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time**, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

<sup>11</sup> In him we have obtained an inheritance, **having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will**, <sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

# God's sovereignty in scripture

- **John 6:42-45**

42 They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" 43 Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. 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. 45 It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—

...

60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" 61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe." **(For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)** 65 And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. \(2016\). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.](#)

# God's sovereignty in scripture

Job calls God's justice into question and God shows up and lectures Job in robust fashion. Here is Job's response:

## Job 42:2-6

- <sup>2</sup> "I know that you can do all things,  
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
- <sup>3</sup> 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'  
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,  
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
- <sup>4</sup> 'Hear, and I will speak;  
I will question you, and you make it known to me.'
- <sup>5</sup> I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,  
but now my eye sees you;
- <sup>6</sup> therefore I despise myself,  
and repent in dust and ashes."

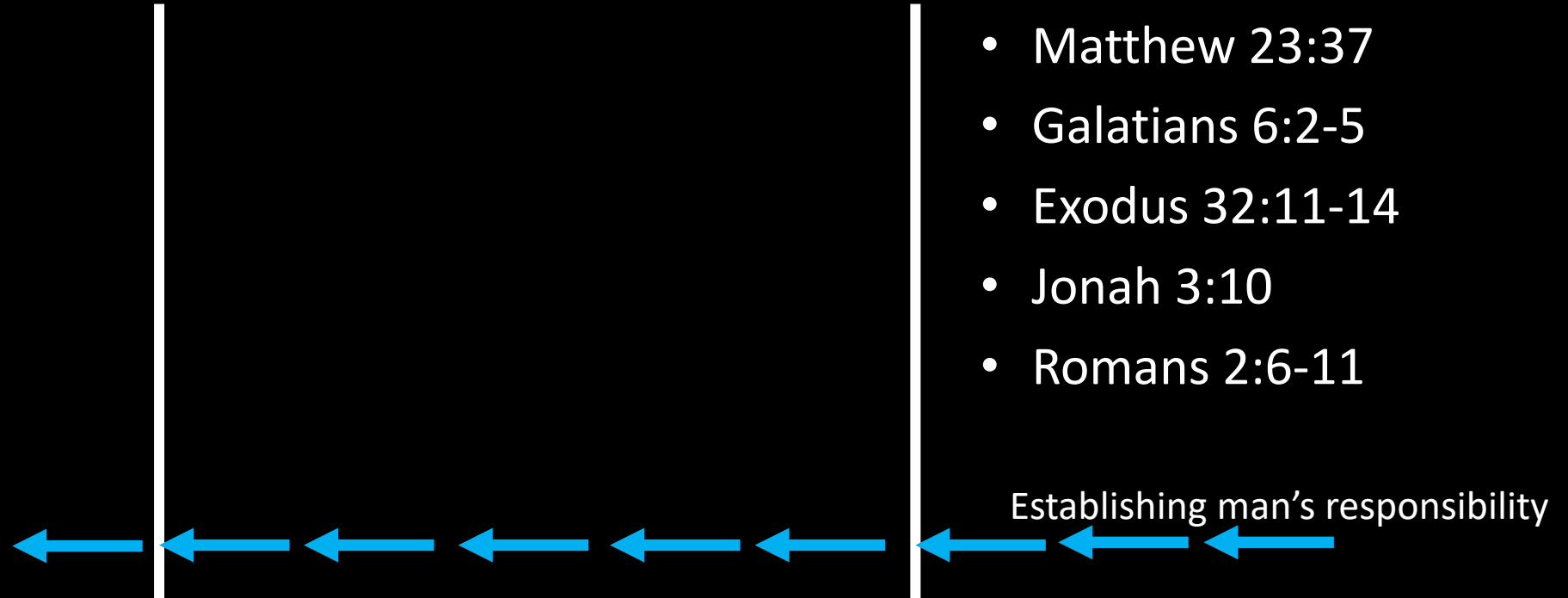
# God's sovereignty in scripture

God is declaring Himself greater than the idols of Babylon through the Prophet Isaiah:

## Isaiah 46:8-11

<sup>8</sup> “Remember this and stand firm,  
recall it to mind, you transgressors,  
<sup>9</sup> remember the former things of old;  
for I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is none like me,  
<sup>10</sup> declaring the end from the beginning  
and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,  
and I will accomplish all my purpose,’  
<sup>11</sup> calling a bird of prey from the east,  
the man of my counsel from a far country.  
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;  
I have purposed, and I will do it.

# Man's responsibility in scripture



# Man's responsibility in scripture

Jesus is speaking of Jerusalem after delivering the 7 woes to the Jewish leaders at the time.

## **Matthew 23:37**

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, **and you were not willing!**”

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. \(2016\). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.](#)

# Man's responsibility in scripture

Paul is telling the Church in Galatia how to engage with one another's sin

## **Galatians 6:2-5**

2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But **let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor.** 5 For each will have to bear his own load.

*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Ga 6:2–5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.*

# Man's responsibility in scripture

God is speaking to Moses after Israel makes an idol at Mount Sinai.

## **Exodus 32:11-14**

9 And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. 10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you."

11 **But Moses implored the Lord his God** and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.' " 14 **And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.**

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. \(2016\). \(Ex 32:9–14\). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.](#)

# Man's responsibility in scripture

Nineveh is told that God will destroy them for their sin in three days. Here is the response to the decree.

## **Jonah 3:6-10**

<sup>6</sup> The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. <sup>7</sup> And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, <sup>8</sup> but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. **Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”**

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, **God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.**

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. \(2016\). \(Jon 3:6–10\). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.](#)

# Man's responsibility in scripture

God is speaking to Moses after Israel makes an idol at Mount Sinai.

## **Romans 2:6-11**

**6 He will render to each one according to his works:** **7** to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; **8** but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. **9** There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, **10** but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. **11** For God shows no partiality.

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. \(2016\). \(Ro 2:6–11\). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.](#)

# God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in scripture

... at the same, mind-blowing, time



God's sovereignty and man's responsibility...  
at the same time.

Paul is exhorting the Church in Philippi

### **Philippians 2:12-13**

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,** <sup>13</sup> **for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.**

*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Php 2:12–13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.*

# God's sovereignty and man's responsibility... at the same time.

Paul is talking about the word of God being given to the Church. The "them" in verse 27 refers to the saints in the Church.

## **Colossians 1:27-29**

27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 **For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.**

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. \(2016\). \(Col 1:27–29\). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.](#)

# God's sovereignty and man's responsibility... at the same time.

James is teaching and exhorting the Church

## **James 1:13-18**

<sup>13</sup> Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. <sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

<sup>16</sup> Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. <sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. <sup>18</sup> Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Jas 1:13–18). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.*

# God's sovereignty and man's responsibility... at the same time.

Peter is preaching on the day of Pentecost

## **Acts 2:22-24**

22 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 **this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.** 24 **God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death,** because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. \(2016\). \(Ac 2:22–24\). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.](#)

# God's sovereignty and man's responsibility... at the same time.

Jesus warns His disciples as He sends them out on Mission in Matthew 10

## **Matthew 10:17-20**

<sup>17</sup> Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, <sup>18</sup> and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup> When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. <sup>20</sup> For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. \(2016\). \(Mt 10:17–20\). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.](#)

# What about Romans 9?

## Romans 9:14-16

<sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

<sup>16</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

- **What is the authorial intent of this statement?**
- **Is it to mute the individual's responsibility?**
- **Even if it isn't his intent, doesn't it have that effect anyway?**

[\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. \(2016\). \(Ro 9:14–16\). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.\*](#)

# What about Romans 9?

Getting broader textual context for understanding authorial intent.

Romans 9:5, 14-16, 30:-32, 11:4-6

<sup>6</sup> But it is not as though the word of God has failed.

...

<sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

<sup>16</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

<sup>30</sup> What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; <sup>31</sup> but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. <sup>32</sup> Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works.

<sup>11:4</sup> But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." <sup>5</sup> So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup> But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace

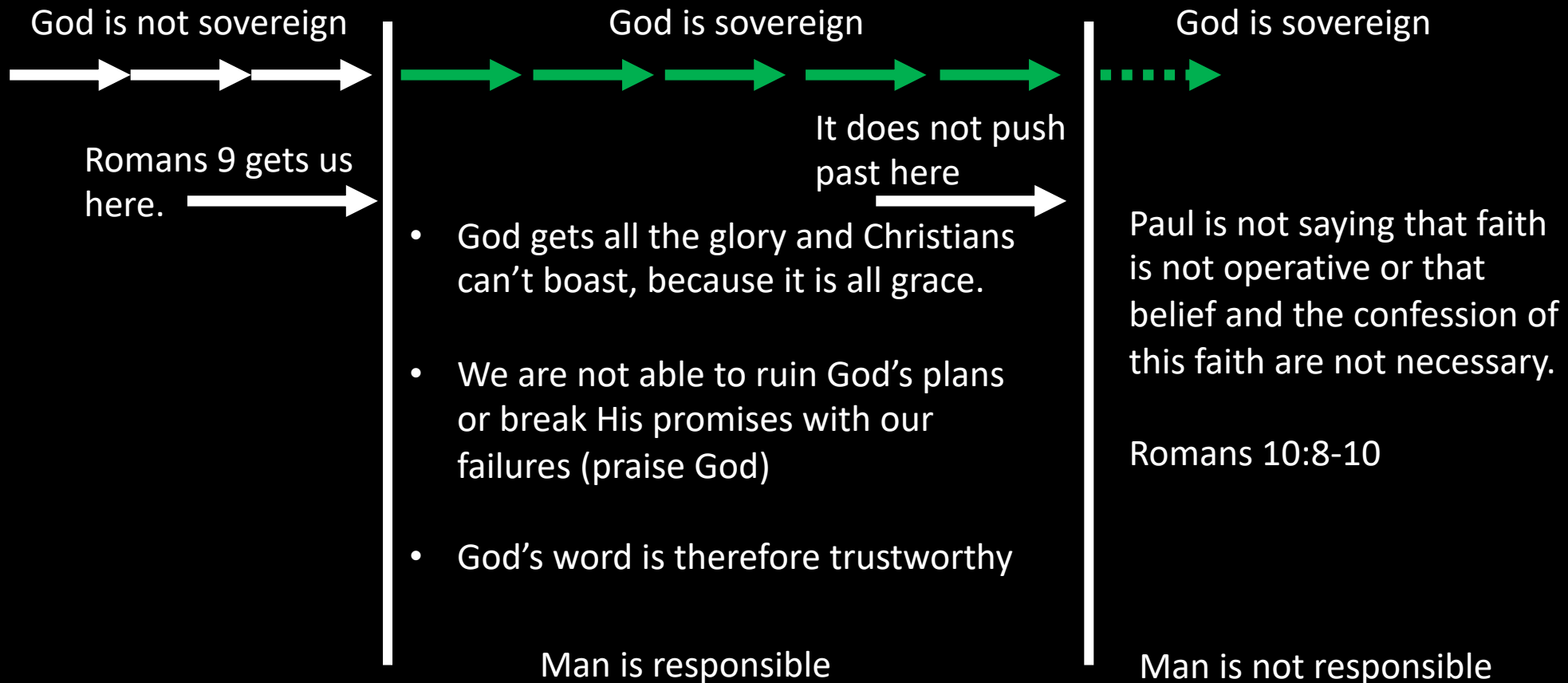
[\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. \(2016\). \(Ro 9:14–16\). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.\*](#)

# What about Romans 9?

Now the purposes of Romans 9:16, from the original author, are fleshed out by the surrounding texts to include and not include certain conclusions

- The “it” of 9:16 is God’s word coming to pass. This is God’s sovereignty. It is not dependent on people’s desires or actions. (Connecting Romans 9:6 to 9:16)
  - *As sinners who confess that we’ve earned death, we should be careful not to stipulate that we are saved because we are less bad than other sinners who are not saved. We are saved because Christ purchased us and God softened our hearts to receive His grace.*
- This reality is meant keep the gospel a matter of grace and not work, garnering all the glory for God. (Connecting Romans 9:16 to 9:32 & 11:5-6)
- This is not muting personal responsibility to put our faith in Jesus. (Paul balances 9:16 with 9:30-32)
  - Nor does this suggest that faith is anything less than operative.
  - *Note: we must first ask what the authorial intent of scripture is, prior to asking if they make sense to us. Otherwise we hoist our personal reasoning above the text.*

# God's sovereignty and man's responsibility



# What about Romans 9?

## **Romans 9:17-18**

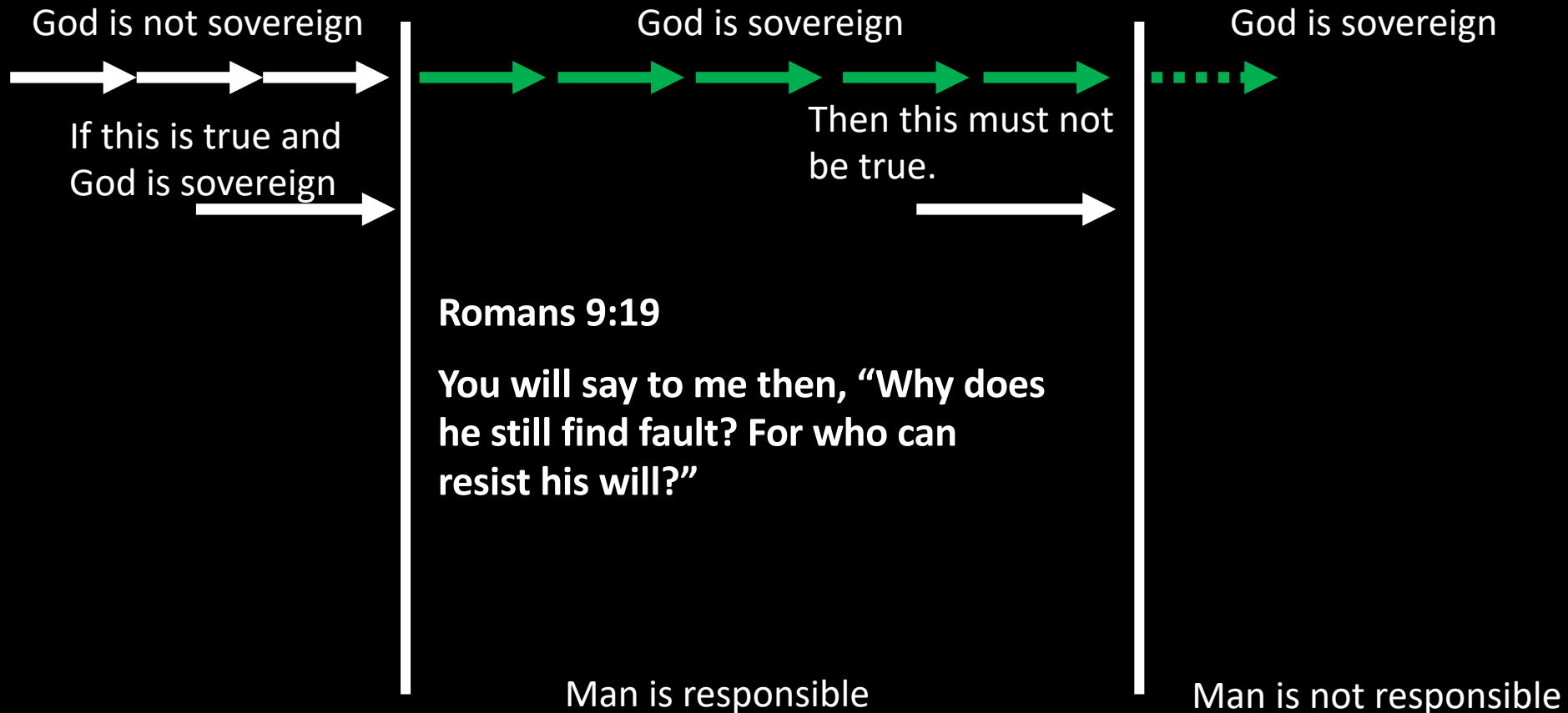
<sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” <sup>18</sup> So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

Here is the thought this kicks up in our hearts and minds:

Since God hardens Pharaoh’s heart, he didn’t have a choice.

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. \(2016\). \(Ro 9:17–18\). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.](#)

# God's sovereignty and man's responsibility



Let us be careful to not identify more with Paul's antagonistic dialogue partner than we do with Paul himself.

God's ways are higher than ours.

# What about Romans 9?

## Two possibilities for asking such a question:

1. We are winding up to judge God for not being just and therefore not being good.
  - Disposition: closed fist
1. We are genuinely asking how this works?
  - Disposition: open handed

# What about Romans 9?

In response to the first possibility, Paul gives us Romans 9:20-21

<sup>20</sup> But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” <sup>21</sup> Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

Translation: We don't get to call God into question

[The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ro 9:20–21). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

# What about Romans 9?

In response to the second possibility, Paul gives much more to think about.

- Romans 9:22-23 & 11:11, 28 – God uses those that rebel against Him for His glory
- Romans 9:30-10:21 – There is a dynamic of personal responsibility to submit to the righteousness of God

# What about Romans 9?

But wait, if there's a personal dynamic to believe in our heart and confess with our mouth, then it seems that it does depend on our will and work... right?

No. Our responsibility does not mute God's sovereignty either.

Paul's conclusion when speaking about God's kindness and severity in salvation:

# Romans 11:33-36

<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

<sup>34</sup> “For who has known the mind of the Lord,  
or who has been his counselor?”

<sup>35</sup> “Or who has given a gift to him  
that he might be repaid?”

<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

# Reasonable Dispositions

God is not sovereign  
Man is responsible

~~Fear~~

God is sovereign  
Man is responsible

Mystery

Confusion

Wonder and amazement

God is sovereign  
Man is not responsible

~~Apathy~~

# Application in every step

## Covid-19

God is not sovereign  
Man is responsible

# Fear

**God is sovereign,  
so we do not  
need to be  
afraid.**

God is sovereign  
Man is responsible

# Mystery

**Trusting God with the  
outcomes, we confidently  
move forward towards loving  
each other and the world  
during this time of need.**

God is sovereign  
Man is not responsible

# Apathy

**We are responsible,  
so we do not shrug  
our shoulders in  
apathy.**

# Application in every step

## Prayer

God is not sovereign  
Man is responsible

# Fear

**God is sovereign,  
so we know we  
are engaging with  
a God that is able.**

God is sovereign  
Man is responsible

# Mystery

**Trusting God with the  
outcomes, we confidently  
bring our cares and concerns  
to our Lord, along with  
adoration and praise for all  
that we enjoy and have.**

God is sovereign  
Man is not responsible

# Apathy

**God is genuinely  
engaging with us, so  
we do not believe  
our prayers are  
without purpose.**

# Application in every step

## Evangelism

God is not sovereign  
Man is responsible

### Fear

**God is sovereign,  
so we know that  
we will only see  
success if He  
moves hearts first.**

God is sovereign  
Man is responsible

### Mystery

**Trusting God with the  
outcomes, we confidently  
proclaim the Gospel of Christ  
to the world, soaked in  
prayer, out of love for our  
neighbor.**

God is sovereign  
Man is not responsible

### Apathy

**God is sending us  
and that we obey  
actually matters to  
the mission.**

# Conclusion

## God is sovereign

- He gets all of the glory honor and praise
- God is not out of control, no matter our circumstances
- God's promises are trustworthy
- We do not close our fist and call on God to answer for our circumstances.

## We are responsible

- We are responsible for our own sins and failures
- We need to put our faith in Jesus, because faith is operative
- Prayer and evangelism matter and make a difference