

Sovereignty of God

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Interpretive principle: Let the context define the conclusion — don't decide a doctrine first and then mine proof-texts. This matters especially here because Romans 9–11 gets pulled in opposite directions by readers who arrive with their conclusion already fixed.

Core definition: God's sovereignty is His supreme authority and unrestricted right to rule over all creation — nothing happens outside His permission or decree (**Psalm 115:3; Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11**).

- Bottom line God is not asking us how we want it to happen but instead reveals to us what is happening how and why
- Does not mean God is in control of everything but He uses everything for His purpose.
- God's Word is not a revelation of Him causing what will happen but Him revealing what will happen.

Key theological tensions worth noting for teaching purposes:

1. Sovereignty and human responsibility — Scripture holds both without resolving the mechanism (**Acts 2:23**, where Christ's death is both predetermined by God and accomplished by "wicked hands"). Most systematic frameworks (Reformed, Arminian, Molinist) differ mainly on how these fit together, not whether both are true.
 - God declared beforehand what He would do and what your response would be and what you would do and how He would use what you did to benefit His plan.
2. Sovereignty and permission vs. causation - God ordains all things but doesn't author sin in the same sense He ordains righteousness (**James 1:13 vs. Isaiah 45:7** — "create calamity" language often gets pressed hard in your kind of source-level study).
 - Light and Darkness demonstrate Peace and Evil
 - i. If God formed the light, then He did so out of darkness and the result of no light is darkness. If God created peace, He did so out of calamity and the result of rejecting His peace is calamity
3. Sovereignty in dispensational framework — sovereignty often gets tied to God's unilateral covenant-keeping (Genesis 15's covenant ceremony where only God passes through the pieces) and His sovereign timeline for Israel and the Church as distinct programs.
 - Unilateral means Performed or undertaken by only one side. When God made a covenant with Abraham, He did so by Himself without Abrahams activity or participation other than to believe. Gen 15 Thus God's LAND covenant with Abraham is independent of Abraham's actions. (Abraham believed the promise of the Seed, but the Land was covenanted unilaterally)
 - In this we see God sovereignly give Abraham and His descendants the Land irrespective of what they did. (Slaves in Egypt) God kept His covenant and it still serves His purpose for all things. **Eph 1:4-14; Rom 8:28**

Key texts to anchor a teaching series: Job 38–42 (sovereignty over creation)

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- God made the world and all things they are His to do as He wills.

Romans 9 (sovereignty in election, notoriously debated)

- God made all people and had a predetermined plan for man and can do what He will to bring that plan to pass even when man rebels against it.
- God even uses mans rebellion to further His plan **Pro 16:4; Joh 6:70; Joh 13:18; Act 2:23-24; Gen 50:20**

Daniel 4 (sovereignty over nations/rulers — good eschatology tie-in),

- God can use all that man does to bring His plan to pass. Even man's rebellion he uses to bring His desired result to pass.
 - Time, Test, and trials further God's predeterminate plan not stop them. **Psa 2:1-12**
- God can use governments to bring His plan to pass and separate the sheep from goats by allowing each nation and people to choose whom they will serve. (Making Israel and the Church a light) **Isa 42:6; Isa 49:6; Act 13:47; Mat 5:14-16; Jos 24:13-15; Revelation 5:9/7:9 and Matthew 25**

Isaiah 46:9–10 (sovereignty over history/prophecy).

- God has revealed His will and purpose so that we can know His will and do His work.
- God will fulfill His will and gives us the choice which side we want to be on.

Gods predetermined will and our response

What does God's sovereignty cover?

- It does not mean God causes or micromanages every event as a puppeteer. It means He is sovereign over the outcome — He takes what happens, including human rebellion, and works it into His purposes (cf. **Genesis 50:20**, Joseph to his brothers: "you meant evil... God meant it for good").
- Scripture is largely predictive, not causative — God revealing what will happen (because He knows all things), not narrating His own puppetry. This distinction matters for prophecy generally: foreknowledge is not the same as determinism. **Deu 29:29**

Romans 9–11 — Paul's actual argument

- The presenting problem Paul is answering: if Israel is God's chosen people, why have so many of them rejected their own Messiah? Has God's word failed?
- Paul's answer across three chapters: no — God's purpose was never "every physical descendant of Abraham is automatically saved." It was always a purpose of election within Israel — a remnant, chosen by promise, not by bloodline alone (**Rom 9:6–8**, "not all who are descended from Israel are Israel").

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- This is why Paul reaches back to Jacob and Esau — to show this pattern of selective purpose is not a new phenomenon triggered by Israel's unbelief; it was built into Israel's story from the start.

Jacob and Esau — the two applications, held together

- On the national level (which is Paul's explicit subject in **Rom 9:10–13**): God's choice of Jacob over Esau determined which of Isaac's sons would carry the covenant line, the promise, and the messianic lineage — not which one would go to heaven. Esau's descendants (Edom) had a real, documented national history and fate distinct from Israel's (see Obadiah).
- On the typological/individual level: Paul is using this national example to illustrate a principle that also holds for individual salvation — God's choice is never a response to human merit or effort ("not by works but by him who calls," v. 12). The connection isn't "Jacob = individual believers" one-for-one; it's that the pattern of grace-before-merit demonstrated nationally applies to how God saves individuals too. Paul makes that move explicit later in Romans 9 by shifting to "vessels of mercy" language (9:22–24) that includes Gentiles — the argument has clearly moved from nation to individuals by then.
 - Paul is arguing national Israel and then shows the same principle of grace applies to individuals.
 - Paul's point being that God has elected to love us in Christ before we deserved it. We are still free moral agents with the choice to reject that love and live without God.

"Jacob have I loved" timing is the whole point

• **Genesis 25:23** — the oracle to Rebekah ("the older will serve the younger") was given before either child was born, before either had done anything good or bad (**Rom 9:11** makes this explicit: "though they were not yet born and had done nothing good or bad"). Paul's entire point is that election precedes and is independent of merit — not that it's random or arbitrary, but that it originates in God's purpose, not human performance.

- Applied to salvation: God's choice to save was made "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4) — not after we did something to earn it and not based on anything foreseen in us to commend us. This is common ground with Calvinists, actually — the disagreement isn't over whether grace precedes works, but over whether that grace is resistible.

"Esau have I hated" — covenant language, not raw emotion

- The Hebrew idiom of "love/hate" in covenant contexts (paralleled in **Deut 21:15–17**, **Luke 14:26**) is relational preference/rejection language, not necessarily emotional hatred. God "loved" Jacob means He bound Himself to Jacob in covenant; "hated" Esau means He did not extend that same covenant commitment to him or his line.

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- Esau's own recorded response (**Gen 25:29–34, Heb 12:16–17**) — trading his birthright for a bowl of stew, then later weeping for it when it was too late — is presented in Scripture itself as evidence of a settled disregard for what God had entrusted to him, not an arbitrary divine grudge against an innocent party.
- **Malachi 1:2–3** (which Paul is directly quoting in **Rom 9:13**) applies this love/hate specifically to the nations Israel and Edom, generations after both patriarchs had died — reinforcing that the immediate referent is national destiny, even while it illustrates the individual principle above.
 - In other words, Edom (Esau) in rebellion said I will do this regardless of what God wants and I don't need God (**Mal 1:1–4**) This shows His rejection of God and God's plan. God in His foreknowledge rejected Esau from before he was born. (Basically God said: I know what you are and what you will do and I reject that and will not accept it.)

God's sovereignty and the cross

- God's sovereign choice culminates in Christ — chosen from Israel, David's line, Judah's tribe (**Rom 1:3, Rev 5:5**) — as the means of salvation for all who believe, Jew or Gentile (**Rom 3:22, Gal 3:28**).
- Those grafted into the vine (**John 15**) or the olive tree (**Rom 11:17–24**) are there by faith, not ancestry — and Paul explicitly warns Gentile believers not to be arrogant about this, since natural branches were broken off for unbelief and could be grafted back in.
- God's foreknowledge of who will believe is not the same as God unilaterally deciding who is allowed to believe — this is the hinge of the whole debate with Calvinism, and it's worth stating plainly as the hinge rather than leaving it implicit.

Revelation, response, and human responsibility

- What is revealed belongs to us (**Deut 29:29**) — we're not judged by hidden divine counsel but by revealed truth we had access to (**John 12:48, Rom 2:12–16**).
- Our response doesn't alter God's will, but it does determine our place within it — a distinction worth stating carefully: God's plan is not contingent on us, but our participation in its blessings is dependent upon us.
- God's knowledge of what we will choose (foreknowledge) doesn't cause the choice — this is the classical Arminian/Molinist distinction between foreknowledge and foreordination,

Salvation: sovereignty and choice held together

- **Deuteronomy 30:19** — "I have set before you life and death... therefore choose life" — is Moses' charge to Israel and functions as a paradigm: God sets the terms, offers the choice, and holds the outcome accountable to genuine human response.
- God's will and desire is that all receive HIS PREDETERMINED WAY TO BE SAVED **1 Timothy 2:4** ("God... desires all people to be saved") and **2 Peter 3:9** ("not wishing that any should perish")

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- "Whoever will" (**Rev 22:17, John 3:16's** "whoever believes") is the consistent NT invitation formula — open, not restricted to a pre-selected subset but open for WHOSOEVER WILL!
- Summary line: God's sovereign initiative (choosing us in Christ, before we did anything to deserve it) and man's responsible response (believing) are not competitors — they're the two halves of how Scripture describes conversion God's Choice and Man's Choice
 - (I choose you and I choose the way to reconcile you to me now you choose to be reconciled to me through that way) **2Co 5:15-20**

Regarding how this affects prophecy. God is revealing to us what will happen not saying He is causing it to happen. Our response to what is revealed determines our results of what we receive.

Rev 1:3