

# 2 Timothy - Part 11

by John Hunter

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*The sermon explores the complex relationship between God's sovereignty in election and human responsibility in salvation, urging believers to embrace both truths.*

**Duration:** 32:40

**Scripture:** Luke 15:2-10, John 6:37-65

**Topics:** "Sovereign Salvation", "Human Responsibility"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the three-phased parable in Luke 15 to illustrate the wonder and glory of divine activity in relation to human souls. The first phase depicts a lost sheep, emphasizing the sovereignty of the shepherd in seeking and finding the sheep. The second phase portrays a woman searching for a lost coin, highlighting both sovereignty and human responsibility in salvation. The third phase presents the parable of the prodigal son, illustrating the combination of sovereignty and human responsibility in the sinner's return to God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding and preaching on both sovereignty and human responsibility in salvation.

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## Transcript

2nd Timothy 2 at verse 8 Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel. For in I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Those of you who were present on Friday evening may recall that I promised this afternoon that I would speak to you on the subject of election and also go on to speak on election and human responsibility. So this afternoon we are going to look at the sovereignty of God. Now, it's quite clear that I can only touch the basic issues and endeavour to leave a foundation upon which to form your thinking according to your New Testament.

This verse Paul says that he's enduring all things for the sake of the elect, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. So perfectly clear that he has in view people who will be saved. He calls them the elect.

But he does say that they will obtain by faith the salvation which is in Christ with eternal glory. So Paul didn't look upon some of the modern ideas that if you're elect you'll get saved, supposing we sit back and

do nothing. The elect were saved through preaching and through putting their faith in Christ.

For after all, when you preach, you're preaching a gospel that goes out to everyone. It's a bonified offer by God that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. And it's only after having preached and declared such a message that those who are saved you recognise as the elect of God.

Now, in order that you might follow me more intelligently, and that is very essential in a subject like this, I want you to turn with me to various scriptures. First of all, we'll turn to Ephesians chapter 1, verse 4. Ephesians 1, verse 4. Now notice, adoption is always connected with sons, not with children. Now you'll notice, please, in verse 4 that you have brought before you the truth of election.

In verse 5, you have brought before you the truth of predestination. That is, in verse 4, God chose you before the foundation of the world, and in verse 5, at the same time, he marked you out to become a son of God. Now, when you go back to times eternal, and you are pondering the self-determination of the Godhead to bless men, there are three words that stand together in your New Testament.

Election, predestination, foreknowledge. Now, you will always find them together in your New Testament. For instance, take election.

Here in Ephesians 1, it is associated with predestination, verse 5. But when you go to 1 Peter 1, verse 2, elect according to the foreknowledge of God, election is connected there with foreknowledge. Election and predestination together in Ephesians 1, election and foreknowledge in 1 Peter 1, verse 2. Now you take predestination. In Ephesians 1, it is connected here with election.

But when you go to Romans 8, verse 29, whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. So predestination is connected with election here in Ephesians 1, but in Romans 8, it is connected with foreknowledge. Again, take the subject of foreknowledge.

In 1 Peter 1, verse 2, it is connected with election. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God. But foreknowledge in Romans 8 is connected with predestination.

Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate. Now just take a note of the scriptures, and you can search it out for yourself. Ephesians 1, verses 4 and 5. 1 Peter 1, verse 2. Romans 8, verse 29.

Now, will you note please that in verse 4 of Ephesians 1, that election secures the person. You were chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world. Election secures the person.

Verse 5, predestination secures the blessing. You are predestined unto sonship. Now, that's the order, it's a logical order, while both things were determined at the same time.

But they are placed logically here, because you must have a person to bless, before you can give them a blessing. So that God chose us as persons, before the foundation of the world. And then, he predestinated us to the blessing of sonship.

So election secures the person, predestination secures the blessing. Foreknowledge. Now you must always read very carefully.

Romans 8 says this, whom he did foreknow, not what. So foreknowledge means this, that back yonder in times eternal, in the mind and counsels of God, you existed as a personality. Is that clear? God knew you, as a real person, long before there was a creation and long before you were ever thought of.

Foreknowledge. Now, look now at verse 4. Now, for the moment we are on election. Verse 4. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him.

Now let me break up the verse for you. According as he, the source of election is God. Got that? Come again.

According as he hath chosen, the nature of election is choice. Come again. According as he hath chosen us, the object of election, Christians.

Come again. According as he hath chosen us in him, the ground of election, in Christ. In him before the foundation of the world, the time of election, before the foundation of the world.

The purpose of election, that we should be holy and without blame before him. Have you got that? According as he, God, the source of election. The nature of election, choice, chosen.

The objects of election, as believers, as Christians. The ground of election, in Christ. The time of election, before the foundation of the world.

The purpose of election, that we should be holy and without blame before him. Now notice carefully please. In Ephesians 1, election has nothing at all to do with destiny.

God elected you, that he might place you before himself, holy and without blame. Now that's standing. That's your standing before God in Christ.

And God, God chose you, in order that you might be in his presence, holy and without blame before him. Now, this is the self-determination of God to bless people. Now, you look again at verse 5. When he comes to predestination, here's what he says.

That you have been predestinated unto sonship, by Jesus Christ, unto himself. So God's doing it for his own pleasure. He's doing it for his own delight.

Yonder in times eternal, when the Godhead rested in undisturbed repose, before ever sin entered at all, God determined not only to have a people for himself, but he determined to surround himself with a multitude of sons, that would be for his own pleasure and for his own delight. It's not so much that you should be blessed eternally, while that's true, but God wanted a family for himself, and God determined it in times eternal. Isn't that wonderful? Now, so that, in verse 4, election hasn't in view justification.

It has in view sanctification, God setting apart a people for himself. Now, let me come now broadly. You see, when you're dealing with things like this in your Bible, you must be prepared to believe, although you may not understand.

Is that clear? Now, let me repeat that. You see, generally most Christians think as to these subjects, that you must understand to believe, wrong. You believe to understand.

Once you're prepared to believe it, you'll be led to a knowledge of it. But you must be prepared to believe it, whether you understand it or not. And in this area of divine truth, it would seem, by the way, lots of believers talk, they just don't understand.

Because they're wanting to reduce things to their own level of thinking. So you'll get them talking about foreknowledge, that God elected you because he knew that you would put your faith in Christ. That's rubbish.

Of course, God knew everything. But your choice doesn't determine the divine will. This all took place before ever you existed.

It's God's self-determination to bless men and women. You see, you must allow deity, the freedom and liberty to act for itself. And if God deigns to bless his creatures, then that rests unreservedly in his sovereignty as the creator.

Once you begin to limit deity in any way at all, it ceases to be deity. Is that clear? So that when you come to your Bible like this, you come with this. I'll believe what God says, whether I understand it or not.

And then you'll find that God will lead you into maturity. Now, as I talk to you today, your maturity will be challenged. Maybe it's being challenged now.

And you're in a fog, simply because you're not prepared to believe what the Bible says. And the Bible will teach you opposites and never try to reconcile them. You see, the trouble with intellectuals today is this.

That they hate to think that there's anything beyond their ability to think through and penetrate and understand. But when you come to Christianity, you come to the touch of the miraculous. Now, Christianity as a system is the most intelligent system in the world.

Must be, because it came from God. But you'll appreciate this, that there comes a point in it. Because it comes from God and is touched with the miraculous, that there comes a time when you must stop and faith takes over.

If you could reason everything out, there's no need for faith. The creature would have encompassed the creator. And that's impossible.

So that when you come to the subjects of sovereignty, election and human responsibility, everybody seems to be at sixes and sevens. Simply because they try to equate them. They try to reconcile them.

They try to get an answer that will fit their tiny minds. And maybe answer some ungodly sinner that has heard about election. Now, if you're going to learn to think with deity, it will take you out of the realm of human logic altogether.

And will introduce you to the mind of God and how God thinks. For God says, my ways are not your ways and my thoughts are not your thoughts. So, they finish with logic altogether.

For instance, logic says this. If God has elected some people to be saved, then others have been elected to be damned. The Bible never said that.

That's human logic. Human education would lead you to reason like that. But then, Christianity never stemmed from the universities of men.

It stemmed from eternal wisdom. God distinctly says that every man shall be judged according to his works. So that, when you come to election and human responsibility, you'll need to be prepared to accept both and not try to reconcile them.

For instance, down through the ages, you've had the Calvinist and the Arminian. The Calvinist is 100% on the idea of sovereignty. Represented, I don't know, in this country, represented in our country by the Banner of Truth publications.

On the other hand, you have those who are known as Arminians. That is, they believe in free will. Or, if you like, whosoever believeth.

And they both stand at each side, irreconcilable. One says one thing, and one says the other. Now, you'll understand that basically, man is an extremist.

Oh yes, man's an extremist. That's why even amongst us, certain brethren put over-emphasis on certain truths at the expense of others. That's because man basically is an extremist.

And unless his thinking is governed by the Spirit of God and the Word of God, he'll go beyond what God says in anything. So now, we come to consider both these things. I remember on the east coast of Scotland, taking meetings and invited out to a young couple for tea.

At the table, he raised this subject. And he said to me, Mr. Hunter, you've got to accept one or the other. Election or human responsibility.

And I looked at him, and I said, you don't really mean that, do you? Oh yes, he said, I do. But I says, the Bible teaches both. And you'll need to be prepared to accept both.

Some have spoken of it as railway lines, two of them. And you stand here, and in the distance, they seem to come together. But they don't really.

Don't you ever try to reconcile things, and never be ashamed of your Bible. God teaches both things. And you should be prepared to accept both.

Now, the amazing thing about it is this. That when you come to both these subjects, they're always put together. In the same book, in the same section, and in the same verse, God will teach both things.

Now, he does that to teach you and I, that you must learn to understand and believe both things. And don't try to separate them. Just accept them the way that God has put them.

I'll tell you more, and this will surprise you. But I'll prove it to you in a moment. I'll prove to you tonight that Christ preached both things when sinners were present.

Well, I know the general idea is, oh well, this is a truth for the family. You don't set it forth. Christ distinctly sets both things forth to a mixed audience.

What no preacher would ever think of doing. Because the whole truth must be taught at any time. Now, having said all that, please, now turn with me first of all to Acts chapter 2. Verse 23.

Peter preaching to a mixed audience. Acts 2 verse 23. Him, that is Christ, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Now, look again. He's talking about Christ and his death.

He says Christ was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. What's that? Sovereignty. God decreed that Christ would die.

Isn't that right? Oh, well, you say that's all right then. Men can't be held responsible if God decreed it. Read on.

Ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Human responsibility. Men were responsible for their action, albeit they were carrying out the divine decree.

Now, that's contrary to human reasoning. Even Christians stumble over it. But that's what the Bible says.

There's no need to be ashamed of it. It's true. Sovereignty and human responsibility brought together in one verse by Peter as he preached to a mixed audience concerning the death of Christ.

Now, turn now please to John 6. John chapter 6. Now, before I pinpoint the verses, look at verse 24. When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took ship and came to Capernaum, Capernaum seeking for Jesus. When they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, whence comest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I say unto you.

So he's speaking to the crowd, the multitude. So that when you come to verse 41, after the things he's been speaking about, the Jews murmured at him because he said certain things. Now, I'm only drawing your attention, please, that the multitude and the Jews were there, unbelievers.

Now, watch how Christ preached. Verse 44. No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him.

What's that? Sovereignty. Verse 44. No man can come to me except my Father draw him.

None will ever come to me except my Father in his sovereignty draw them to me. All right? Just a minute. Just a minute.

The same gospel says, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. The Lord didn't seem to feel he was contradicting himself as he presented sovereignty and human responsibility. Now, look now, please, at verse 37 of John 6. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.

Sovereignty. No one comes to Christ except the Father gives him, gives them to Christ. Everyone that comes to Christ for salvation are the Father's gift to Christ.

Sovereignty. Now, read on, the same verse. Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Human responsibility, you've still got to come. Like that. All in one verse.

I know you're always used to quoting the last part of the verse. But the first part of the verse indicates sovereignty. The second part of the verse indicates human responsibility.

All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me. But him that cometh to me I shall in no wise cast out. The Father gives them to Christ and yet they themselves must come.

And what do you think about it? Preaching to a mixed audience. The Son of God. That was how he preached.

Now, you don't need to turn to this. Let me take you now to Luke's Gospel, chapter 15. To the pearl of parables.

You will recall the three-phased parable. Just one parable, not three. The three-phased parable in which Christ set forth the wonder and glory of the activity of divine persons in relation to human souls.

Now, before I begin, you never had any problems about preaching from Luke 15, had you? No, you say I haven't. That's right. Well, now, I hope you won't have any more problems by the time I've finished.

Phase number one, a sheep that was lost. And please, brethren, please don't come to me at the close of the meeting and tell me that the sheep there is a saint because it's not. Verse two is quite clear.

In Luke 15, this man receiveth sinners. That governs the whole chapter. Now, here's a sheep and it's lost.

You'll remember that the shepherd went out after it until he found it. And there there is graphically described to us a sinner wandering in his sins. And there you see the Son of God as the shepherd going after the sheep until he finds it.

Now, notice something. The sheep doesn't do anything but wander. Isn't that right? I was nearly going to say it's too stupid to do anything else.

It doesn't think. It just wanders. And the shepherd went after until he found it.

What's that? Sovereignty. The shepherd did everything. The sheep did nothing.

Isn't that right? And the Lord Jesus depicted the sovereignty of his own action in seeking sinners. He says they're like sheep. You never had any trouble about preaching from it, had you? But it's all sovereignty.

Now, let's come to the second phase. There's a depicted a woman and she's lost the coin. It's slipped off and it's rolled away.

There it is lying in the corner in the dust and in the dark. The woman takes a broom and she seeks to find it. And she sweeps until she found it.

There is now the coin didn't do anything. It just lay there. There is depicted the sovereign action of the Spirit of God as he swipes the world for sinners.

They do nothing. They just lie there until the action of the Spirit brings them to God. What's that? Sovereignty.

Sovereignty. Pure sovereignty. Christ and the Spirit combining in the salvation of a sinner.

Now, but come to the third phase. When you come to the parable of the prodigal, what is it now? There he is down among the swine. When he came to himself, he said, I will arise and go to my father.

And he walked all the way back. What's that? Human responsibility. Now, you see how in that peril of parables, the Lord combines sovereignty and human responsibility.

Doesn't try to explain it because he thought the brethren would see it easily. Is that right? And none of us had any problem about preaching on it. And that doesn't alter the fact that in his teaching and in parabolic illustration, the Lord Jesus brought both things together.

Tells you you can't separate them. They are both two sides of the one thing. And yet, and yet, while you do not separate them, you can't mix them.

They are both there together. Now, come again. Let me take you now to a little experience.

But sometimes, you know, we're experts at practicing things we say we don't believe. And there are lots of my good brethren who are not at all clear about these things. But I've noticed that when it comes to their actions, they seem to work it out all right.

For instance, have you ever been at a prayer meeting before a gospel meeting? Oh, you say, yes, I have. Ever listened to the brethren praying? Oh, yes. Is it not true that you leave the prayer meeting believing that every brother in the prayer meeting is a Calvinist? Unavowed, unashamed Calvinists.

Why? Every one of them's praying to God and they're telling God, if you don't come in tonight and exercise yourself, and if divine persons are not active, there's not a soul will be saved. Salvations of the Lord. God must do it.

The power of God must come in. Unashamed Calvinists. And they're right too.

They're 100% right. Ah, but you come into the gospel meeting and you listen to us preaching and you get the very distinct impression that if the people in the audience don't put their faith in the Christ of the message that you're preaching, they'll never be saved. Isn't that right? And you're preaching like an unashamed Arminian.

I remind you, you're right. Absolutely right. Totally right.

Why? Because both things are true. Don't you see? That always in your mind, you must be prepared to accept what the Bible teaches. They may seem, humanly speaking, incompatible.

They may seem to be against each other. But that's exactly how God has put it down. And you must never be ashamed of the wisdom of God.

Just the same as when you come to the virgin birth. We believe in the virgin birth, but you don't understand it. You haven't a clue.

Isn't that right? How a divine person, the son of God, should come down and be found nestling in the darkness of the virgin's womb and then come forth as a babe. You don't understand that. That's the very foundation of your faith.

Isn't that right? But you believe it. With all your heart, you believe it. Because you can't touch Christianity that was born in the heart of God.

You can't touch it without having to be prepared to accept the miraculous in the whole system. And that's true of everything that you touch. And it is true that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

It's still true to enter into all that there was a time when we put our faith and trust in Christ. Now my time's up. Let me stop at this point just by saying this.

We have seen tonight that these things that I've been trying to teach you that the Lord believed them and taught them. That's good. I have shown you tonight that Paul believed them and taught them.

And here in Deep Cove this afternoon, Lord's Day afternoon, I have indicated to you that I believe them and have taught them. So if you believe them, you're in good company. You're in the company of Christ.

You're in the company of Paul. And you're in the company of the preacher. And many another.

So may God give us help. It may challenge your maturity and your spirituality. It'll be much easier just to say you believe in one or the other.

But when you come to your Bible, led by the Spirit of God, you begin to understand something of the wonder and glory of divine reasoning. The expression of the wisdom of God. That has so decreed faith to believe in a God who in his sovereignty chooses, yet at the same time to believe that the message that comes from God is genuine, it's pure, it's bona fide.

And whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Says Paul, I endure all things for the sake of the elect that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Thank you.

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