

I. The sovereignty of God in grace does not affect anything that we have said about the nature and duty of evangelism.

- a. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us . . . that we may do all the words of this law.'[Dt29:29]

1) The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the *necessity* of evangelism.

Whatever we may believe about election, the fact remains that evangelism is necessary, because no man can be saved without the gospel. 'There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek,' proclaims Paul; 'for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord (Jesus Christ) shall be saved.' Yes; but nobody will be saved who does not call upon the name of the Lord, and certain things must happen before any man can do this. So Paul continues: 'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not *believed?* and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not *heard?* and how shall they hear without a *preacher?*'[Rom 10.12 ff.]

(2) The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the *urgency* of evangelism.

'Except ye repent,' said our Lord to the crowd, 'ye shall *all* .*perish*.' Lk 13:3,5 We should not be held back by the thought that if they are not elect, they will not believe us, and our efforts to convert them will fail. So we find Paul warning and teaching 'every man':[Col. i.28] not merely because he was an apostle, but because every man was his neighbour. Some fear that a doctrine of eternal election and reprobation involves the possibility that Christ will not receive some of those who desire to receive Him, because they are not elect. The invitations of Christ are words of God. They are true. They are meant. They are genuine invitations. They are to be pressed upon the unconverted as such. Nothing that we may believe about God's sovereignty in grace makes any difference to this.

(3) The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the *genuineness* of the gospel invitations, or the truth of the gospel promises.

Whatever we may believe about election, and, for that matter, about the extent of the atonement, the fact remains that God in the gospel really does offer Christ and promise justification and life to 'whosoever will'. '*Whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'[Rom. 10:13]

(4) The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the *responsibility of the sinner* for his reaction to the gospel.

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Jn. 5.40,3. 19.

II. The sovereignty of God in grace gives us our only hope of success in evangelism.

Some fear that belief in the sovereign grace of God leads to the conclusion that evangelism is pointless, since God will save His elect anyway, whether they hear the gospel or not. This, as we have seen, is a false conclusion based on a false assumption

‘The natural (unspiritual, unregenerate) man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’[1Cor 2.14] Eph.2:ff

What does this mean for evangelism? It means, quite simply, that evangelism, described as we have described it, cannot possibly succeed. However clear and cogent we may be in presenting the gospel, we have no hope of convincing or converting anyone.

Why have we these doubts? Because we have been disillusioned. How have we been disillusioned? By the repeated failure of the evangelistic techniques in which we once reposed such confidence. What is the cure of our disillusionment? First, we must admit that we were silly ever to think that any evangelistic technique, however skilful, could of itself guarantee conversions; second, we must recognize that, because man’s heart is impervious to the word of God, it is no cause for surprise if at any time our evangelism fails to result in conversions; third, we must remember that the terms of our calling are that we should be faithful, not that we should be successful; fourth, we must learn to rest all our hopes of fruit in evangelism upon the omnipotent grace of God.

What effects should this confidence and certainty have upon our attitude when evangelizing? Three at least.

(1) It should make us *bold*.

(2) This confidence should make us *patient*.

(3) Finally, this confidence should make us *prayerful*.

- a. ‘Pray for us,’ writes Paul to the Thessalonians, ‘that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified.’ 2Thes 3:1, Paul was a great evangelist who had seen much fruit, but Paul knew that every particle of it had come from God, and that unless God continued to work both in him and in those to whom he preached he would never convert another soul. So he pleads for prayer, that his evangelism might still prove fruitful.
- b. The way ahead for us in evangelism is that we should be taught afresh to testify to our Lord and to His gospel, in public and in private, in preaching and in personal dealing, with boldness, patience, power, authority, and love; and that with this we should also be taught afresh to pray for God’s blessing on our witness with humility and importunity. It is as simple—and as difficult—as that.