

“He Has Put Eternity Into Man’s Heart”

Sermon Notes

➤ **God’s absolute sovereignty over our lives does not rule out our massive responsibility for our lives**

**Our times are in his hands, so...*

1. Get busy (vv.9-10)

2. Stay humble (v.11)

3. Enjoy life (vv.12-13)

4. Fear God (vv.14-15)

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of November 15th-21st

Getting Started

1. Have you given much thought to the relationship between God's divine sovereignty (that he's in control of every aspect of our lives) and our human responsibility (that we are accountable and answerable to him for all of our lives)? Do these two propositions seem compatible or incompatible to you? How come?

Digging Deeper

2. Discuss the following statement from J.I. Packer, comparing it with your answer above: "C.H. Spurgeon was once asked if he could reconcile these truths [of divine sovereignty and human responsibility] to each other. 'I wouldn't try', he replied. 'I never reconcile friends'. Friends? - Yes, friends. This is the point we have to grasp. In the Bible, divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not enemies. They are not uneasy neighbors; they are not in an endless state of cold war with one another. They are friends, and they work together."¹ What do you think? Do you agree or disagree? What further questions do you have about Packer's statement?

Open Your Bible to Acts 18:9-10...

3. In Acts 18:9-10, the Lord Jesus speaks to Paul in a vision, offering encouragement to him in the face of the hostile resistance he'd received to his preaching of the gospel in the city of Corinth. How are these two verses an example of divine sovereignty and human responsibility at work as it relates to our evangelism and potential salvation of the folks on our 'Lists of 5'?
4. Perhaps another example of how divine sovereignty and human responsibility work together when it comes to outreach might be helpful. Turn to 2 Timothy 2:10. How do Paul's words to Timothy capture both of these biblical truths? If a person's not thinking biblically, why might they consider the doctrine of election to be a discouragement to evangelism? In point of fact, how does this verse teach the doctrine of election as a massive encouragement to evangelism?
5. Just in case we haven't made the point, let's take a look at one more example along these lines. Read through Romans chapter 9 as a group. As you do, note as many references to divine sovereignty in salvation as you can find. Now, read through Romans chapter 10 as a group. As you do, note as many references to human responsibility in salvation as you can find. What is it about our fallen human reasoning that finds these two truths so difficult to hold together? How does knowing that the same man (Paul) taught the same truths in the same portion of the same letter help us hold these twin truths in proper biblical tension? As you reflect on your 'List of 5' once more, which chapter is most helpful to you in the current moment as you think about your relationships with unbelievers around you? Why?
6. Though the truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility are helpful as it relates to outreach and evangelism, there are countless other applications as well. Take Bible reading for

1 J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. IVP Books: Downers Grove, IL. 1958.

example. See what Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:7. What's Timothy's (and our) role as we study God's Word? What's God's role as we study his Word? Consider some of the toughest Bible passages you've ever pondered, particularly those with which you still wrestle. How does the truth of 2 Timothy 2:7 give you hope that you may one day come to some tentative, or even confident and settled conclusions in these areas? How does this make you feel?

7. Throughout the Bible, God makes promises to his people (2 Corinthians 1:20). At the same time, God's people are to pray for what he has promised. For instance, in Jeremiah 33:3, what does God promise and for what are God's people to pray? Or in 1 John 1:9, what does God promise and for what are we to pray? Or consider Revelation 22:20. What does Christ promise and for what are we to pray? It might be tempting to think that if God's promised it, we need not pray for it. What's the problem with this line of thinking, and how ought we seek to correct it?
8. For one last example of the practical importance of holding together the Bible's teaching concerning divine sovereignty and human responsibility, take a look at Colossians 1:28-29. According to v.28, what's Paul's ambition for the church in Colossae? Should this be our ambition at MEFC as well? According to v.29, what is the pathway that Paul is committed to take in order to achieve that aim? How does a commitment to the Bible's teaching concerning both God's sovereignty and human responsibility contribute toward the realization of this goal?