

Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God

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If God is in control of everything, can Christians sit back and not bother to evangelize? Or does active evangelism imply that God is not really sovereign at all? J.I. Packer shows in this classic study how both of these attitudes are false. In a careful review of the biblical evidence, he shows how a right understanding of God's sovereignty is not so much a barrier to evangelism as an incentive and powerful support for it.

The mystery and seeming paradox between evangelism and God's sovereignty has been causing disagreements and confusion among Christians since the beginning of the 20th century. In *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God*, J.I. Packer reveals that a faulty understanding of the Bible leads to the assessment that these doctrines are foes rather than friends. By debunking the erroneous view that "robust faith in the absolute sovereignty of God is bound to undermine any adequate sense of human responsibility" toward evangelism, the author adeptly moves through the obstacle course of tricky theology with ease and grace, allowing the reader a more complete understanding of the mystery of salvation. Packer manages to tackle an overwhelming piece of doctrinal truth and contain it within the subject of evangelism by concisely determining what evangelism is and what it is not. "It is our widespread and persistent habit of defining evangelism in terms, not of a message delivered, but of an effect produced in our hearers." This error is corrected when one is renewed in his or her knowledge of the sovereignty of God. Of course, fault is found on the other side as well, with those who so heavily rely on God's sovereignty to save the lost that they are lazy in obeying God's command to share the Gospel. Packer insists that love for God, at the very least, should draw one out of this stagnation and that the coupling of these seemingly diabolical doctrines will make one bold in speech, patient in God's timing, and prayerful for the salvation of others. --Jill Heatherly

J. I. Packer is Board of Governors Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. He also serves as contributing editor to *Christianity Today*. Packer's writings include books such as *Knowing God* (IVP Books), *A Quest for Godliness* (Crossway), *Growing in Christ* (Crossway) and *Rediscovering Holiness* (Servant), and numerous articles published in journals such as *Churchman*, *SouthWestern Journal*, *Christianity Today*, *Reformation & Revival Journal* and *Touchstone*.

Other Books

The Master Plan of Evangelism, 30th anniversary edition of the bestseller that shows believers how to share the Good News using Jesus' own methods.

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