

The sovereignty of God

God is the "sovereign Lord of all by an undisputable right as the creator . . . owner and possessor of heaven and earth." Sovereignty is an attribute of God based upon the principle that God as the creator of heaven and earth has absolute right and full authority to do all things or allow whatever He desires. *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places.* (PSA135:6) God is the supreme authority and all things are under His control.

The sovereignty of God is the fact that he is the Lord over creation; as sovereign, he exercises his rule over against the claims of human kings, such as Pharaoh. (Exo 3:14) This rule is exercised through God's authority as King, his control over all things, and his presence with his covenantal people and throughout his creation. The divine name, Yahweh, is regularly translated 'Lord' in the Bible. And Lord, in turn, as a name of God and specifically as a name of Jesus Christ. So, to discuss the sovereignty of God is to discuss the Lordship of God—that is, the qualities that make him to be God. The major workings of the biblical concept of divine sovereignty or Lordship are God's control, authority and presence.

God's Sovereign Control means that everything happens according to his plan and intention. Authority means that all his commands ought to be obeyed. Presence means that we encounter God's control and authority in all our experience. So that we cannot escape from his justice. When God meets with Moses in Exodus 3, He reveals His name that God rules over the affairs of Egypt and Israel: *But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go, unless forced by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.* (vs 19–20) Because God is Lord, the sovereign, he will certainly deliver Israel from Egypt and bring his people into promised land. Nothing can stop the Lord from fulfilling his promise. Note that this four words of promises in Exo 6:6–8: *Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God.* God delivered them from slavery. Jewish people call the promises in this text, "The Four I Wills" These promises have always been and still are in the heart of God today for us (gentiles).

I. *I will bring you out:* Ancient Egypt was a place of idolatry, contest with the pagan gods of pharaoh. The false worship was disgusting to God and He brought the children of Israel out by means of the plagues. They left Egypt, means leaves (separate from) the world, spiritual bondage of sin. (ICOR10) God wants to save us, like the Israelites, He called each family to mark doorposts of their homes with the blood of a sacrificial Lamb, that offer up for their sin. We are called to accept the sacrifice of Christ on cross as payment for our sin by applying His shed blood to our hearts by faith. It involves repentance—sorrow from sin, a complete change of direction toward God. In doing this, we receive promise of His eternal Salvation.

II. *I will rescue you:* Salvation takes care of our eternity. But liberty determines our quality of life while on earth. Like a newborn baby – he/she is fully alive – but they have lot of growing to do. God promises freedom or deliverance from our past lifestyle or sinful nature and snare of the devil. *'that they may know the truth and escape the snare of the devil,* (JOH8:31-32) It is important that we abide in His word that we might know the truth shall make us free. The entire realm of humanity lies under the binding influence of the evil one. "The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1JO5:19) Many believers are still influenced by the enemy's lies. "we are not ignorant of his [Satan's] devices" (2CO2:11) We need to know in understanding of, and reliance upon, the victorious purposes of Jesus' coming to this earth. (1JO3:8) *"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."* (COL1:13)

III. *I will redeem you:* To redeem means to put it back to its original intent. Our condition was characterized by guilt: all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (ROM3:23) Once we experience Salvation and Freedom God promises us Restoration. The moment you accept Jesus as the Lord over your life, you are redeemed. Everyone is in need of redemption. As redeemed, we experience a lifelong journey of being transformed into His image. As redeemed, we grow in the grace. Christ's redemption has freed us from guilt, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ. Jesus, with outstretched arms on the cross, gave Himself as a drink offering for our sins. To be redeemed is to be sanctified, justified, adopted, reconciled. God has purchased us by the blood of Jesus, so that we could be restored to God's possession. It means that your debt of sin has been paid and you're forgiven. And we are no longer in bondage to sin. (GAL3:13; EPH1:11-14)

IV. *I will take you as My people:* God's original intent was and His final promise was to make them a people – a godly community in which His people would live with Him and one another in covenant faithfulness. He intended to create a qualitatively different kind of community that would make a difference in the world. Israel's identity as God's people entailed a lifestyle of obedience to all of God's decrees, commands and laws. This forms background for Jesus who would build His church, as a new community with disciples from all nation. And the Lord will create ongoing relationship between himself and His people. In the OT, He fulfills His presence with Israel in the tabernacle and temple. This is taken up by Jesus, whose name "Emmanuel" means God is with us in relationship. (MAT1:23) In order to free us from spiritual bondage of sin, God performed mighty miracles. When God takes us to be his people, he fights our battles, blesses us, loves us. Finally, God intends for his people to experience the good life in the promise land. This is about God's promise of satisfaction and fulfillment. It's in Christ that we find out who we are that He had His designs on us for glorious living. They Israel was baptized in the Red Sea, just as we were submerged and became part of spiritual Israel, the Church. (1CO10:2)

Paul anticipated the argument against divine sovereignty in Romans 9:19-21: You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this? or will it? Does not the potter have power over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?" God is like a potter who creates some vessels for destruction and others for glory. God has called out His people from both the Gentiles and the Jews to faith in Christ, the stumbling stone. Jesus says, He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces. (MAT21:44) God's sovereign choice to bless some and not others, is "fair" that God is God, and as the Creator, He has the right to do as He wishes with His own creation. A potter can choose how to use clay, and that clay has no cause to complain that it was chosen for one purpose or another. In the same way, God has the absolute right to choose whom He will save. God did as He liked in Pharaoh's hardening heart because He is God and He has an absolute and sovereign right to do so.

God is sovereign in creation, providence, redemption, judgment. God is King and Lord of all. He is Almighty in every area. God is sovereign in creation. *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* (GEN1:1) Apart from God, there was nothing. The will to create was entirely God's; it was a free action of God. He's the Creator who remains, as the Sustainer! Pharaoh's magicians were not able to duplicate third plague, God was demonstrating superiority of His power over Egypt. So, they admitted that Israel's God was greater than any of theirs. Pharaoh then accepted God's demand to let Israel go free. (EXO1:1-13:16) All who worship Idols/images are put to shame. God says, "*I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God*" (ISA45:5) *O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.* (PSA95:1)

God is sovereign in providence (wisdom). God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. Omnipotence means God is all-powerful. This means God has supreme power and has no limitations. Omniscience means God is all-knowing. This means God knows everything, including the past and future. Omnipresence means all-present. This means that God is capable of being everywhere at the same time. His divine presence encompasses the whole of the universe. Each divine sovereignty, His power, knowledge, and presence ensure that His goals are met, that His designs are fulfilled. He can do all that is possible for Him to will to do. *If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, since he cannot deny himself.* (2TI2:13)

God is sovereign in redemption (Salvation). If any man be saved, he is saved by divine grace. It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. We are saved as the result of God's good pleasure and the work of His grace in our lives. The gospel message of Christ's death on the cross is weak and foolish to the world, but God has given faith in Christ to those who believe it and find God's power and wisdom. All that is good in us is preceded by the grace of God and is the effect of a divine cause within. Grace of God is sovereign mean God has an absolute right to give grace where He chooses. *For God said, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.* (ROM9:15) We thank God for our salvation and pray for the salvation of our friends. Our salvation displays God's glory. (ROM11:36)

God is sovereign in judgment. The Sovereign God has the right to deal with sinful creatures in such a way as to display His glory, both in judgment and in mercy. God showed his awesome sovereignty in the story of Noah and the flood. He was sovereign over sin and all human beings. We see this through God's two commands to Noah and God's covenant sign to the whole world. And he was sovereign over life and history and points forward to the final return and Judgment Day of Jesus Christ. God's judgement is covenantal, awesome and to be feared. His judgement is awesome for His power is beyond human imagination. Who may stand in God's sight if He reveals fullness of his power? Fear God with reverence!

God has revealed to us that He not only created all things but He also preplanned everything that would happen in His creation. He both knows everything that has happened and everything that is yet future. Even though God is sovereign, Man still has real responsibility and freedom in the choices he makes. These choices are his; he cannot blame God for them. God is the first cause of all things, but evil is a product of second causes. And yet God is not the author of evil. God Himself cannot do evil and cannot be blamed for evil. *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.* (JAM1:13-14) God is never the one to blame for our pain, but rather the sovereign one to whom we turn for help. *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*" (v5) God is the generous giver of wisdom when we ask. He is the one to whom we reach out for help. He's the giver of every good and perfect gift to whom we look for relief, which is coming down from the Father of lights.

King Saul gives an example of the reality of human responsibility. His disobedience cost him a kingdom. (ISA13:13) God later said, "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned away from me and has not done what I said" (ISA15:11) Every command of God is proof of human responsibility. Consider, Crucifixion of the Son of God. Men were responsible for putting Jesus to death. Those who were gathered together against Jesus to occur. This relates directly to Judas Iscariot and his betrayal of Christ. "*And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!*" (LUK22:22) We are held responsible for our actions and behavior. We are guilty in transgression and praiseworthy in obedience. Human beings have free will and are fully responsible for their own actions. The choices we make, the words we speak, the things we do... Our actions have eternal implications. In Heb 6:4-6, warns against crucifying Christ again.

If the Lord is God, follow Him

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Prophet Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people said nothing.(1KI18:21) On Mount Carmel, the prophet Elijah stood before all Israel, including the prophets of false gods, that brought out the simple contrast that challenges all Christians. Sometimes we complicate things, even in faith. This is why there's a range of doctrine, different denominations, but ultimately one church under one faith. The trouble starts when we get caught up in disagreeing over details – "foolish and stupid arguments"(2TI2:23) The end result is that the devil has his way, taking senseless believers captive to do his will.(V26) If the devil is in details, that is your god, follow him. But there's a third option is here. "But the people said nothing."

When Elijah spoke to all the men of Israel, his address is directed to those who are uncertain between two opinions. The prophet insisted upon the distinction which existed between the worship Baal, the god of Jezebel, and the worship of Yahweh, the one true God. the God of their fathers. People thought both Gods might be worshiped, and each of them have a share in their hearts. "No," said the prophet when he began, "this will not do, these are two opinions; you can never make them one, they are two contradictory things which cannot be combined. No man can serve two masters." If God be served, he will be a master; and if the devil be served, he will be a master; and "you cannot serve two masters." God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, these never can meet; there never can be an agreement between them, they never can be brought into unity, and why should you seek to do it? Two opinions, would not allow any of his hearers to profess to worship both. These are two opinions, and you are uncertain between the two. Prophet calls these wavers to an account for the amount of time in making their choice to serve God or to serve Satan. How long time you want to decide? If we understood the things of God, we should not hesitate, but say at once, "Now God is my God, and that forever." Let your conduct be consistent with your opinions; if you believe the Lord to be God, carry it out in your daily life; be holy, be prayerful, abide in Word, trust in God, be faithful, be upright, be loving; give your heart to God, follow Him and serve Him. And the challenge will arise for the Church—a decision is put before Christians which asks us to choose God or the gods of the world. How long will you waver between two opinions? What makes a believer a disciple? Surrender. Christian purposes himself to surrender every part of himself to the Lordship of Jesus. So that's all my heart. It's difficult because my heart(/soul/strength/mind) doesn't naturally love the things of God. But it wouldn't be surrender if it were easy, no? This is so important it's right up there with the First Commandment: And God spoke all these words, saying, "*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.*"(EXO20:1-3) It must be an intentional, conscious, sober and daily attempt to surrender all. *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.*(1CO10:21)

In 1 Kings 18, centers around a test, whichever god sends fire down to burn up the sacrificial bull, that is God. Elijah then invites priests of Baal to pray for fire to light the sacrifice. They pray until evening without success. Elijah builds an altar; he asks God to accept the sacrifice. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, the stones of the altar itself. All the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"(v.38-39) Then, it took the sacrifice of a bull to bring men to submission. Thereafter, submission involves the sacrifice of a man. Living Sacrifices to God: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*(ROM12:1) So every day we have to submit to God who is good. Bible is a summons to a personal, absolute and ultimate unconditional surrender to God as Sovereign. God rules in Love. He loves you and wants the best for you. "Lord, decide me now by the fire of thy Spirit; O! let thy Spirit descend into my heart, to burn up the bullock, that I may be a whole burnt offering to God; to burn up the wood and the stones of my sin; to burn up the very dust of worldliness." May God grant you his Holy Spirit that you may turn unto Him! Hallelujah!

What difference does God's sovereignty make? For Isaiah, it meant everything. '*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple*' Isaiah 6 records the "call" of the young prophet to the difficult task of preaching a message of judgment to the nation. This incident focused his ministry and prepared him for it. Here looks at how the sovereign Lord inspired the young prophet for service. Revelation of the glory of the Lord was the foundation; it led to a response of confession, which brought cleansing, which in turn enabled him to hear the Word of God, which carried a commission to preach the message. The first change for Isaiah came upon his vision of the Lord enthroned. By seeing God's sovereign glory, Isaiah recognizes his own lack of holiness. Then angel having a live coal in his hand, And he laid it upon his mouth that he was cleansed. *Lo, this has touched your lips.*" "*And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'*" he exclaimed, "*Here am I! Send me.*"

Isaiah accepted God's call to ministry. Since God is true sovereign, there is no greater privilege than to serve Him. For those who have seen sovereignty of God see all of their labor as an opportunity to extend His reign and serve His kingdom. It is when we realize how great is the God we serve, how is His sovereignty, how glorious is His kingdom that we want to serve Him in all we do. The vision of God's sovereignty by seeing God as being holy and glorious! It was a glimpse of God in his glory, majesty, exaltedness which the seraphim sing about –in their response to seeing and responding to God. If we see just a portion of what he saw, we will do the same, considering the high privilege of serving so Great our Lord!