

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Even though the word "Sovereign" does not appear in the Bible, (except now, in N.I.V. Acts 4:24), it is a very precise term to use in describing the character and nature of God. It is an adjective that not only described God but also describes what God does! The word sovereign means "the supreme power or authority, independent of and uninfluenced by, any other source." Since this is a human term used to describe God, we must be careful not to attach human limitations to it while using it of God. For instance when the term is used of kings or rulers, it is not true that they would be in control of all that happens - as it is with God. Nor is it true that they would have always been and ever will be sovereign - as it is with God. The contrast between the two could go on, but I'm sure you see the significance of this point. Therefore, God being eternally sovereign is:

- Omniscient - all knowing (past, present and future)
- Omnipotent - all powerful - in control of everything (past, present and future)
- Omnipresent - everywhere present - all at the same time, past, present and future.

These three all inclusive terms are beneficial in expanding the definition of sovereignty as it relates to God. Now think about how it relates to you.

There are many thought provoking questions that arise when the Sovereignty of God is discussed, such as:

- Is God responsible for man's sin? Did He "determine" what would happen or just know what would happen and therefore permit it in order to accomplish His purposes? Because sin exists, does this mean that God wants it, or can't He get rid of it? Is what is, what ought to be?
- Does God allow/permit something to happen or does He make it happen?
- Does He decree everything? (Deut.29:29)
- Does God provide a "2nd best" - alternative plan B. C. D....?
- Does God continually have to "change" His mind because of "accidents, sin or unexpected events"?
- Is God sovereign?

The verses below that I've selected are some of the most insightful Biblical truths that the Scriptures contain regarding this subject. They require your careful meditation so that His words can speak to you for themselves.

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| *Gal.1:15-16 | *Isa.46:9-11 |
| Dan.5:25d | *Acts 2:23 |
| Isa.14:26-27 | *Eph.1:4-5 |
| Jer.4:28 | Eph.1:11 |
| *Prov.21:1 | *Rom.9:14-24 |
| Jer.51:12 | Rom.8:28 |
| *Jer.25:13 | Job 38 |
| Isa.53:10 | *Rom.11:33-36 |
| Eph.3:10-11 | Job 40:7 |
| *Acts 4:27-28 | Ex.7:3 |
| Matt.11:25-26 | Ex.9:12-16 |

Jer. 32:17,37,42

*Prov.16:4

Jer.33:2

16:9

2 Tim.1:9

16:33

Ps.33:11

*Isa.40:21

*Job 23:13-14

* 40:28

Prov.19:21

*Isa.55:8-11

Luke 22:22

Isa.45:7

*Eph.2:1-10

Gen.45:8

*Acts 17:26-27

50:20

Heb.9:27

*Acts 13:48

Ps.106:15

2 Thess.2:13

*Job 1:21 - The Lord gives and takes...

*Jer.18:3-6

2:10

*Jer.29:11-13

2:3

Js.1:18

5:18

Jn.1:13

13:15

*Deut.29:29

Acts 15:18

Eph.2:1-5

Job 14:5

Ps.139:16

*Dan.4:35

*-Definitely look up these references before going on in this "study".

The fact that God is sovereign and in complete control certainly does not deny human responsibility. The Bible clearly states that we are fully accountable and responsible for what we do and say (Matt.12:36; Rom.14:12). Also we can never escape the consequences of sin because Gal.6:7 says we shall reap what we sow! So how do these things fit into the picture?

If God foreknew and foresaw everything that was ever going to happen, we could say that He obviously "allowed" it to happen. But since He is omniscient and sovereign, He must have intended it to happen that way in order to accomplish His divine purposes which cannot be thwarted. That may be the first step here in understanding the picture. Now if God intended it to happen, does that make Him the "cause" of everything that happens, even sin? No! James 1:13 says, "Let no man say he is tempted of God. God can't be tempted with evil nor does He tempt any man", Verse 14 basically says that every man sins because of his own sinful nature. God is not the author of sin. Satan is. God has "foreordained" or decreed whatsoever shall come to pass. For instance in Heb.9:27, it says, "it's appointed unto man once to die...". That says there is an appointed time to die, right? That means that if Mr. A. murders Mr. Z on July 20, 1939 - even though it is sin - God has appointed Mr. Z's time of death to that date in time, and logically concluding that He has also "appointed" the means. Think it through. There is no accident, sin, or mistake that man can make that is outside of the plan and purpose of a sovereign God. One way to clarify that is, that God doesn't force or cause an individual to do anything that wasn't/isn't already in their heart of man to do anyway! For the biblical illustration of this, turn to the account of Pharaoh in Ex.4:21; 7:3, 14; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,12,34-35; 10:1-2,20,27, 11:10. God has and will use sinful man to

accomplish His Divine Purposes. It was Pharaoh's heart to rebel against the sovereign God, so God purposed through all of the plagues to: Ex.7:3,5; 9:15-16!

How about the story of Joseph for another Biblical illustration of the sovereign "decretive will" of God. Remember Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery to some Egyptian traders and lied to Jacob saying he was dead. All of which was clearly willful sin against Joseph, Jacob and most of all, God. Now did that throw off God's purpose and plan? Did God say "Oh no, look what happened. Now what do I do? Joseph is one of the chosen tribes. Well, now I'll have to create plan "L" because these sinful humans have stopped me from what I've intended before the foundations of the world?" Poor God! How ridiculous! Joseph knew before Paul did that Rom.8:28 applied. Red. Gen.45:3-8 and Gen.50:20. Whew, what a coincidence this all just happened to work out at the last minute. Right? No way! The Bible teaches differently.

Think about David and his sin of adultery with Bathsheba. Solomon, the greatest, richest, wisest man that ever lived came out of that! A coincidence? No - an intended part of the decretive will of God. Think about Jonah. He ran from God in disobedience but God still accomplished His purposes through him! Read the rest of the Bible and see it, especially the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 3:13-18).

WARNING!!! This no way gives us an excuse to justify our deliberate wilful sin, using the statement, "Well, God's in control. He's sovereign. I can do what I want and He'll work it out for the best!"

Let's seriously consider the consequences of sin. Did Joseph's brothers all those years experience a joyful, abundant, victorious, faithful life knowing things would work out? Not at all. Read the story. Did Jonah experience the blessed joy of being used of God to bring about the great Naval revival? Not at all. He was miserable, depressed, humiliated, cast overboard in a storm, swallowed by a fish "that God decreed" (Jonah 1:17), lived in the stench of a stomach and was vomitted out onto a beach! Certainly not worth the apathetic excuse, "Well God will work it out". Or please read the consequences of David's sin, 2 Sam.12:9-18. List the consequences.

Forgiveness is certain, but look what he went through! (Ps.51)

It is tragically terrifying for a person to say, "I'll go ahead and _____ (sin). God's in control and will work it out!" Yes He is in control and will work it out according to Rom.8:28 and the 50 other references in this study, BUT you don't know how He's going to work it out! You can't take comfort in the decreed will (secret will) of God (Deut.29:29) if you're willfully continuing in sin. God has decreed Sodom and Gomorah. God decreed hell. God decreed Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5). You can only take comfort in the decreed will of God when you're in obedience to His revealed will (Dt.29:29). You're not guaranteed "Well, if I sin God will take my life and I'll be in heaven". You surely won't get off that easily with that kind of an attitude! "It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God who is a consuming fire! (Heb.12:29 and 10:31). We certainly cannot second guess God's plan before the foundations of the world. What we are responsible for is the revealed will of God in His Word.

Sin is not worth it. Ask the guy in jail. Ask the drunkard. Ask the one who's committed adultery. Ask the one who ran off with another man or woman. When they finally come to their senses and realized the terrible effects their selfishness had on their spouse, children, family, friends, self, the church and other people of God, they wished that they had never done it. Think also about the unsaved. That would give them the opportunity to mock and blaspheme the TRUTH because of it. No my friend, sin is not worth it. It took me one year to get my life "straightened out" after being a drug addict for just about three years. The "hell" I went through wasn't worth it at all. No one will escape the consequences of sin because of the "Sovereignty of God". Even though He'll accomplish His divine purposes in spite of it all. God's Word says -

- You'll reap what you sow (Gal.6:7)
- You'll pay the price (Adam and Eve paid a great price) (Gen.3:1-24)
- You'll suffer the consequences (Num.32:23) shame, guilt, fear... "Your sin will find you out".
- Others will suffer the consequences (guilt, sickness, V.D., the law) (Num.14:18)
- You'll miss out on the joy and blessing (Jer.5:25)
- You'll experience "leaness" in your soul (Ps.106:15) - "an empty, depressive turmoil"
- You'll be chastened by God (Heb.12:5-15)
- You'll not prosper or grow spiritually (Prov.28:13)
- You'll face the ulcers, pain, cancer, amputation, whatever, for your sin (Ps.32:3-4)
- You'll miss out on the good God had for you (Jer.5:25)

It's much better to be a part of God's decreed sovereign plan in loving submissive obedience to His revealed will than to be "fighting against the current."

I want to clearly say that this is a study of the Scripture - God's Word - not mine. It is God who we must be honest with. If what He says is truth, then we must conform our preconceived ideas to His word which is established forever in heaven.

PART II - SOVEREIGNTY STUDY

The Sovereignty of God is also involved in our salvation to an amazing extent! The scripture says that He chose us, adopted us, elected us, and made us alive by His will (or choice) - not ours! One of the best ways to understand that, is the illustration of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (Jn.11:1-40). Lazarus was dead and in the grave four days. But by the very words of God he was made alive! Now, did Lazarus ask Jesus to deliver him from being dead? Did Lazarus do anything to bring about his new life? No, he was dead! He couldn't respond to Jesus Christ on his own at all! That's exactly the way we were spiritually according to Eph.2:5. It says that, "while we were dead... He made us alive..."! We must thoughtfully and carefully think through this whole matter in order to bring us into a more grateful and worshipful relationship to our sovereign Father. To study this in further detail, continue the study entitled "What Does the Sovereignty of God Have to Do With Our Salvation"? Just take a careful and thoughtful look at the following verses:

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| Eph.1:4-5 | 2 Thess.2:13 |
| Acts 13:48 | 2 Tim.1:9 |
| Matt.25:34 | Titus 1:2 |
| Acts 18:9-10 | Rom.9:11-13 |
| I Cor.2:7 | I Pet.2:8 |
| Eph.2:1-5 | |