

Online Grace Bible School

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**Online Grace Bible School
Phase 5
The Sovereignty of God**

1) God's Sovereignty, Our Security

Who controls what happens on earth? Quotations. Some Christians say...

1) Satan. They say that at the fall Adam gave all dominion and authority over to Satan. But God never gave His world to man. Adam was a steward only. Satan is called the god of this world because the world is duped into doing his will. But God never gave him control. The earth belongs to God.

2) Man. Some claim man 'was created on terms of equality with God, and he could stand in God's presence without any consciousness of inferiority. He made us the same class of being that He is Himself. He lived on terms equal with God'. Another: 'God's reason for creating Adam was His desire to reproduce Himself. He was not a little like God or almost like God. He was not subordinate to God even.' This is close to blasphemy.

3) God's Laws. Others believe the world and God are governed by laws. The more you discover the laws the more you will manipulate things in your favour. God cannot act outside his laws. E.g. the laws of faith, confession, prayer.

4) God. God either rules or is ruled. If His will is subject to, or can be thwarted by, Satan or man then He is not God. But the Bible teaches that He is sovereign, Psa.115:3; Psa.135:6; Eph.1:11.

- ✓ God is sovereign, i.e. God is God. It is He who determines the course of history, nations and life according to His will. He sets the boundaries, determines the limits and ordains the outcome, 2 Chron.20:6.
- ✓ Nothing honours God more, as it affirms His rights as Creator over His creatures.
- ✓ And nothing is more humbling and reveals our faith more than our attitude to the sovereignty of God.
- ✓ God's sovereignty is not popular. But to challenge it is to challenge the Godhood of God.
- ✓ Yet it is challenged! Some have said that praying, 'If it be your will' is a faith-killer. The problem is that we will let God be anything but God. We prefer role reversal, Isa.29:16; Isa.10:15.
- ✓ The Bible teaches truth from 2 perspectives: God's and ours. It's not a matter of one being right and the other wrong. But our perspective is very limited. God's perspective is perfect.

4 truths concerning God's sovereignty which will support us through life:

1) We know nothing can happen unless God allows it, Matt.10:29; Gen 45:8. Our disappointments are sometimes His appointments.

2) Faith requires us to submit to God's purposes, even when we don't understand them, Isa.55:8-9; Rom.11:33; Matt.20:15; Job 33:13.

3) When God allows us to pass through difficult times we can trust Him for grace for each situation.

4) He will make all things work for our good, Rom.8:28. As a workman uses different tools to achieve his purpose, so He can even use the wicked for His purposes, Hab.1:12. This doesn't make Him the author of sin.

God is sovereign in His timing. We trust God when His promises do not seem to be fulfilled, Psa.39:9. 1 Pet.5:7. Our lives are in God's hands, Psa.33:18.

Spurgeon said, 'There is no attribute of God more comforting to his children than the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe troubles, they believe that Sovereignty hath ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children of God ought more earnestly to contend than the dominion of their Master over all creation, the kingship of God over all the works of His own hands, the throne of God, and His right to sit upon that throne.'

2) God's Sovereignty And Our Free Will

God is in control and works all things according to His eternal purpose. Don't we have a free will? Both truths are taught in the Bible. Some say they are irreconcilable. Only if either is seen as absolute is there a problem.

- ✓ Does the unbeliever have a free will? Free, but not absolutely free. E.g. He is free to choose, yes, but only what *he* wants, not what *God* wants. This is the Biblical definition of an unbeliever's free will, Rom.6:20.
- ✓ The operation of the will always involves the refusal of one alternative and acceptance of another. It responds to the greatest influence upon it. Therefore it is not a self-determining agent. It is servant to the strongest influence, i.e. the heart, Prov. 4:23. The unbeliever's heart at enmity towards God, Rom.8:7-8.
- ✓ Only as the heart is renewed by the Holy Spirit can a person choose to come to Christ, Jn.6:44; 8:36.
- ✓ So the sinner's free will is really bondage. God allows the unbeliever to walk in his wicked ways. But...
- ✓ Sometimes He restrains unbelievers, and other times He softens their hearts, Prov.21:1; Ezra 1:1;7:27.

What about the believer? Does it mean we don't need to pray, serve, preach, etc.?

1) We worship God and honour Him as we acknowledge His sovereignty and submit to His will

- ✓ See Jas 4:13-15; Acts 18:21.
- ✓ Why was Stephen stoned, James beheaded but Peter escaped? Sometimes suffering is in God's will, other times it isn't, 1 Pet.3:17.
- ✓ We glorify God by testifying of our peace and security because of His sovereignty. We are in His hands.

2) We see salvation from God's perspective

- ✓ Remember, the doctrines of God's sovereignty and man's free will only become error when we teach absolutes in either area. Paul reveals salvation from both views. **Man's perspective:** Rom.10:13-15. **God's perspective:** Rom.8:28-30; 2 Tim.1:9; Jn.6:37,39,44. Are you secure because you are holding God's hand or because He chose you and He is holding your hand? (Jn.17:1,2,9).
- ✓ Note order in these verses: *'Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you"'* (John 10:25-26). They did not believe because they were not His sheep, not vice versa.
- ✓ Whose decision determines our salvation? See 2 Thes.2:13; Jn.1:12-13; Rom. 9:16; Acts 13:48; Titus 1:1; Rom.11:5).
- ✓ If we say 'It's not fair' we have moved away from the meaning of grace. We should rather say, 'Why me?'
- ✓ Does this discourage or encourage evangelism? It encouraged Paul's evangelism at Corinth, Acts 18:9-10.

3) Prayer does not change God's mind, but aligns us with His purpose

Someone said, 'Earth is changed, souls are saved and God's policy shaped by prayer.' Is this true? No! God is working all things according to the counsel of His will, which is eternal.

- ✓ Much of prayer is endlessly pleading for things we want, hoping we will get lucky. The more praying, the better. But God already knows what you need, Mt.6:32.
- ✓ Matt.6:10. Jesus taught us to pray according to the Father's will, Matt.7:7; Lk.11:13.
- ✓ Rom.8:26. How do your children know what's good for them? They don't but we do. How do we know what is good for us? We don't but the Spirit does. We can pray for a new car but maybe His will is that we are imprisoned for the gospel!
- ✓ If we pray according to God's will all our prayers will be answered, 1 John 5:14.
- ✓ So why pray? Because it connects us with God and His purposes. Prayer is talking to God; but it's far more. It's *listening* to God. It 'is the process of discovering what the Lord is doing and coming alongside Him in that'
- ✓ In prayer: 1) Sometimes God changes things; 2) Other times He empowers us to change things, *'And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward'* (Exodus 14:15); 3) Other times things don't change but we do; He changes us!