

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Introduction

Here is an amazing statement. It is the basic truth of the Bible.

It is all the more amazing because it was made by a pagan world emperor who was absolute ruler of all he possessed:

Dan 4:34-35 "...and I blessed the Most High and praised Him Who Lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion and His Kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the Army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one Can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have you done?"

We will look at God's sovereignty in several ways:

1. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY STATED

To speak of the Sovereignty of God means He is absolutely supreme, the King, the Almighty, the possessor of ALL power. No one can defeat His purposes or resist His will. He governs all life, all history, all time and all eternity.

1Tim 6:15 "He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to Whom be honour and everlasting power.

Psalms 22:28 "For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations."

Do you believe in the sovereignty of God? If you are a Christian you do.

You pray! You recognise that God is the source and author of all your need .

You thank God for your conversion. You don't think you saved yourself!

You pray for others. You don't think God they can believe by themselves.

You never think that God is "trying His best" to save all mankind and that the Father is disappointed, The Son is dissatisfied with the result of His death, and that the Holy Spirit is defeated in His efforts to get people to repent. This would be blasphemy! It would be to dethrone God!

But there are problems and disputes with this Glorious truth.

Great and Godly Christians have argued over it. (Wesley and Whitefield)

There are two Biblical truths that must both be held together.

1. God is in sovereign control of all things
 2. God judges men responsible for their individual words, thoughts and deeds.
- See Romans 3:5-8; Romans 9:17-20

This truth is not acceptable to sinful man, nor even to our rebellious nature.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your Ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the Earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than Your thoughts."

2. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER HIS UNIVERSE

i. Over the natural world.

Suppose God didn't govern His universe and our world in particular.

We know of cloudbursts and torrential rains. What if the never stopped?

We hear of earthquakes in some area. What if there were multiple quakes?

What if all the animals and birds of the world attacked us all?

But this is what the Word of God says:

Col 1:17 "And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist (hold together)"

Heb 1:3 "Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power..."

2Pet 3:7 "But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word..."

The bible shows again and again that God IS controlling His world.

Genesis 1 shows God creating everything – Light, seas, living creatures.

He governs nature in the plagues of Egypt. Frogs, hail, locusts, darkness (Only in one part of Egypt but not on the Israelites!)

He sent fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, the Red Sea parted, Nebuchadnezzar's furnace could not harm the three boys, (but destroyed the men who threw them in) He caused the sun to go back ten degrees to help Hezekiah, a dumb ass speaks words to Baalam, ravens bring bread and meat for Elijah, a great fish swallows Jonah and then vomits him out on shore, a fish carries a coin for Peter. God is in control of His world!

ii. Over the spirit world

God even controls the spirit world. Angels (Good spirits) and Demons (evil spirits)

He sends his angel to deliver Peter from prison

Satan is not permitted to touch Job except with God's permission.

Even evil spirits intent on sin, deception and destruction are in the hands of the Lord Who has to give His permission before they can operate.

See 1Kings 22:23 Wicked Ahab and righteous Jehoshaphat want guidance for whether they should go to battle with Syria. All the false prophets say, "Go!" but godly Micaiah says "No!" He explains what is going on v19-24.

But this does not mean God is the author of lies.

James 1:13-15 (READ!) God can even use the lying falsehood of evil spirits for His own glory and purpose!

See also Matt 9:28-32 (READ) Jesus meeting the demon-possessed man.

The legion of demons in the man could not leave him and go into the herd of pigs, as they wanted to do until Jesus gave them permission.

iii. Over the affairs of sinful men.

Gen 45:4-5(READ) Joseph said to his brothers who had treated him so badly that God had overruled it for His purpose.

50:19-20 “You meant evil against me but God meant it for good.”

Proverbs 21:1 “The kings heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes

Psalms 33:11 “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.”

Isaiah 46:9-10 “My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure.”

Acts 15:18 (In connection with the gathering in of Gentiles through the Gospel. Not an afterthought or some alternative plan when Israel failed) “Known to God from eternity are all His works.”

Numb 23:4, 8 King Balak hired Balaam to curse God’s people but God compelled him to bless them. (Balaam wished he could have a houseful of gold but God would not allow it, so he couldn’t!)

Psalms 2:2-3 What do all the kings of the earth want? To reject God’s Christ and cast off His restraints from them. What does God do? v4-6 He sets His King on the throne! V8 Gives Him the whole of the nations as His inheritance!

The most evil deed that has ever been done in the history of the world is the crucifixion of God’s own Son and yet see what Acts 2:23 says:

“Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;”

Although it was God’s eternal plan, nevertheless those who did it were called “wicked” by God and guilty.

A.W.Pink (The Sovereignty of God p43)

“The Lord God omnipotent reigns. His government is exercised over inanimate matter, over brute beasts, over men, over angels good and evil, over Satan himself. No revolving of a world, no shining of a star, no storm, no movement of a creature – nothing in all the vast universe can come to pass otherwise than God has eternally purposed. Here is the foundation for faith. Here is a resting place for the intellect. Here is an anchor for the soul both sure and steadfast!”

3. GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY IN SALVATION.

Jonah 2:9”Salvation is of the Lord.”

Many have no difficulty with God’s sovereignty so far, but can’t accept it when it comes to matters of grace, faith, and salvation.

Let us ask some questions.

Are all men lost sinners? Yes! Are all men saved? No! Why not?

They have hard, rebellious hearts and refuse to believe. Yes! But:

Are some of the worst men saved? Yes!

How ? God changes their hard hearts by His Spirit!

1Tim 1:15 “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern...”

Why doesn't God save all men? Is it their stony hearts that prevent Him? No!

Ezek 11:19 “...I will put a new spirit within them, and take away the stony heart out of their flesh...”

How did this happen? Was it your willingness to let God do it? No!

Eph 2:1 “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins... and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy,...even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive..”

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”

There are three significant words used in connection with our salvation.

All point to a miracle that only God can do.

Birth 1Pet 1:23

Creation 2Cor 5:17

Resurrection Eph 2:5

Many other scriptures refer to salvation as God's sovereign act.

i. The words of Jesus

John 6:35-37 (READ) Jesus speaks of some whom the Father gives to Him as the ones who come to Him and so are accepted.

V39 and of those given to Him He would lose none

V44 explicitly, none can come unless the Father draws them.(also v65)

John 10:14-16 (READ) Some spoken of as His sheep whom He knows and others whom He must bring who will hear His voice.

V26 shows that some rejected Him because they were not His sheep.

V27 But His own sheep Hear His voice and follow Him and receive eternal life and cannot be snatched from His hands.

John 15:16 Did we choose Christ? No! He chose us!

John 17:2, 6, 9, 12, 24 All these verses speak of a select group out of the world given to Christ by the Father, loved by Him just as Christ is.

Pause and wonder at such sovereign love and grace!

ii. Other New Testament scriptures.

Rom 8:28-32 The reason that all things work for good for us is that we are completely enclosed in God's sovereign purposes, and Christ's saving work.

The whole of Romans ch9 dwells on the theme of God's electing purposes.

(Paul quotes Gen 25:23 “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated”

Illus: A friend of mine went to his Pastor saying he had a problem with that verse.

The Pastor said he also had a problem with it, but not the same one. He could understand how God could hate Esau but not how He could love Jacob!)

1Cor 1:27-29 The call of God came not because we were worthy or distinguished but in order that God alone might get all the glory.

Eph 1:3-6, 11 We were chosen (elect) in Christ, predestined to be His sons When? Before the world began! Nothing to do with our merit or effort

2Thess 2:13 How thankful Paul was that the Thessalonians had been loved and chosen by God from the beginning (Notice the order of things. “Sanctifying of the Spirit” comes before “belief of the truth”)

2Tim 1:9 Before time began, God had this purpose of grace for us.

1Pet 1:2 Christians everywhere are in the sovereign purposes of the Father, the Spirit, and the Son.

See this in action.

Acts 13:48 The clearest possible statement!

Acts 16:14 Religion didn't do it, culture didn't do it, not even good preaching could do it, but “The Lord opened her heart...”

1Thess 1:4-5 (Jim has shown this) Proof of their election was that the “gospel came in power and the Holy Spirit and much assurance...”

4. OBJECTIONS TO THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN SALVATION.

i. Man has a free will and must decide for himself.

But our wills are fallen, in bondage to sin, enemies of God, blind, dead. Rom 5:6-10 Describes us as “Without strength, still sinners, enemies...”

Rom 3:10-11 says “...there is none who seeks after God...”

1Cor 2:14 Naturally, we don't know or receive the things of God.

We should come to Christ. God says we MUST but we can't!

ii. God's foreknowledge means God knew beforehand who would believe

If God chose people who He knew would believe then their belief would be a “work”. They would be better than others.

C.H.Spurgeon “*I believe the doctrine of Election, because I am quite certain that if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him, and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked on me with special love.*”

iii. This is fatalism How can we be responsible for not believing?

Rom 9:19-20

Don't argue against what God says or does. Don't say, “I'm not to blame for the decisions I make.”

iv. Gospel preaching is pointless if God has decreed who will be saved!

But God calls His elect to be saved through hearing and believing the message. This is the logic of Gospel preaching.

Rom 10:14 “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?”

5. THE RESULTS OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

i. Our holiness

Some think that if they are God’s elect they are safe from hell whatever they do. But that is a false view.

Eph 1:4 “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be HOLY AND WITHOUT BLAME before Him in love...”

2Tim 2:19 “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “the Lord knows those that are His” and

“Let everyone who names the name of Christ DEPART FROM INIQUITY.”

ii. Our Assurance

How comforting it is to know that I am a believer not because it was MY idea or will that decided but that God had it all planned and paid for long before I ever came with faltering faith to Christ. And also that I will not lose my salvation by my unfaithfulness or sin after conversion.

Rom 8:30 “Moreover who He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us who can be against us?”

iii. Our humble adoration and praise

Rom 11:33 “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past finding out!

V36 “Foe of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be the glory forever. Amen.