

# The Strange and Wonderful Attributes of God

## Lesson #13 – God’s Sovereignty <sup>2313</sup>

God’s sovereignty is closely related to the actual application of God’s “omnipotence” which we studied in our last lesson. Sovereignty goes further than just omnipotence in that it includes the relationship of omnipotence to His will and purpose.

### I. Definition of God’s Sovereignty

“The **Sovereignty of God** is the biblical teaching that all things are under God's rule and control, and that nothing happens without His direction or permission. God works not just some things but all things according to the counsel of His own will (see Eph. 1:11). His purposes are all-inclusive and never thwarted (see Isa. 46:10-11); nothing takes Him by surprise. The sovereignty of God is not merely that God has the power and right to govern all things, but that He does so, always and without exception. In other words, God is not merely sovereign *de jure* (in principle), but sovereign *de facto* (in practice).”

From the website **Theopedia**

#### Categorical Discussions:

**Is this an Existential or a Relational Category?** Sovereignty is an existential attribute of God. It is found in His very nature of existence and cannot be other than completely sovereign. To deny the sovereignty of God is to deny His very nature and to worship an idol of your own making.

**Is this an Incommunicable or a Communicable Category?** God’s sovereignty is an incommunicable attribute of God. We humans are never commanded to be sovereign.

If we were to have any authority that mirrors God’s sovereign authority (such as a “sovereign” king), it would be a meager loaned sovereignty that is temporary and fully under God’s control. God never gives absolute sovereignty to anyone, but rather can loan it for a short time and still maintains full control of that authority according to His own purposes and decrees.

**Problem Statement:** Christians often believe that they understand God’s sovereignty because they know that it is taught in Scripture. But it is certain that many born again Christians really do not understand sovereignty and don’t incorporate it with thorough understanding into their own faith.

They don’t understand it because their remaining fallen nature rebels against the sovereignty of God. This doctrine is effectively an attack on man’s supposed “free will”.

In saying that, I am not saying that we are robots that are made to sin and rebel against God, rather that we are accountable before God for our own rebellious acts against the Sovereign of the universe and the spiritual world created of God.

### II. Logic and Importance of God’s Sovereignty

God has a plan. God will accomplish His plan. There is, and never has been, and never will be a person or persons who can thwart God’s purposes or decrees. God’s sovereignty consists of:

1<sup>st</sup> His own plans and purposes combined with

2<sup>nd</sup> His absolute Omniscience (all knowledge), His absolute Omnipresence (present everywhere at all times), and His absolute Omnipotence (all powerful). Not just able to move mountains, but rather able to move planets, no, no, rather able to move galaxies, no, no, rather able to move universes at a very minimum!

#### Consequences of God’s Sovereignty

Because God is sovereign in all things, He must be acknowledged as the only absolute sovereign ruler, approached in fear, and lived before as the absolute LORD of all persons and things. Obedience is expected and demanded. Man’s failure to obey will always ultimately result judgement of death and hell.

God does not directly forgive sins. Rather, with all sin which is forgiven, a royal price has been paid in full for we who have been forgiven through the shed blood of Jesus Christ His Son. The wrath of God has been satisfied, propitiation has been made, our sins have been paid for in full by God’s substitutionary blood sacrifice of His Royal Son.

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## Historicity of God's Sovereignty

Because the Scriptural teaching is so thorough and clear on this subject, it has been widely held by theologians, pastors, apostles, prophets, teachers, etc. from the earliest days of Israel and the church. There is no real controversy over the Sovereignty of God "officially".

When our churches cater to the wishes of lost people in our churches (Seeker Sensitive Churches) and refuse to teach about who God is, the congregants are allowed to bring idolatry and heresy into the church without challenge and thus practically deny the full sovereignty of our God.

## III. Scriptural Basis of God's Sovereignty

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures are quoted from the New American Standard Updated version (NASU) Some verses pertinent to this goal of knowing of God's Sovereignty:

**Deut 31:15-18** *The Lord appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the doorway of the tent. <sup>16</sup>The Lord said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. <sup>17</sup>Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, 'Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?' <sup>18</sup>But I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods.*

**Deut 32:39-43** *See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand. <sup>40</sup>Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, as I live forever, <sup>41</sup>If I sharpen My flashing sword, and My hand takes hold on justice, I will render vengeance on My adversaries, and I will repay those who hate Me. <sup>42</sup>I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword will devour flesh, with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the long-haired leaders of the enemy.' <sup>43</sup>Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance on His adversaries, and will atone for His land and His people." Speaks of Jesus the Christ of Israel!*

**1 Chron 29:10-13** *So David blessed the Lord in the sight of all the assembly; and David said, "Blessed are You, O Lord God of Israel our father, forever and ever. <sup>11</sup>Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O Lord, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. <sup>12</sup>Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. <sup>13</sup>Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name.*

**1 Sam 2:6-10** *The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. <sup>7</sup>The Lord makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. <sup>8</sup>He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles, and inherit a seat of honor; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He set the world on them. <sup>9</sup>He keeps the feet of His godly ones, but the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; for not by might shall a man prevail. <sup>10</sup>Those who contend with the Lord will be shattered; against them He will thunder in the heavens, the Lord will judge the ends of the earth; and He will give strength to His king, and will exalt the horn of His anointed."*

**Isa 14:24-27** *The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, <sup>25</sup>to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder. <sup>26</sup>This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. <sup>27</sup>For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"*

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**Rom 9:10-18** *And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; <sup>11</sup>for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, <sup>12</sup>it was said to her, "**THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.**" <sup>Gen 25:23</sup> <sup>13</sup>Just as it is written, "**JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.**" <sup>Mal 1:2-3</sup>*

<sup>14</sup>What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! <sup>15</sup>For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." <sup>Ex 33:19</sup> <sup>16</sup>So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. <sup>17</sup>For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." <sup>Ex 9:16</sup> <sup>18</sup>So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

**Eph 1:18-23** *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup>and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might <sup>20</sup>which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup>And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup>which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

**Rom 11:1-8** *I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup>God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? <sup>3</sup>Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life. <sup>1 Kng 19:10 & 14</sup> <sup>4</sup>But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. <sup>1 Kng 19:18</sup> <sup>5</sup>In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. <sup>6</sup>But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. <sup>7</sup>What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; <sup>8</sup>just as it is written, "**God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day.**" <sup>Deut 29:4</sup>*

### IV. Important Points About God's Sovereignty

#### 1<sup>st</sup> How God's Sovereignty Relates to Other Attributes

- God's love is sovereign and accomplishes all that God has decreed.
  - God's wrath is sovereign and accomplishes all that God has decreed.
  - God's providence is sovereign and accomplishes all that God has decreed.
  - God's transcendence is sovereign and accomplishes all that God has decreed.
  - God's righteousness is sovereign and accomplishes all that God has decreed.
- etc., etc., etc.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Why God's Sovereignty is Important to Our Faith

To know and to be assured of the perfection of God's sovereign plans

- for you,
- for His church,
- for the United States,
- for and over our enemies,
- for and over natural disasters,

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etc., etc., etc. provides to men and women of faith great comfort and assurance that all is under His control and will accomplish His purpose for all that He has made.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Confessions or Creeds that Address God's Sovereignty

### Chapter 2 God and the Holy Trinity

**Article 1** - The Lord our God is the one and only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself; who is infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; who is a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; who only has immortality; who dwells in the light which no man can approach, who is immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, **almighty**, in every way infinite, most holy, most wise, **most free**, most absolute; **who works all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will**, for His own glory; who is most loving, gracious, merciful, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; Who is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him; and who, at the same time, is most just and terrible in His judgements, hating all sin and who will by no means clear the guilty. **The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**

## 4<sup>th</sup> Errors/Heresies that Deny God's Sovereignty

Clearly, Deists, Unitarians, Universalists, theological liberal churches, and untaught Evangelical churches deny and/or are ignorant of the knowledge of God's absolute sovereign rule of all things that exist or come to be of the creation

## Important Quotes About God's Sovereignty

An updated version of Mt 10:30 & Lk 12:6-7 - "God's exhaustive sovereignty extends to both the position and the velocity of every subatomic particle from the last electron in your fingernail, to the least particle of cosmic dust on the farthest edge of the most distant galaxy; 'I, the LORD, do all these things' (Is 45:7). But you are worth more to me than any number of subatomic particles."

**R. K. McGregor Wright**; *No Place for Sovereignty*; p. 196

God is sovereign over the course of history and the rise and fall of powers. As the book of Daniel reminds us again and again, "It is Heaven that rules." God is the ultimate source of all power. All human power is therefore derived, limited, unstable and transient. There is always an "after you" that marks the terminus of every great power and the transition to the next. That is not only true of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, but of every modern empire, superpower and great power too - the United States included. God gives power and God takes away power, especially from the arrogant. We have nothing that we did not receive, and even over the highest, strongest and most enduring that we humans ever achieve, the ancient wisdom still holds true: "This too shall pass."

**Os Guinness**; from *Renaissance*; p. 26

Let's plant our feet on this rock-solid foundation before we offer a word of counsel or advice to anyone. God is in sole, purposeful control of the past, present, and the future, both on a macro and on a micro scale, at the interplanetary level and the our-little-life level. God rules over time and space. He has a plan that He is working out perfectly day to day, year to year. This plan extends from creation to consummation. It includes all the good and all the bad, the pleasant and the painful. Belief in God's sovereignty changes the way we look at the world, at people, and at their problems. What looks like a mess is actually part of a meticulous divine plan that is being worked out for the good of those who love God.

**David Murray**; from *Tabletalk*, April 2012; p. 44