



**“The Absolute Sovereignty of God”
Pastor’s Choice**

Definition

God’s Sovereignty – all things are under *his* rule and control, and nothing happens without his direction or permission.

This doesn’t simply mean God has the power and right to govern all things, but that he does govern all things. He ordains everything that comes to pass. He doesn’t merely foresee what will happen, he controls it in such a way that everything happens according to his will, either by decree or permission.

The General Principle

Ephesians 1:11 – “[God] works all things according to the counsel of his will...”

- Greek verb *energeo*: to work, produce, make, cause an effect. (Present tense = God is actively, continually working.)
- “All things” – not just some things. Nothing is excluded from the scope of his providential working, including the existence of evil and sin.
- “Counsel” – purpose, plan, decision. God is working to make sure everything occurs according to his predetermined purpose and plan.

This principle is taught repeatedly in Scripture (Ps 115:3, 135:6; Isa 46:10; Job 42:2; Dan 4:35).

7 Arenas of God’s Sovereignty

- 1. God is sovereign over our birth.** (Ps 139:13, 119:73, 100:3; Job 33:4; Ex 4:11)
- 2. God is sovereign over our circumstances.**
 - Plans/Direction: Prov 16:9, 19:21, 20:24; Ps 16:9; Jas 4:13-15
 - Success/Failure: Isa 45:7; 1Sam 2:6-7; Lam 3:38-39
 - Temptation: 1Cor 10:13
 - Suffering/Trials/Persecution: 1Pet 4:19, 3:17
 - Random Details: Prov 16:33
- 3. God is sovereign over our salvation.**

God has predestined and chosen from all eternity who will be saved. All of us deserve hell, and he is not obligated to save anyone. God is free to save no one, everyone, or some as a demonstration of his mercy and grace (Rom 9:15). Ultimately, the only reason we choose God is if he first chooses us: Jn 15:16; Mt 22:14; Eph 1:4-6; 2Tim 1:9.

- 4. God is sovereign over our good works.**

God not only prepares our good works in advance (Eph 2:10), he prepared us to do the good works. He works in us both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil 2:12-13).

- 5. God is sovereign over nature.**

God creates, sustains, and governs every aspect of the natural world – from the smallest microorganism to the largest catastrophe.

- The life and breath of every creature is in his hand (Job 12:10).
- He upholds the universe (Heb 1:3) and holds it together (Col 1:17).
- He causes the grass to grow (Ps 104:14).
- He feeds the birds (Mt 6:26); not one perishes apart from his will (Mt 10:29).
- He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and unjust (Mt 5:45).

6. **God is sovereign over rulers and nations.** (Dan 2:21, 5:21; Prov 21:1; Rom 13:1)

7. **God is sovereign over our death.** (Job 14:5; Ps 139:16; Deut 32:39)

Two Chief Objections

If God is the ultimate cause of all things and ordains everything that comes to pass, (1) does that make him the author of evil, and (2) does that mean we don't have free will?

Westminster Confession of Faith: "God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

- As human beings, we make real choices and decisions, and we are responsible and accountable for our actions. But God's will takes into account our will. He uses our will to accomplish his will.
- There's a difference between what God decrees and what he permits. Some things God causes directly himself. Other things he allows to happen. He could prevent them from happening, and in the sense that he permits them, it is his will that they come to pass. But God is never the author or the perpetrator or the approver of sin, even though he permits it to exist.

The Inscrutability of God

The relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility is mysterious and beyond our comprehension. That's a good thing – it means that God is a lot bigger and smarter than we are, and we need to trust him (Rom 11:33; Isa 55:8-9).

Paul Tripp: "God will not always give us answers, but he always gives us himself."

The benefits of this doctrine:

- It magnifies our awe and wonder of God's infinite power and wisdom.
- It cultivates humility and awareness of our human limitations.
- It draws us into deeper levels of trust and surrender.
- It provides us with comfort, confidence and security in times of trouble.
- It reminds us that good will triumph over evil.

Romans 8:28 – "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you feel about the definition of God's sovereignty Pastor Kenton gave in the message? Is there anything you disagree with?
2. Name one or two verses about God's sovereignty that blow your mind.
3. Which "arena" of God's sovereignty stood out to you the most personally, and why?
4. If God is the ultimate cause of all things and ordains everything that comes to pass, does that make him the author of evil? Does that mean we don't have free will? How would you respond to those two main objections?