

# The Implications of God's Sovereignty

I've discovered that I'm a control freak. I like to be in charge of what's going on around me. I learned this the hard way by riding repeatedly through Memphis with my dad driving. Two or three times a year, my sons and I go to Mississippi to visit my family. My husband or my father-in-law will drive us to the half-way point to meet my parents, and then we'll ride home with them. That keeps me from making the long drive by myself with the kids. To get to my parents' home, we have to go through Memphis, where the traffic is insane. It freaks me out every time. Now, I just want to say that my dad is a good driver. I don't think he's ever been in a wreck. So why am I so nervous? Because I'm not in control. I'm have no control over the vehicle I'm in or any of the other vehicles. I'm probably safer with my dad driving than if I were driving, but I'd still rather be the one controlling the situation.

Isn't that so true of all of us? We all want control. Our whole lives are a power struggle. When we're kids, we fight to have our own way. As teenagers, we fight for our independence from our parents. Then, we become parents ourselves, fighting to maintain authority over our kids. Or we seek to be in control of our health, or our finances, or our jobs. We all want to feel like we're in control of our lives. We get nervous and scared when it feels like things are spiraling out of control.

The truth is, though, none of us are in control. Some people believe in destiny or fate, which refers to a predetermined set of events that will shape their future. We are all on a predetermined course, but that course is no set by some obscure power called fate. It's set by God, who is the only One that really has any control because He is sovereign.

## An Explanation of God's Sovereignty

Sovereignty is one of those Bible words that we hear occasionally in church, but what does it mean that God is sovereign? It just means that God is in control, and that He has authority over all things. Joel James explains it well:

*How is it that God is able to arrange all the threads of our lives, weaving them into a universal tapestry, interlacing them to form the beautiful picture called His will? God can do that, because, in a word, He is sovereign.*

God is in control of all things. He's orchestrating all events of human history to bring about His desired end. He's maneuvering each person into just the right position to accomplish His will. Psalm 115:3 says, "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases."

Joel James makes a distinction between sovereignty and providence, another word that we may not fully understand:

*Gods' sovereignty in action is providence. Providence means that every moment of every day, God ordains and blends together an unimaginably complex web of events to enact His perfect sovereign plan for that day.*

God's sovereignty means that He has authority. He exercises that authority through providence. Sovereignty is the cause, the reason why He acts. Providence is the action that brings about His desired results.

## The Extent of God's Sovereignty

I've said that God has control over all things, but does that really mean *all* things? What is the true extent of God's sovereignty? Well, let's look more specifically at the things over which God has authority:

### **God is sovereign over nature.**

God can manipulate the elements and even the laws of science that we are all bound to. As I've already said, God has authority over all things because He is the Creator of things. He created nature and the laws of science, so it makes perfect sense that He has authority over them. When God chooses to act in a way contrary to what we would normally expect based on the laws that govern our world, we consider that to be supernatural, a miracle even.

#### *God's Sovereignty Shown through Many Events*

God has shown His authority over the earth in many different events. During the flood, He made it rain for forty days and nights (Genesis 7:11-12). Now, I've always pictured this as a pretty hard rain, maybe even a thunderstorm, but I've never really thought about the cataclysmic nature of the Flood until I began studying it recently. This wasn't just a gentle thunderstorm. This was a major traumatic event that completely changed the face of the earth. For example, many scholars believe that there were earthquakes and volcanoes all over the earth, strong enough that it broke apart the one existing continent and scattered the pieces into the locations of the modern-day continents. God was not only controlling the weather, but He was rearranging the very earth that He had created just a couple thousand years earlier.

When the Israelites left Egypt, God pushed back the waters of the sea so that they could cross on dry land (Exodus 14:21). He supernaturally caused their clothes and shoes to not wear out (Deuteronomy 29:5). He made water come from a rock (Numbers 20:8). He clearly exhibited authority over nature and His creation.

#### *Jesus's Sovereignty Shown through Many Miracles*

Jesus Himself performed many miracles. He changed water into wine (John 2:1-11). He caused fish to basically jump into a net (Luke 5:1-11). He healed people of various illness and disabilities. He controlled the water and the weather by calming the sea and storm (Matthew 8:23-27). He even had authority over death, bringing many back to life, and then rising again Himself.

Many people deny that miracles can happen. They dismiss the supernatural, preferring instead to fabricate some logical reason behind what we call miracles. For example, I saw an article recently in which the author tried to explain the parting of the Red Sea using natural causes. His argument was that some strong wind burst pushed back the waters. Other people deny the

resurrection on the basis that it's impossible for anyone to rise from the dead. These people do not understand sovereignty. They try to make God subject to the laws of nature, when in fact God is not subject to anything or anyone. He made the laws of nature. He certainly has the power and the right to bend or break those laws as He sees fit.

### **God is sovereign over humanity.**

People also struggle with God's sovereignty in relation to humanity. People do not want to have to submit to any authority. Children rebel against parental authority. Workers challenge their boss's authority. Many people are trying to strip the police of their authority. We don't want anyone telling us what to do.

*God is our Creator.*

Sovereignty has to do with authority. God has authority over us because He is our Creator, as we read in 1 Chronicles 29:11-12:

*Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.*

When you make something, you have control over it. You have the right to determine how it's going to be used. In the same way, because God made us, He has the right to determine how He wants to use us and what He wants to do with us. In fact, Joel James says, "God can do whatever He wants, and He has the authority to make everyone else do what He wants."

*God is our Ruler.*

Not only is God our Creator, He is also our Ruler, sitting on the throne of heaven. Psalm 103:19 says, "The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all." You may hear a human king referred as a sovereign, but their rule is limited to a local earthly kingdom, and their reign will eventually end. God's rule, however, is unlimited and will never end. As Ruler, God has the authority to command His subjects to do His will. As His subject, our only choice is to obey. Fortunately, God is good. Everything He commands is for the purpose of bringing glory to Himself and good to His people. His commands may be difficult, but the end result will be much better than anything we could have chosen for ourselves.

### **God is also sovereign over Satan.**

This actually came up in my kids' Sunday school class recently. The kids knew the right answers, but let's see how you do. Is Satan all-powerful? Is Satan all-knowing? Is Satan everywhere at the same time? No, of course not. However, many people give Satan much more power and authority than he's due. They seem to think that Satan is the opposite equal of God. They think that God is the greatest good being, and Satan is the greatest evil being, but that they are somehow equal in what they are capable of. We know that's not true.

*Satan is not deity.*

Satan is a created being, a fallen angel. He is not deity. That means that He can only be in one place at one time. So, even if you are facing demonic temptation or something like that, it's not Satan that you're dealing with. It would be one of his lesser demons. You and I are probably not enough of a threat to attract Satan himself.

*Satan is not omniscient.*

Satan also does not know everything. Some people seem to think that Satan knows their innermost thoughts and fears, and that He uses that against them. That's not true. The Bible says that the temptations that you face are common to man (1 Corinthians 10:13). Satan knows generally how humans think and act, but he doesn't tailor each temptation to each person. He just uses his same tired old tricks, and we keep falling for them.

*Satan is not omnipotent.*

Satan is also not all-powerful. Some people live in fear of Satan and demonic activity. I am convinced that demonic activity is real, but we need not fear Satan. As my pastor told our children in Sunday school, God is sovereign even over Satan. It's like God has Satan on a leash. God allows Satan a certain amount of freedom and control over this world, but Satan cannot do a single thing without God allowing it to happen. We see that in the story of Job. Satan wants to prove that Job is not as dedicated to God as he seems, but God only allows him to go so far in the things that he does to Job.

## Implications of God's Sovereignty

### **We can find comfort in God's sovereignty.**

We don't have to worry or fear because everything that happens is part of God's plan. No matter how bad things seem right now, we can trust that God is working everything out for His glory and our good. We may not always see His hand at work in our situation, but because He is in control, we know that nothing happens to us by chance. There is no such thing as a freak accident. We can trust in His good plan.

### **We can find relief in God's sovereignty.**

We may feel responsible for the things that happen around us, especially when things go wrong. We may have made some poor choices, and we are having to live with the consequences. We may feel like we've somehow ended up outside of God's plan, or that somehow, we've messed up God's plan for us.

However, Job 42:2 says, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted." We also read in Proverbs 19:21, "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand."

It's should be relief to know that nothing we do can thwart or ruin God's plan. Even if we make bad choices, we can forgive ourselves and move on knowing that He can bring good out of even our worst decisions. We don't have to live with regret or guilt. God is ultimately in control, and nothing we do can change that.

### **We can find rest in God's sovereignty.**

We often struggle to maintain control of our circumstances or relationships in unhealthy ways. We try to manipulate people to get them to do what we want. We may try extreme diets or exercise routines to control our bodies. We may become obsessed with every small detail of our day in order to control our circumstances. That all takes a lot of time and energy and effort. We can let go of that struggle and rest in God's plan. We've all heard the saying, "Let go and let God." I'm not sure how I feel about that, because we do have an active part to play in our sanctification. But when we let go of our need to be in control and let God have the control over our lives, we can find rest.

When we acknowledge and submit to His authority, it's actually freeing. Many people don't want to submit, and they stubbornly try to maintain control over their lives. However, God is infinitely more wise and powerful than I ever could be. He knows better than I what is best for me. He also has the ability to bring about the best outcome in my life. Why would I want to struggle against His good plan for me?

### **The information in this post was based on the following resources:**

[\*None Like Him: 10 Ways God Is Different from Us\*](#) by Jen Wilkin

*Taste and See that the Lord Is Good: A Study of the Attributes* of God by Joel James

[\*The Attributes of God\*](#) by Arthur W. Pink

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