

The Sovereignty of God

If this is the last presentation I ever give, I'm glad it is this subject, because I feel it is the greatest need that this whole world and the Christian church in particular needs to understand.

We not only need to understand fully but we all as created human beings must live our lives with the sovereignty of God being foremost in our minds and the main motivating force within all our words and actions.

The truth from God's Word that will be revealed in this presentation will be very hard for some of us to accept, because of our built-in Adamic nature.

Some of you may disagree with part of what I present from God's Word, but that is alright, you all have the right to be wrong!!

If you find this presentation too hard to accept, I urge you to wait until you have heard and read the next presentation entitled "*Our Responsibility to Our Creator*", for this presents the "*other side of the coin*".

The sovereignty of God is a subject that has to make the journey from our head to our heart before we will really believe it to be vital and true.

The old true saying "*a man convinced against his will [our heart] is of the same opinion still*".

What do we mean by the sovereignty of God?

It is God's right and power to do whatever He pleases with anyone at any time.

Psalm 115:3 [NIV] "*Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.*"

Let us consider "*God's right*"!

Back in mediaeval days there was a system of government that included "*the divine right of kings*".

This was not according to scripture, and the kings were the only ones who really liked this form of government.

"*The divine right of kings*" was an assumption in the minds of the vast majority of people. This "*right*" meant that the king could do anything, including breaking the rules that would apply to anyone else.

Henry the Eighth is a perfect example of this.

This "*right*" of kings became discredited, fell into disrepute and eventually was rejected. But what has still remained is the idea that those with ruling power are a law to themselves.

In recent years "*human rights*" has become an issue of considerable discussion.

This issue of "*human rights*" extends to every aspect of life of individuals; in racial tension, poverty, housing, education, health, etc.

"*Human rights*" seems to now overshadow and hide "*human responsibilities*" and is leading to a compensation syndrome for any action that may infringe "*human rights*"!!

Parallel to “*human rights*” has been “*animal rights*” and some are so highly motivated by “*animal rights*” that they are sometimes hostile to the rights of unborn children. I’m amazed that some defending animals can condone abortion.

God’s rights are almost totally neglected today.

The question we have to face is ‘will we let God be Sovereign in our lives?’

Why is this study so important?

There are two basic approaches to theology [the study of God]:

- 1) **From man’s point of view.** This is the common approach of many writers on theology today.
- 2) **From God’s point of view.** This is the pure Biblical approach for God’s Word is His “*in-house*” publication; all it expresses is God-centred and therefore from God’s viewpoint.

The emphasis of theology being a study of God’s Word from man’s viewpoint has led to the loss of a real respect for the Creator God.

- a) There is no fear of God in the world or among Christians.
- b) This is the “*me generation*”, the “*what’s in it for me?*” era, when the “*health and wealth*” or “*prosperity*” gospel, so called, has great appeal to vast numbers of those seeking a relationship with God.
- c) The irony is that the more theology is presented from man’s perspective the less people know the real God, fear Him and the less they care about Him.
- d) A robust view of the sovereignty of God, which puts Him back on the throne, will be what brings people back to their senses.

It was the sovereignty of God based teaching of such men as John Wesley and George Whitefield that powered the great revivals of the 1700s.

It seems to me that their biographies show that the motivation of these evangelists was characterised by three things:-

- a) **Obedience to God’s command** to evangelise as God being absolute sovereign.
- b) **The glory of God** and **not** the salvation of the people was the most important reason for evangelism. The more people who were saved by the work of the Holy Spirit in these men the more God was glorified.
- c) **Compassion of God** was revealed in the grace and kindness we have received from a loving God.

The sovereign reign of God over His creation was the central theme of their preaching.

The study of the sovereignty of God will enable us to get better acquainted with the One and only true God.

Exodus 33:18-20 [NIV] “*Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.” And the LORD said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”*”

Note how God responded to Moses' request to see God's glory.

- a) God showed His goodness.
- b) God proclaimed His name [depicting His character].
- c) God presented His mercy through His sovereignty.
- d) God does **not** reveal His total nature [His face] to any human being.

There will always be mystery surrounding the greatness and holiness of God. It is the mysteries of God that we are challenged to seek to know through the fellowship of worship.

But all eternity will not be long enough for us to know God totally, because He is God and we are created beings.

Isaiah 64:8 [NIV] *"Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."*

The clay eventually understands what the potter is creating with its co-operation but the clay will never understand the thoughts of the potter!

God's right as sovereign ruler over all His creation

a) God's privilege or prerogative as Creator

Aristocrats are *"born to privilege"* but God was never born, He always was, is and shall be ever.

God has the right to do whatever He pleases because He is the Eternal God.

b) God's right because of His right-ness, His righteousness in what He does.

God makes the perfect rules, He does what is right.

Does this mean God can break His own rules?

Does this mean God can teach one thing and live another way Himself?

No!

God's right and privilege cannot be divorced from His unchanging characteristics.

God is Holy.

God cannot lie.

Although God doesn't break the rules that He in His righteousness has made, neither does He have to explain Himself along the way.

Why?

Hebrews 6:13 [NIV] *"When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself,"*

As there is no greater being than God, He is answerable to no-one.

Psalm 16:11 [NIV] *“You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”*

God is at peace with Himself. Because of His total perfect wisdom and righteousness, He is never assailed with doubts about His thoughts or actions.

Isaiah 57:15 [NIV] *“For this is what the high and lofty One says, he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”*

God is perfectly free; nothing pressures Him into making His decisions and He has nothing to prove to justify His decisions and actions.

God is the *“high and lofty one”*. There is no being like Him, nor any to be compared with Him.

God’s sovereign dominion over all and the incontestable right He has to give both law and judgement to all is because He is both immortal and unchangeable.

God’s name is Holy and all who desire to be acquainted with Him must know Him as the Holy God, and have to approach Him with:-

a) **A contrite heart.** That is a broken spirit that has no self-righteousness and pride, knowing their sinful nature and have become completely penitent, repentant.

b) **A humble spirit.** That is a person who acknowledges that God being Holy and righteous knows what is best for our welfare.

Psalm 37:4 [NIV] *“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.”*

To delight in God means a person who is soft and pliable in the hands of God, one who opens up before God and keeps nothing back.

Having to explain ourselves all the time, or having to prove something, is a sign of insecurity.

God is secure within Himself and this peace of mind and security is mirrored in the person of Jesus Christ.

In His dealing with the chief priests.

Matthew 21:23-27 [NIV] *“Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?” Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism, where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?” They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men’, we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”*

In His dealing with Herod.

Luke 23:8-9 [NIV] *“When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer.”*

God's Power and His Will

The fulfilment of God's Will is an expression of His sovereignty.

Ephesians 1:11 [NIV] *"In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,"*

Our very existence is only as a result of God's will.

This is a very clear declaration of God's sovereignty.

Psalms 115:3 [NIV] *"Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him."*

Out of the acceptance of God's sovereignty is the assumption that whatever God does is acceptable because of His Holiness and righteousness.

Behind this right of God to do whatever He pleases is the assumption that He has the power to do what He chooses to do.

Humans may sit on thrones and exercise their will but do not have the power to bring it about, they may reign but not rule, God reigns and rules.

The word 'power' has two basic meanings, force and authority.

The Greek language has two words, both of which are translated in scripture as power.

"Dunamis" from which we get the word *"dynamite"*.

Luke 24:49 [NIV] *"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."*

The apostles were to be given the energy and force to fulfil the commission given to them.

Acts 1:8 [NIV] *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

This energy was to come from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Many who are servants of God often experience this. Divinely given energy to perform a God-given task when their bodies are exhausted physically.

"Exousia" – authority or having the right or privilege.

Matthew 28:18 [NIV] *"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

Christ's authority over all things, given to Him by the Father.

John 1:12 [NIV] *"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"*

We receive the privilege of becoming created children of God.

John 17:2 [NIV] *"For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him."*

Christ given authority to extend eternal life to all whom the Father gives Him.

The sovereignty of God encompasses both power and authority.

God has the power to do anything because He can make it happen.

God's power over His physical creation.

Psalm 19:1-6 [NIV] *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat.”*

God's power is in total control of everything that happens in the universe.

Psalm 75:3 [NIV] *“When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm. Selah”*

God has total power over all the spirit beings He has created.

Job 1:12 [NIV] *“The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.”*

Job 2:6 [NIV] *“The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.”*

Lucifer who became Satan is the most powerful of these spirit beings.

God alone has the right or the privilege to control all He has created.

God controls our destinies.

Romans 9:18-21 [NIV] *“Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?” But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?”*

Lamentations 3:22 [NIV] *“Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.”*

It is only because of God's mercy that we are not eliminated as a result of our sin and rebellion against our Creator.

In short, God can do anything and whatever He does is right.

God's sovereignty with regard to His dealing with us individually.

James 1:18 [NIV] *“He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.”*

God chose to give us life, to cause us to be born, first physically, then spiritually, in a “new birth”.

We may feel that our parents did not want us but God says “I wanted you”.

Psalm 139:16 [NIV] *“your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*

God chose our parents and therefore the time and place of our birth. God through this choice of parents gave us natural gifts, talents and intelligence, all of which He in His sovereignty, desires to use as part of His Plan for all of mankind.

None of us can say “*we are an accident of nature*”.

God chooses the time of our redemption or salvation.

Ephesians 1:4 [NIV] “*For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love*”

The choice was made by God before He created the universe.

Romans 8:29-30 [NIV] “*For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*”

The time of our calling to salvation is determined by God in His sovereignty, some to be firstborn, others to be called later, even after death in a resurrection back to physical life.

2 Timothy 1:9 [NIV] “*who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,*”

The choice is not based on anything we do.

Acts 13:47-48 [NIV] “*For this is what the Lord has commanded us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”*” *When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.*”

All will eventually be called, both Gentiles [those who do not know the true God] as well as Jews [those who were born into a God-fearing family].

When we are appointed to be called we will all receive all that is needed for us to choose the gift of eternal life, that is salvation.

The explanation for our status, calling, profile or position lies solely and wholly within God’s sovereignty.

Psalms 16:6 [NIV] “*The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.*”

Some like David are blessed with a delightful inheritance.

Luke 1:28 [NIV] “*The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”*”

Some are highly favoured by God as Mary was.

Psalms 103:10 [NIV] “*he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.*”

We all are blessed in this way by our Merciful Creator.

2 Samuel 9:3 [NIV] *“The king asked, “Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God’s kindness?” Ziba answered the king, “There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet.”*

Although Mephibosheth was born into a royal family he was born crippled.

Some Christians seem destined to continual suffering and can hardly recall when there were not problems in their lives; financial, emotional, physical or social.

Why?

All of this lies within the mystery of God’s sovereignty.

John 11:4 [NIV] *“When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”*

Such suffering may be for God to be glorified!

God chooses to whom He will give spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11 [NIV] *“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” ... “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”*

Some have greater gifts, some are the eye, ear or mouth, others the unnoticed but essential gifts, the heart, lungs or liver.

God chooses how He rewards His servants.

Matthew 20:1-16 [NIV] *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. “About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. “He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’ “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’ “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’ “The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ‘These men who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’ “But he answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”*

We are dependent on God calling us to work in His vineyard [the church], otherwise we have no work or reward.

The giving of a whole day’s wages to those who had laboured less than a tenth of the time that those who were first called, shows that God distributes His rewards by grace and sovereignty **not** debt.

God did no wrong, He fulfilled the covenant He made with those who were called first.

If God gives such grace to others, which He denies us, it is a kindness to them, but still justice to us, we ought not to find fault.

If God rewards others more than He does us, we have no reason for complaining, for we are rewarded far more than we deserve.

Whatever God does, remember, He is dealing with what is in the first place His own property, we are His creation and are continually sustained by Him.

Proverbs 1:24 [NIV] *“But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand,”*

As to the call to work as a servant of God in His church, many are called and yet refuse to do committed work.

There are but few chosen and committed Christians in comparison with the many that are only called Christians.

Conclusion:

God is sovereign, He has the right and the power to do whatever He pleases.

God is in control of all that happens to both nations and individuals.

Isaiah 55:8-9 [NIV] *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

Because of God’s holiness, righteousness, love and faithfulness we can trust Him to always do what is right, even if His actions remain a mystery to us.

Matthew 11:26 [NIV] *“Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.”*

Whatever may happen to us, can we affirm that is what was best and say with our Saviour, *“yes Father, for that was Your good pleasure”*?