



IS GOD IN CONTROL OF EVERYTHING?

The Sovereignty of God

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Introduction

In 2003 a revelation on God's sovereignty radically changed my life and I know that it will greatly impact yours too. This study has been designed as a process to help you discover this revelation. I suggest following these guidelines will help you to receive the most out of it:

- 1) Do not read through the study. Grab a pen and write down answers to each question. If you are unable to print it get yourself a notepad and read the study on your electronic device and write down your answers.
- 2) Do not read ahead or look through the study, rather just do it from beginning to the end.
- 3) If you want to get the most out of this study don't rush through it. Take your time and process what you are learning.

When I was confronted with this teaching I did not like it at first. I rejected it and took a few weeks to study it out for myself to see what the Word says about the topic. You may be challenged by it, too, but don't let that put you off. Allow the Word to get in the way of what you believe. I encourage you to finish this study and keep studying the scriptures for yourself.

Much love,

Shayne B. Holesgrove

Sovereignty of God

God is sovereign. This is a fundamental foundation. How you understand the sovereignty of God will determine a lot of things in your life.

SOVEREIGNTY DEFINED

1. How would you define the sovereignty of God?

Interestingly, the word sovereign is not used in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. In the New International Version (NIV) it is used 303 times, always associated with the word “LORD” and is the equivalent of the KJV's “LORD God.”

The American Heritage Dictionary (4th Edition) defines sovereignty as “1. Supremacy of authority or rule as exercised by a sovereign or sovereign state. 2. Royal rank, authority, or power. 3. Complete independence and self-government. 4. A territory existing as an independent state.”

It's true that God is the supreme authority. He is completely independent, meaning that He governs Himself and is not answerable to anyone, but many Christians have explained sovereignty as “God controls everything. Nothing can happen except that which He wills or allows.” They say “you never can tell what God will do” and pray “God, if it's your will...” Those are all misconceptions, and we will go into why that is now.

2. Do you think God is limited?

IF IT BE YOUR WILL...

If you believe that you cannot know for sure what God's will is, you will start praying prayers like, “Lord, if it's your will.... heal me, save me, protect me, provide for me...”

One cannot confidently declare that God will do something because it feels presumptuous. We can't make God do anything.

3. Read Psalm 138:2. What has God magnified even above his own name?

4. Read Matthew 24:35. What will pass away? What will not?

5. Read Psalm 89:34. What do you see in this Scripture? What is God saying?

You could say that God has bound Himself by His Word. He has limited His sovereignty placing limitations on it. He did that through His Word. The word is magnified above God's Name; and his Name is powerful. The Word is constant and steadfast, binding and true.

6. Read 1 John 5:14-15. How can we be confident in approaching God to make a request? _____

GOD'S WILL...

7. Do you think it's possible to know God's will?

8. Read Hebrews 13:8 and Malachi 3:6. Does God change?

9. Read Hebrews 6:18. What is it impossible for God to do?

God's Word is His will. You can know His will, and as a result you can be confident that you'll receive because God does not change. If God changed He'd lie, and the Word says it's impossible for God to lie.

So when it says, "If we ask anything according to His will..." what it's saying is, "ask anything according to His Word" and it's yours. When you pray the Word, you pray the will of God, and you can know beyond a shadow of any doubt that you have received.

10. Read Mark 11:22-24. What is the promise here?

11. What is the promise dependent on?

Seeing isn't believing. Believing is seeing! You have to believe when you pray, not just when you see the manifestation of your prayer. But how can you be bold enough to presume that you have received when you ask? How do you know God is going to do what you ask? Because you put faith in His Word. And His Word is His will.

12. Read James 1:5-7. To whom does God give?

13. What must we do when we ask?

14. What is the man like who doubts? What does he receive from God?

15. Why do you think that is?

God is constant. He does not change. He is the same forever. He chose to limit His sovereignty by His own power. He chose how He would do things. He bound Himself by His Word. It's true that you cannot put God in a box because you could not find a box big enough, but God is predictable. His Word is His will, and we can know what He wants in a situation by knowing His Word.

GOD IS IN CONTROL...

16. Explain how you understand God is in control.

Another misapplication of the Sovereignty of God is that because God is sovereign, He must be in control of everything that happens; He must be responsible for everything that happens. If He didn't will it, He allowed it. That sounds good, but it's wrong.

17. Read Ephesians 1:20-23. Where is Christ?

18. What is under His feet?

19. Who is His body?

20. Where is His body positioned?

We are seated with Christ in heavenly places. This is a place of authority. Romans 8:17 tells us that we are “joint heirs with Christ.” That means that we have joint power of attorney. God has delegated His authority to man, but not all of it and not independent from him. One cannot work without the other.

God is not in control of everything. Overall, He is in control, but in certain areas He has limited Himself by delegating His authority to us.

OUR WILL

Even though we may have that position and power in Christ, the consequences of that aren't immediately visible because we have a free will. It's entirely possible for someone to die even if they have the same Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the dead (Romans 8:11). They might not know that they have resurrection power inside of them, but even if they do, they can choose not to exercise it.

21. Read Deuteronomy 30:19. What does God do here?

God shows us here that we have the power to choose between life and death, blessings and curses. It's a choice. God tells us His will, “Choose life, so that you and your children may live,” but He doesn't force it on us. If we choose life, we will undoubtedly enjoy the fruit. If we choose death, which is the enemy's path, we will most certainly reap the fruit of that. Is it God's will for you to live in death and under the curse? No, He doesn't will that or allow it, you choose whether you want that or not!

22. Read Ephesians 3:20. What is God able to do?

23. How does He do this?

God is not able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all we can ask or think except through His power at work within us. He has limited Himself to this. God doesn't just work in our lives without us. He flows through us. God uses people to accomplish His will. We certainly cannot do anything without God, but God could not and would not do anything independent of us because that is His will. He chose to not do anything without us.

24. Read Acts 1:7-8. What is not for us?

25. What is for us?

26. Read 2 Peter 3:9. What is God's will?

27. Are there people perishing?

28. Read Romans 10:13-15. Why is it that they're perishing?

Read Acts chapter 10. In it, you'll see that Cornelius receives a visit from an angel. The angel tells him to get Peter.

29. Read Acts 10:33. What was Peter's purpose for being there?

30. Do you think the angel knew the gospel?

31. Why do you think the angel didn't share the gospel with Cornelius?

32. Read Matthew 28:18-20. What did Jesus tell us to do?

33. Read 2 Corinthians 5:20. What are we?

34. What is God doing through us?

WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST

God has chosen to work through us. We are His body. According to Acts 1:8, God has given His church the authority and power to witness. He won't do it directly. We are His ambassadors; He is making His appeal through us.

35. Read James 4:7. Once submitted to God, what do we have to do?

36. Read Mark 16:15-18. Who is called to work those signs and wonders?

If we don't resist the devil, he won't flee. If we don't cast out demons, they won't go. God will not do it for us since He has committed and delegated His power to us. It's His power, but it flows through us.

Many people fall into condemnation here. They say, "But you're saying it's my fault that I'm sick and it's my fault that person died and didn't get healed." Yes, exactly. While that doesn't make us feel good, it's the truth, and John 8:32 says that knowing the truth makes us free. Knowing that it's not God's fault should bless us! Truth is liberating! When I realise that I'm the problem, I can have peace because I can change. I can still learn and grow. If God is the problem, then I'm stuck because God does not change!

If you believe that God willed sickness on you or allowed someone to be murdered for some unknown reason, your relationship with God will suffer and you won't want to turn to Him for comfort when He's the true comforter (2 Corinthians 1:3). If you believe suffering is to teach you something, and turn to human understanding for answers, you will miss out on true wisdom and knowledge which comes from God alone. (Colossians 2:2-3)

LEARNING THROUGH DIFFICULTIES...

37. Can good come out of bad circumstances? Can you learn through difficulties?

38. Read Romans 8:28. Does this verse say that God is the origin of everything you experience?

39. What does God do in every situation for those who love Him?

40. Looking back at a difficult or tragic situation in your life, can you see how God helped you through it? How did He turn the situation for your good and His glory?

While we can learn a lot from hardships, sickness, poverty, and those things of that nature, God is not the author of those things. If God sent Jesus to the cross to redeem us from the curse and deal with sin and its consequences and restore everything that was lost in the fall of Adam (Galatians 3:13-14), why would He use it to perfect us?

41. Read Isaiah 53:4-5 and Matthew 8:16-17. What did Jesus do with sickness?

In the Old Testament, God disciplined through sickness, plagues, and judgments, but Jesus had not yet come. In the New Covenant, God still disciplines, but He does things differently.

42. Read Hebrews 12:10-11. Why does God discipline us?

43. What does discipline produce?

44. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. For what is the Word of God useful, and why is it useful?

45. What will God use to correct and discipline us?

46. How do we become fully equipped?

We can learn through hard knocks, but if we dig into the Word, we can learn from others' mistakes instead. We can be trained in righteousness and be fully equipped for every good work without it being necessary to undergo so many trials and pains.

YOUR CHOICE

In Deuteronomy 30:19, God says you must choose either life or death. He won't make the choice for you, even though He knows what's best for you. God will never force Himself on you, and He will never defy your will except in final judgment. Even then, it's not that He sends people to hell, He simply gives them what they choose on earth.

When you don't know that you have a part to play by choosing, you'll become passive as a result of your unscriptural understanding of God's sovereignty. If you know that God is good, He wants good for us, and He's given us the authority to act on His behalf on earth, you'll be moved to an active faith where you can boldly and confidently represent Him and be used by Him to bring change to the world.

47. In light of this teaching, how has your understanding of God's sovereignty changed?

48. Do you feel more liberated now? Explain your answer.

49. How will you apply these truths to your life?
