

The Sovereignty of God

We have looked at how important God should be in our lives, how we can know about God, how well we can know God, and the effect that the holiness of God should have on our lives. These are all aspects that deal with *our* relationship with God. Our relationship with God is voluntary as we submit to Him. God also has a relationship *with the world*.

This causes us to ask how the God of the universe is actually in command of the universe. God's sovereignty leads to the theological question about the extent of His involvement and control in His creation.

Theologians' views parallel worldly political ideologies. Take a king who is recognized as sovereign with *absolute authority*. His word is law and he exercises direct control over all aspects of governance. He could centralize power, make decisions on taxation, military actions, and economic policies without requiring consent from anyone else. That is usually the way a monarch is seen using his power as a sovereign authority. But, there is another way he could use that power. The king could use his sovereign power to promote a *laissez-faire*, casual, economic policy, where he refrains from interfering in the economy and allows the forces of supply and demand to dictate economic outcomes. His role would be more of a protector of the system rather than a direct controller of it.

Similarly, one class of theologians defines God's sovereignty as *absolutely controlling*. They are fond of saying that God is in control of every molecule in the universe. Every molecule in a knife is controlled by God, every molecule in the arm of a murderer is controlled by God, so that when the murderer's arm swings at you with the knife...that would make God the murderer.

Other theologians recognize the free will of man and see God working with man, responding to his decisions. How a man wills to respond to God will determine if that man is a murderer or not. God *will* bring about His ultimate

plan while at the same time man interacts with Him. God's purposes of redemption *will* be fulfilled. Mankind is only given so much time for God to demonstrate the inarguable righteousness of His plan before He brings it to a close. At that point, His kingdom is ushered in, all the wicked are consigned to the Lake of Fire. This will leave only the redeemed who go to their eternal reward.

1. The *righteous* sovereignty of God -

By God's *sovereignty* we mean *the superior moral interests of God*. By being morally superior we are saying that God *ought* to be obeyed because He is more righteous than we are, He has greater rights than we do, and He has a sovereign position over us, whether we recognize it or not. If we recognize that sovereignty and submit willfully and willingly to it and receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, then we get to go to Heaven. If we rebel and don't submit to it, we go to Hell. People might feign ignorance of God's sovereignty, but it won't pass. Ignorance doesn't work as an excuse because there *is* no ignorance according to Rom 1:

Rom 1:19-32 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

...

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those

things which are not convenient;
29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Isa 28:15-20 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

19 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only *to* understand the report.

20 For the bed is shorter than that
a man can stretch himself *on it*:
and the covering narrower than
that he can wrap himself *in it*.

People have false doctrines that they agree with, but that doesn't mean they are going to stand. The thought of what happens after death plagues us. It must be resolved. God will still be righteous which justifies the fact that those who reject Him will suffer the judgment of Hell.

2. The autonomy of man -

While God as sovereign *deserves* our respect and submission, man has been given autonomy, or self, *auto*, rule, *nomos*. We make choices to live by God's principles, or not. There are so many decisions we make about day to day things as we were taught in church. There are also choices where we exercise fulfilling our purpose in Christ. Then there are other special decisions where we need guidance by the Holy Spirit or the intervention of God. That is the way it should be. However that is not the only way man exercises his will.

Man, in his rebellion, has gone too far and taken freedom of conscience to declare his sovereignty over God. We are not just free to follow the dictates of our own conscience. Properly stated, we are free to follow the dictates of our conscience *being ultimately* responsible only to God. Along the way, God has put some other authorities in our lives, such as the state represented by the Commander in Chief, the government, the police. Where their moral judgments conflict with God, we go with God's will. We are not just free, unaccountable, and responsible only to self. Following our rebellious conscience, we are all stained in our sin.

Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

The alternative is to find our righteousness in Christ.

Phil 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

3. God's will be done -

God, though sovereign, gives us great responsibility on how we respond to Him. Over and over in the Bible we hear His call to repent. As Israel was about to enter the Promised Land, God marked the event *not* by a big party for rejoicing. He had them gather on the barren Mount Ebal for cursing and the lush Mount Gerizim for blessing.

Deut 27:14,26 And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice,
26 Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Deut 28:1,2,13,14 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

13 And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do *them*:

14 And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I

command thee this day, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

The choice is there for them. An interesting thing about this passage is that the blessing section is 11 verses long but the cursing for disobedience section is about *six* times longer than the blessing section. God really wants us to be warned about the judgment. He expected them in the moral, intellectual, and emotional capacity He has endowed them to obey. That is why He holds man responsible: he is *able to respond*. The Bible is full of language that speaks of our responsibility. If we were just puppets on a string then all the verses about repenting would be misleading lies.

Deut 30:19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

Josh 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Prov 1:29 ...they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

At the end of the print version of this sermon are just 30 references that are a witness to our responsibility.

God wants us to be fairly warned. Judgment is not a footnote found at the bottom of some Bible passages. God wants to bless us. Some people ignore God and choose their own way rather than obeying Him. They might look like they are doing okay according to the

world's standard, but ultimately they will face an eternal punishment in Hell. There is no neutral with God.

John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

The significance of God's warning is actually part of something larger. Mankind might resist and twist against God's will, but that will not be something that goes on indefinitely. God has a time table and a plan. This was foreshadowed early in the history of man.

We all remember Noah's Flood¹ but you have to wonder why the flood didn't happen at the *End Times*. Has mankind really been all that virtuous and rosy since the Flood? The flood at the beginning of history served as a warning of what *will* happen in the fulness of time. Before the flood, God indicated that He will not always strive with man.

Gen 6:1-3 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,
2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they *were* fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.
3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

In other words, just as God gave determined an end in the days of Noah, He will not strive forever with man. As

¹This is kind of a misnomer. It wasn't really *Noah's* flood, but a flood associated with Noah.

God progressed with His revelation through time, His mercy and grace will be fulfilled. This has been His plan.

The teaching of the end times has to be considered in the context of God's overall plan. The doctrines of the end times represent the ultimate vindication of God's righteous. All through history, mankind has rejected God, but it did not stop God from revealing more of His plan of the ages.

Rom 3:3-4 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? **[Just because some did not believe, that doesn't make them unaccountable to God]**

4God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, **That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. [God will be proven right in the end and that every man who thought God was wrong will have believed lies.]**

The end times are the *ultimate* vindication of God's plan. God has presented more and more of that plan each step of the way through history. Mankind rejected His plan each step of the way. God will say in the end, "I told you what I was going to do...now, there, I did it. You built your world on lies, fabrication, and assumptions, and none of you could maintain and fulfill your version of righteousness." Even though people reject the sovereignty of God because they want to be sovereign in their own life, even though they choose to not believe, even though they refuse to examine truth, God will be vindicated. He will be justified in all that He has said. Ultimately it will be said that He tried to tell us, but we would not listen.

Without God, we certainly are directing our own way to our ultimate destruction. With God, we are *also* directing our way as we submit to Him. It is only when our plans figure into advancing His agenda that we have any significance. Along the way, we stand to

be beneficiaries. God's will will ultimately be done with this world. Concerning us, He is not willing that anyone should perish so He sent His Son to die for us. The problem is whether we will be willing to repent and turn to Him

2Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

For those who have come to know Jesus as our Savior, are we truly willing to follow Him? Is serving the Lord more than getting a religious fix or are we seeking out His will that we might obey? Because we serve the sovereign God, our choice must not be casual. We must be deliberate and consciously seeking out His will and planning to serve Him.

1. The righteous sovereignty of God - Rom 1:19-32, Isa 28:15-20
2. The autonomy of man - Isa 64:6, Phil 3:9
3. God's will be done - Deut 27:14,26, 28:1,2,13,14, 30:19, Josh 24:15, Prov 1:29, John 3:36, Gen 6:1-3, 2Pet 3:9, Rom 10:13

Supplemental verses about being responsible for our choices:

Deut 30:19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

Josh 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Prov 1:29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

Prov 3:31 Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

Isa 7:15 Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

Isa 56:4 For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please me, and take hold of my covenant;

Isa 65:12 Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose *that* wherein I delighted not.

Isa 66:3 ...Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.

Job 34:4 Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what *is* good.

Ps 25:12 What man *is* he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way *that* he shall choose.

Ps 119:30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid *before me*.

Jer 21:8 And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

Jer 35:15 I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

Ezek 18:31 Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Ezek 33:11 Say unto them, *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Matt 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Matt 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matt 10:38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

Matt 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Luke 9:23 And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

John 7:17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself.

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Rom 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

1Cor 10:21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

Gal 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Gal 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Phil 1:22 But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

Jas 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.