

## What is the Sovereignty of God?

The sovereignty of God is a much used, and often abused, subject in the Christian world. Those who follow a Calvinistic view of scripture say that God's sovereignty means He controls everything. Those who don't follow a Calvinistic view of scripture believe that God is sovereign, but have an entirely different understanding of what "God's sovereignty" means - believing a biblical view of God's sovereignty instead of a Calvinistic view (Calvinists insist their view of God's sovereignty is the biblical view). This topic is not just a discussion of theology, but has practical ramifications concerning God and His character and man and his responsibilities.

"Is God Sovereign? Not in the Calvinist sense. In Calvinism, the idea of "Sovereignty" is that God planned, orchestrated, and causes absolutely everything that happens. That God prefers sin over holiness in every instance that it occurs, because He could have decreed sin instead of holiness but chose sin instead."

[note: I believe he meant to say "...He could have decreed holiness instead of sin but chose sin instead."

<https://biblicaltruthresources.wordpress.com/2018/02/13/is-god-sovereign-no-at-least-not-in-the-calvinist-sense-the-heresy-of-sovereignty-exposed-by-jesse-morrell/>

"The devil, and the whole train of the ungodly, are in all directions, held in by the hand of God as with a bridle, so that they can neither conceive any mischief, nor plan what they have conceived, nor how muchsoever they may have planned, move a single finger to perpetrate, unless in so far as he permits, nay unless in so far as he commands, that they are not only bound by his fetters but are even forced to do him service."

John Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, Book 1, Chapter 17, Paragraph 11

"Creatures are so governed by the secret counsel of God, that nothing happens but what he has knowingly and willingly decreed." John Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, Book 1, Chapter 16, Paragraph 3

"But since he foresees future events only by reason of the fact that he decreed that they take place, they vainly raise a quarrel over foreknowledge, when it is clear that all things take place rather by his determination and bidding." John Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, Book 3, Chapter 23, Paragraph 6

"We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is fore-ordained for some, eternal damnation for others." John Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, Book 3, Chapter 21, Paragraph 5

"If there is one maverick molecule in all the universe, then God is not sovereign. And if God is not sovereign, He is not God." R.C. Sproul quoted at <https://www.kevinhalloran.net/the-best-r-c-sproul-quotes/>

If the Calvinist view of the sovereignty of God is erroneous, and I believe it is, is there a biblical view of the sovereignty of God? The answer is an emphatic, YES!

It should be noted that the term "sovereignty" or "sovereign" is not used in the Bible. "King" is used oftentimes in the Bible (in 1,919 verses according to my Bible program search tool - the plural is used in an additional 309 verses), and it is acknowledged that a 'king' is "sovereign" over his subjects. But, an earthly king being sovereign doesn't mean he controls every aspect of his subjects life.

"A King is sovereign because he has the right to rule over his realm. He is not sovereign because he gets to determine in advance every action his subjects will take. He might say, 'In my kingdom there shall be peace.' But his subjects can still disobey him and do violence. However, it will mean that the King can banish them from his kingdom because... well, he's the King, and he gets to say what the kingdom will be like."

<http://thinktheology.org/2013/09/27/god-our-sovereign-king/>

There is no difference with God as King (Sovereign) and His rule, and man as king (sovereign) and his rule. The issue is authority, not programmed obedience.

The following is from Jesse Morrell

<https://biblicaltruthresources.wordpress.com/2018/02/13/is-god-sovereign-no-at-least-not-in-the-calvinist-sense-the-heresy-of-sovereignty-exposed-by-jesse-morrell/>

### **GOD DID NOT SOVEREIGNLY DECREE THE ENTRANCE OF SIN INTO THE WORLD**

"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Genesis 6:5-6

### **GOD DOES NOT SOVEREIGNLY CONTROL ALL POLITICAL ELECTIONS**

"They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off." Hosea 8:4

### **GOD DOES NOT SOVEREIGNLY CONTROL EVERYTHING RULERS DO**

"It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night."

1 Samuel 15:11

### **GOD DID NOT SOVEREIGNLY WILL THE SACRIFICE OF CHILDREN**

"They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind" Jeremiah 19:5

### **GOD DOES NOT SOVEREIGNLY DECREE THE OUTCOME OF ALL EVENTS**

"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. Unchecked Copy Box Isa 5:4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isaiah 5:3

### **NOT ALL MEN DO THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD**

"But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." Luke 7:30

### **SOME EVENTS HAPPEN BY TIME AND CHANCE**

"I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all." Ecclesiastes 9:11

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side." Luke 10:31

### **GOD DOES NOT ALWAYS GET WHAT HE WANTS BECAUSE OF MAN'S FREE WILL**

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23:37

### **GOD IS NOT THE SOVEREIGN CAUSE OF ALL THINGS**

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

1Corinthians 14:33

### **GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF SIN**

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" James 1:13

### **GOD SPEAKS OF THE FUTURE WITH UNCERTAINTY**

"It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." Jeremiah 36:3

### **THE ACTIONS OF MEN HAVE CHANGED THE PLANS OF GOD**

"And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." Jonah 3:10

### **GOD TRIES TO GIVE REPENTANCE TO PEOPLE WHO REFUSE IT**

"And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not." Revelation 2:21

"A biblical understanding of the Sovereignty of God is not that God is the ultimate cause of everything, but that He is the ultimate authority over everything."

Daniel Gracely, in his book Calvinism: A Closer Look, page 111, defines sovereignty as:

God's sovereignty, as properly (biblically) understood means that God rules over men and angels and sometimes limits the *effects* of their free will. This means that God is sovereign in the same sense that a human king is sovereign, only on a much grander scale. A king does not make the *choices* of the people; rather, people make their own choices but are subject to the king's punishment if they do evil (or conversely, subject to the king's blessing if they are righteous).

Gracely, in his definition, gives 5 clarifying points:

- 1) God foreknows everything but does not *make* all the events of history.
- 2) God may limit the *effects* of a person's free will upon another person or thing, but He never limits any person's *intention* (free will).
- 3) God limits the degree and duration of every trial facing the Christian, so that the believer need not be tried above his endurance.
- 4) God, because of what He prepares for the believer's future, knows that the suffering of of the Christian in this world is not worthy to be compared to the glory which He shall reveal in the believer in the hereafter.
- 5) God will condemn the sin of every fallen man and fallen angel at a future and final judgment. No one can avoid or resist these judgments.

The following is excerpted from Kent Kelly, Inside the TULIP Controversy, pg. 60-61, 1986. In my opinion, it is one of the best definitions of the sovereignty of God.

### THE TRUTH ABOUT SOVEREIGNTY

A simple but comprehensive definition of the sovereignty of God may be stated as follows:

"God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, exercising His authority over His creatures and His universe according to His own will - but NEVER acting outside the self-imposed limitations of His character as revealed in His Word."

"A sovereign God is free to act as He will and "none can stay His hand or say to Him - What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:35). This means He is bound by neither human reason nor arbitrary definitions of men. Within this sovereignty lies a great deal of latitude. He can create the potential for evil without being the source of evil, (Isaiah 45:7). He can permit temptation which could not be executed without His permission, (Job 1:12), and yet, have no personal responsibility whatsoever in the actual temptation. Although He has foreknowledge and all power, He can permit the rebellion of Satan and the Fall of Man without any self-incrimination for the introduction of evil into this world. Lewis Sperry Chafer put it well:

"REASON ASSERTS that the responsibility for the issues of His creation must, in the end, rest upon the creator. (Emphasis added) On this theme the Scriptures give final revelation. At no point are creatures permitted to trace responsibility from themselves back to God. When God pronounced judgment upon Adam, He did not say - 'I am partly to blame since I created you.' The blame rests upon Adam alone. The race fell in Adam and became what they are, 'the children of wrath,' and the original sin with all it fruitage is never linked to God in any way." Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, pg. 231

"Notice carefully the opening words of his statement. "REASON ASSERTS..." It is precisely that which "reason asserts" which is often and extravagantly used to contradict Divine Revelation. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the assumptions made by Calvinists regarding that which may logically be deduced concerning the sovereignty of God."

**Omnipotent** "The word omnipotent comes from omni- meaning 'all' and potent meaning 'power.' As with the attributes of omniscience and omnipresence, it follows that, if God is infinite, and if He is sovereign, which we know He is, then He must also be omnipotent. He has all power over all things at all times and in all ways." <https://www.gotquestions.org/God-omnipotent.html>

Numbers 11:23 And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

Isaiah 40:12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

**Omniscient** "Omniscience is defined as "the state of having total knowledge, the quality of knowing everything." For God to be sovereign over His creation of all things, whether visible or invisible, He has to be all-knowing. His omniscience is not restricted to any one person in the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all by nature omniscient." <https://www.gotquestions.org/God-omniscient.html>

1 John 3:20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

Isaiah 46:9-10 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,  
Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

Isaiah 40:13-14 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?  
With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

**Omnipresent** "The prefix omni- originates in Latin and means "all." So, to say that God is omnipresent is to say that God is present everywhere. In many religions, God is regarded as omnipresent, whereas in both Judaism and Christianity, this view is further subdivided into the transcendence and immanence of God. Although God is not totally immersed in the fabric of creation (pantheism), He is present everywhere at all times." <https://www.gotquestions.org/God-omnipresent.html>

Isaiah 40:22 It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.

God is sovereign!

A few thoughts:

1. God is not responsible for any sinful act or evil occurrence in the world (a righteous, just action is not sinful or evil).
2. God is not, necessarily responsible for your sickness, financial problems, or other difficulties (God does discipline His children - Hebrews 12:5-11 - and there is a trial of faith - 1 Peter 1:6,7).
3. The actions of individuals, entities, and governments are not all ordained. God uses the decisions of these to work out His plan and purpose for the world.

The amazing understanding about a biblical view of the sovereignty of God is that He orchestrates all events, not programming events as a computer programmer; but even with history foretold, the devil and his demons having the "free will" to oppose God and defeat God's pre-ordained and written plan, mankind as well having free will to oppose God, He works all things together, to bring history to pass "as it is written." What an amazing, awesome God, the sovereign God of the Bible is!!!!