

The Sovereignty of God Selected Scriptures

The sovereignty of God continues to be debated within evangelical Christian circles. On one hand this debate almost seems silly, for to deny that God is sovereign is to deny essential aspects of God's very nature and character, yet, on the other hand, it is understandable because of the possible ramifications it has on the autonomy of man.

The argument generally goes like this: If God is sovereign, then man is just a robot and should not be held accountable for that which he cannot control. Another argument often put forth is that if God is sovereign, then He is also responsible for sin. Neither of these two propositions are true, but they are reasons for such continuing debate.

God is Sovereign.

Let us begin by establishing that God is sovereign. He declares Himself to be so and His other attributes also demand it.

Webster gives several definitions of sovereign. To be sovereign is to have "*undisputed right to make decisions and act accordingly,*" to be "*unlimited, absolute,*" to be "*the person supreme in a state.*" All of these apply to God.

First, there is no rival to God, so there is no legitimate dispute to Him (though many contend, none can win).

Deuteronomy 4:39. - "*Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the Lord, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.*"

Second, God is unlimited in what He can do. God can do what He wants to do,

Psalm 135:6 - *Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.*

Job 9:12. - *Were He to snatch away, who could restrain Him? Who could say to Him, 'What art Thou doing?'*

Daniel 4:35 - *And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And [among] the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?'*

God is the supreme one.

Psalm 83:18. - *That they may know that Thou alone, whose name is the Lord, Art the Most High over all the earth*

1Chronicles 29:12 - *Both riches and honor [come] from Thee, and Thou dost rule over all, and in Thy hand is power and might; and it lies in Thy hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone.*

1Timothy 1:17 - *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, [be] honor and glory forever and ever. Amen*

Psalm 103:6 *The Lord has established His throne in the heavens; And His sovereignty rules over all*

There is also the fact that God's other attributes demand His sovereignty.

God is omnipotent, all powerful. This is what makes Him unlimited and able to do whatever He desires.

Isaiah 43:13 *“Even from eternity I am He; And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?”*

Romans 8:28 - *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to [His] purpose.*

God is Omniscient. His infinite knowledge of all things makes it impossible for Him to be deceived. He can, therefore, judge with truth and righteousness.

Psalms 147:5 - *Great is our Lord, and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.*

Hebrews 4:13 - *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*

1 John 3:19,20 - *We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him, 20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.*

God is Eternal. We have a hard time grasping this idea since we have nothing by which to consider something which has no beginning. This attribute coupled with His transcendence lets us know that God, unlike we finite creatures, He is not bound by time. He knows from the beginning what the end will be, and thus can make decrees concerning what is future for us with absolute certainty they will be fulfilled.

Revelation 22:13 - *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”*

Isaiah 46:10 - *Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';*

God's Providence - the outworking of His sovereignty in the affairs of men

His provision -

Matthew 6:26-34;

Philippians 4:19 - *And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus*

Romans 8:32 - *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*

2 Corinthians 9:10 - *Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;*

His Protection -

Psalms 121 -

Jude 24 - *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,*

2 Thessalonians 3:3 - *But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil [one.]*

1 Peter 1:4-5 - *4 to [obtain] an inheritance [which is] imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*

1 Thessalonians 5:9 - *For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

His Preservation -

Psalm 2:8; - *'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, And the [very] ends of the earth as Thy possession. 9 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware.'* “

2 Timothy. 4:18 - *The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him [be] the glory forever and ever. Amen* (Paul's confidence)

Isaiah 41:10 - *'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'*

We ought be more mindful to seek God and His will as a matter of daily life, giving glory to Him.

Proverbs16:9 - *The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.*

James 4:13-16 *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." ¹⁴ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are [just] a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead, [you ought] to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." ¹⁶ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.*

Practical ramifications of God's sovereignty

Is God the Author of Sin? This question arises as a logical construct from God being sovereign.

No. He is good and Holy and incapable of evil Himself.

Habakkuk1:13 *[Thine] eyes are too pure to approve evil, And Thou canst not look on wickedness [with favor.] Why dost Thou look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why art Thou silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?*

Psalm 5:4 *For Thou art not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with Thee.*

Numb 23:19 *"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*

1Peter 1:15 *but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all [your] behavior; 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*

Sin entered the world at Satan's fall - pride seems to be the center of it, and into mankind at Adam's fall
Satan's fall -

Isaiah 14:10f,

Ezekiel 28:13-17

Man's fall -

Genesis 3;

Romans 5:12f

God tolerates the sinner for His own purposes and glory - Romans 9:19-23;

God's promises are only as good as His ability to keep them. If God was not sovereign, then our hope would be a wish and not a confident assurance.

These facts about God's character are not usually disputed, but when these Scriptural declarations or their ramifications take away from man's desire to be autonomous, then there is disputing.

God's Sovereignty in Salvation.

Let it be understood from the beginning that there is an antinomy in regards to salvation. Two ideas are set in contradiction to each other, which are unsolvable for us, but very solvable for God. God's ways are not our ways. They are much higher (Isa. 55:6).

Man is commanded to repent and salvation is universally offered to all. Man is also held accountable to God if he does not repent and receive salvation.

Repentance -

Acts 17:30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent,

2 Peter 3:8-9 - *But do not let this one [fact] escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

Universal Offer

Romans 10:11-13 - *For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same [Lord] is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; ¹³ for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."*

John 3:16 - *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

1 John 2:2 - *"and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for [those of] the whole world.*

Accountability -

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8. . . *when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

Romans 2:8-9 - *"but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. ⁹ [There will be] tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?*

Romans 10:16-18 (cf. Through 21)" ¹⁷ *So faith [comes] from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. ¹⁸ But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."*

1 Peter 4:17-19 - *"For [it is] time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if [it begins] with us first, what [will be] the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? ¹⁹ Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."*

Hebrews 2:1 - *"For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away [from it.] ² For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,"*

Within the idea that man is held responsible for his disobedience to God's commands is the logical construct that man must therefore have the ability to choose between good and evil and by extension

between salvation and damnation. However it is right at this point that the contradiction in the antinomy is displayed, for the Bible is also very clear that man does not seek righteousness and cannot choose good except by God's act of grace upon him. Salvation is the work of God, and not of man.

Man's utter lostness -

Ephesians 2:1-2 - *"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*

Roma 3:10-12 cf. Psalm 14 - *as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one;¹¹ There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God;¹² All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one. "*

Isaiah 64:6 - *"For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."*

1 Corinthians 2:14 - *"But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."*

God's drawing -

John 6:44 - *"No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

Ephesians 2:4-10 - *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly [places], in Christ Jesus,⁷ in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, [it is] the gift of God;⁹ not as a result of works, that no one should boast.¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

Titus 3:3-7 - *"For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.⁴ But when the kindness of God our Savior and [His] love for mankind appeared,⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,⁷ that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to [the] hope of eternal life.*

Both of these positions are true. Man is offered salvation and is personally responsible for his rejection of it. Unless the Father extends grace and draws the person to Christ and through the Spirit makes him alive (born again - John 3), he cannot come to salvation.

It is wrong to stress either truth to the exclusion of the other. We are called to believe what God reveals, not make what He reveals fit into our own system of logic.

Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God by J. I. Packer is an excellent resource for further study on this topic.