
Is God Sovereign?

(Did God Do This to Me?)

The subject of God's sovereignty can be confusing for some. The problem begins with the definition of the word sovereign. A dictionary definition includes the words supreme, superlative in quality, undisputed ascendancy, unlimited, enjoying autonomy, freedom from external control. In this definition there is no implication of sovereign meaning "active control over all events."

God's sovereignty means that God, not man, is responsible for creating and sustaining all things, and that God had the privilege of establishing the laws and boundaries of his creation. However, once created and established, God Himself is bound to what His Word has decreed. This is where many are confused.

Some see God as capricious and without rules of conduct. They see Him as acting according to whims, intervening when it pleases Him and ignoring situations in which He is not interested. This line of thinking unjustly accuses God and attacks His very nature of love.

To understand how God's sovereignty affects His creation, we must return to the beginning. In Genesis we see that God created all things by his Word. He established order and boundaries. All living things were given the ability to reproduce, but only after their kind. Pine trees will always produce pine trees and dogs will only produce dogs. Though God is sovereign, He will not change the order that He has established. To do so would disqualify Him as God, since His Word would not be immutable.

When God created man, He created him in His own image. Man was equipped to accomplish God's purpose in creation. Man was given dominion and authority over the earth and the responsibility to govern the earth according to the nature of the Creator. He was created with God's identity (image), endued with His authority (dominion), blessed with His ability (blessing) and commissioned with His work (purpose) to subdue the earth and be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:26 – 28).

Psalm 115:16 declares that God gave the earth to the children of men. His plan was for man to derive his life from God and to accomplish his purpose in harmony with God. However, man sinned. That sin effectively "unplugged" man from God. He lost his identity, his authority, his blessing and his purpose. God now found himself on the outside looking in, so to speak. He had given the earth to man, and man through sin had given it to the devil (Luke 4:5 – 6). God is still the Lord and owner of His creation, but His tenant had broken the lease.

For God to now intervene in the events of the world, He would have to make agreements or covenants with men. Without going into great detail here, we can find covenants throughout the Bible which enabled God to deal with man and at times judge sin. Blood must be shed for there to be covenant, and a system of sacrifices was employed. The first such sacrifice is found in the Garden of Eden when God clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of animals. Animals had to die and their blood was shed to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve.

Because of sin, how does God now intervene in the affairs of men? Does God actively control our lives, or does He actively permit events to perfect us? Again, we will return to the beginning for some help. Man, created in the image of God, had a free will. It was necessary that man be able to choose because God did not want a creation of robots. He wanted men and women who would love Him of their own volition. For that free will to exist there had to be an option for disobedience. That option was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

We see that God did not intervene and stop Adam and Eve from sinning, nor did He even stop the serpent from

enticing Eve. He did not because he could not. He had given the earth to man and told him to subdue it and guard it. It was up to Adam to take charge, and he failed. God did not stop Adam from failing even though He knew the horrible consequences that were being released into creation.

When Cain became jealous of his brother and slew him, God did not intervene. This was the first murder – the first tragedy recorded since the fall. Why didn't God stop this murder? Why didn't He protect innocent and faithful Abel from a terrible death? The fact that God didn't intervene reveals much. God is limited by His Word. He is not less sovereign, but His sovereignty had decreed that the earth belonged to man. And because of sin, man was cut off from the life of God. Thus, God was bound by His Word not to intervene.

As we follow this reasoning throughout the Bible, we see God establishing covenants and exhorting men to choose life and to be obedient in order to be blessed. That was God's will, but man doesn't always do what God wants. So man suffers.

To redeem mankind and succeed in His purpose to have a family created in His image who loved Him of their own free will, God had to find a perfect man who could defeat sin (live a sinless life), defeat the enemy (Satan) and defeat death. No man is able. All are born with a nature separated from God and thus, subject to sin, the devil and death.

Therefore, God became a man (Jesus) and was born sinless. He was tempted in all ways yet without sin. He defeated the devil in a face – to – face confrontation. And he defeated death by rising again. This victory of redemption now opens the way for all those who believe to once again bear His image, have His authority, receive His blessing and accomplish His purpose.

The events that take place in the world and in our lives can be divided into two categories: those things that happen within our sphere of influence and those that happen outside of our sphere of influence. Our decisions affect our sphere of influence. This is the first important truth that we must understand.

All men continue to have a free will. That includes sinners. Men are free to choose, to obey or disobey and to live according to the flesh if they like. Those choices, while not the will of God, can and do affect those around them. Men can choose to lie, to steal, to kill, to drink and drive, to abuse their spouses, etc. None of these things are what God would want nor does God need them to accomplish His purposes. They were not needed in the beginning before sin, and they aren't needed now. Nevertheless, evil people exist and those around them suffer. All men and women have a sphere of influence that is impacted by their free will.

Secondly, we live in a world that is still under the influence of the devil. Paul declares him the God of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), and Jesus said that he comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). John proclaimed that the entire world lies under the influence (1 John 5:19).

The kingdom of darkness is not God's will either, and yet it exists.

Those who receive His redemption by faith are translated out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13). They are enabled to live by faith and walk in abundant life if they so choose.

Thirdly, we must understand that the planet itself has been subjected to corruption (Romans 8:20). At the flood of Noah's day, the planet was shaken to its core as the depths were broken up and the continents were divided. Tremendous change took place that left the planet unstable and dramatically different from its original state. Now there are earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, droughts, floods and fires that bring death and destruction to millions. These do not represent the will of God. He does not send them and He does not need them for His purposes. They bring death and destruction, not life and peace.

The free will of evil men, the rule of Satan and the instability of the planet are all things that are outside of our normal sphere of influence. These things will happen though God is not involved in causing them. Suffering and death are not God's will. He has commissioned us to go into the world and preach the gospel of His love. It makes no sense for God to be killing the very people we are to reach.

Within our sphere of influence, we do have authority. And we can have dominion. First, we have authority over our own minds. We can tear down every stronghold and thought that goes against the Word of God (2 Corinthians 10:5). We are responsible for renewing our minds (Romans 12:2) that we might know the will of God, which is good, acceptable and perfect.

We have authority over sickness and disease. We are endued with power from on high and commanded to heal the sick. We have authority to pray that God raise up laborers to send into the harvest to reach our loved ones with the Word of God.

We have the capacity to marry wisely and raise our children in the admonition of the Lord. We have biblical principles concerning how to handle our finances and how to release the power of giving and receiving in our lives.

We have even been given authority over the enemy if he appears. We can submit ourselves to God, resist the devil and he will flee.

We cannot determine what will come our way, but we can determine how we are going to react to it. The storms of life will be different for each of us, but we are all enabled by God to overcome and walk in victory. We should not claim that our failures are really just God dealing with us. That would be unfair to God.

He has equipped us with His Name, His Spirit, His Word, His armor, His New Covenant, His promises, the keys of the kingdom and the authority to bind and loose.

If we fail, it is not His fault. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. (Hosea 4:6)

So, does God control or allow bad things in our lives? The answer is: God has equipped us to live victoriously in this life no matter what may come our way. He is not the author of tragedy and destruction. We live in a fallen world and it is our responsibility to determine our level of victory in this world.

We see this in the parable of the two men, the two houses and the two foundations (Matthew 7:24–27). The storm wasn't God's will and the destruction of one man's house (his life) wasn't God's will. God's will is that we be doers of the Word so that we might respond in faith when trials and temptations come our way. He wants to deliver us and prosper us. But that deliverance and prosperity depends on us, not God. God will intervene in our lives by means of our faith in Him.

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