

The Sovereignty of God

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I Introduction to the Sovereignty of God

- A. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God and its implications affects our daily lives
 - 1. It is important because our understanding of destiny and purpose flows from it
 - 2. Case study: A young man is invited on a camping trip to jump off a cliff into a lake. He is told by one of the campers that he does not need to check the depth of water, for “there is nothing to worry about because God is sovereign.”
 - a. So, is *sovereignty a permission to shirk responsibility?* (authorize sin - no)
 - b. God’s will supreme, so is *sovereignty fatalism?* (whatever will be will be – no)
- B. Defining our terms (see Westminster Confession quote)
 - 1. Sovereign – *supreme in power... supreme dominion; sovereign ruler of universe... absolute sovereignty belongs to God only.* (Webster’s 1828 Dictionary)
 - 2. By definition, all earthly leaders have limited (delegated) authority
 - 3. God is a Trinity – distinct functions, one in essence (Isaiah 33:22)
 - a. Sovereignty is **source** – one who initiates **planning** (Ps. 2:1-4) - Father
 - b. Sovereignty is **authority** – one who is **judge** (Ps. 2:5-8) - Son
 - c. Sovereignty is **jurisdiction** – one who **acts** precisely (Ps. 2:9-12) - Spirit
- C. God’s sovereignty is the interaction of God’s Will (supreme) and our will (secondary)

II Ultimately, it matters who is Sovereign? God or man?

- A. Either God is sovereign (initiates and sets limits), or man initiates and limits God
 - 1. If God is, then all jurisdictions (individual, home, business, church, state) are limited
 - 2. If man is, then “god” is limited, but man (and consequently the state), is sovereign
- B. Two major doctrinal systems flow out of these two premises (Numbers 23:19)
 - 1. The Sovereignty of God – God’s Will (primary) and man’s will (secondary)

<u>Reformed Theology</u>	<u>Dispensational Theology</u>
Augustine (354-430); Calvin (1509-1564)	Pelagius (360-420); Arminius (1560-1609)
<i>Total depravity toward God</i>	<i>Man is partially depraved toward God</i>
<i>Unconditional Election</i>	<i>Predestination conditioned by man’s choice</i>
<i>Limited Atonement</i>	<i>Atonement is universal; can be negated</i>
<i>Irresistible Grace</i>	<i>Grace can be resisted by man’s will</i>
<i>Perseverance of the Saints</i>	<i>Believers can fall from grace; lose salvation</i>

- 2. Reformed theology inspired the Reformation and Western Civilization (America)
 - a. It developed a comprehensive worldview “seamless garment” of reasoning (All of life is under His sovereignty, apply the Bible to “every area of life”)
 - b. Reformed theology is often stated from God’s perspective, not ours... (God knows all things, sounds rigid; but we still have responsibility to respond)
 - c. Reactions to it are in two extremes – dispensational and hyper-Calvinism... (Man limits God and His purposes; or we have no responsibility and fatalistic)
 - d. Dispensational is a fragmented worldview – spiritual is good, culture is evil (This theology became dominant in the late 1800’s, causing believers to retreat)

III. God's Sovereignty – Genesis 1:1 and Deuteronomy 29:29

- A. Deuteronomy 29 (set in context of Dt. 28 and 30) **covenant union initiated by God**
 - 1. Man cannot figure out God for God alone must reveal Himself and save us
 - 2. God is the lawgiver (legislator), judge (judicial), and king (executive)
- B. The **hidden things** belong unto the Lord – the **omniscience of God** – “why?”
 - 1. Only God knows all things – things are hidden from our understanding
 - a. John 21:25 – Many things Jesus did were not recorded in the Bible
 - b. 1st Cor. 2:11 – the Spirit of God knows the deep things of God
 - c. Pr. 16:1 – God prepares man's heart. *Mind rationalizes what the heart chooses.*
 - d. 1st Cor. 13:12 – We presently see through a glass darkly
 - 2. Ro. 9:20-21; Job 40:1-2 – We cannot question the Creator. We must trust Him!
- C. The **created things** (Ge. 1:1) demonstrate the **omnipotence of God** – “what?”
 - 1. Man is the creature, not the Creator, his power is limited (will, mind, emotion)
 - 2. We need to surrender our will (secondary) to God's Will (primary)
 - a. Ps. 100:3 – it is God who has made us and not we ourselves
 - b. Ge. 1:26-28; 2:7 – God is the personal creator of Adam and all mankind
 - c. Heb. 1:3 – God created all things and upholds it all by His power
 - d. Eph. 1:10-11 – we are God's workmanship created for good works
 - e. We are not ascetics – what is created is good, though marred by sin
- D. The **revealed things** are revealed to us by God – the **omnipresence of God** – “when?”
 - 1. God is separate from His creation (transcendence), yet also present (imminent)
 - 2. Man must obey God which is often the best answer to his question of “when?”
 - a. 2nd Peter 1:3 – God's divine power has been given to us to live in godliness
 - b. Mt. 18:18-20 – God's presence is with us when we are in harmony (two or three)
 - c. Lk. 12:41-48 – Our responsibility is to be obedient with what we are given

IV God's Providence – an application of God's Sovereignty (see Webster's 1828 definition)

- A. Providence - *By divine providence is often understood God himself.*
 - 1. General providence – God is sovereign over all and “in control” of all things
 - 2. Particular providence – God is present with us, interacting with secondary causes
- B. What does the Sovereignty of God mean in our daily lives? (see Foljambe's oration)
 - 1. God is the “underlying cause” in the lives of men and nations
 - 2. History is the “autobiography of God “who works all things after his own will”
 - 3. God is timing events in the interest of advancing the Kingdom of Christ on earth
 - 4. On a practical note...
 - a. We make decisions (secondary) without noticing God's timing, orchestration
 - b. The Hand of God is often not discerned clearly until later in time
 - c. Human freedom and responsibility are neither *fatalistic* nor *by chance*
 - d. Advance of civilization to greater order and civility is by God's power
 - e. God's Will and Sovereignty control all, but not in the sense of robotic
 - f. Though we are to choose good over evil, without His Will and power we cannot be regenerated and reflect His image, advancing His Kingdom without Him!

Thus, the sovereignty of God is neither reckless (automatic protection) nor fatalistic (doesn't matter what we choose), but practical – our will surrendered to His Will!