

God's Sovereignty

“The issue, I emphasize, is not whether the Bible teaches the sovereignty of God — it does. The issue is what it means by that teaching.”

-John Lennox

“One cannot emphasize the sovereignty of God strong enough!
The all-out emphasis on the almighty sovereignty of Jehovah
God is the truth and beauty of Calvinism.”

–David Engelsma

“The basic principle of Calvinism is the sovereignty of God”

–**Lorraine Boettner**

“The sovereignty of God is foundational to Christianity. It is the most basic principle of Calvinism.”

–Talbot & Crampton

“only the Calvinist, however, recognizes God’s absolute sovereignty.”

–Coppes

“The Sovereignty of God over all, and his independency, clearly shew, that whatever is done in time is according to his decrees in eternity.”

–John Gill

“As a builder draws his plans before he begins to build, so the great Architect predestined everything before a single creature was called into existence.”

–**A.W. Pink** in ***The Sovereignty of God***

“Plainly it was God’s will that sin should enter this world, otherwise it would not have entered, for nothing happens save as God has eternally decreed. Moreover, there was more than a bare permission, for God only permits that which He has purposed.”

–A.W. Pink

“Nothing in this world happens by chance. God is in back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen that do happen. He is not sitting on the sidelines wondering and perhaps fearing what is going to happen next. No, he has foreordained everything “after the counsel of his own will” (Eph. 1:11): the moving of a finger, the beating of a heart, the laughter of a girl, the mistake of a typist — even sin.”

–Edwin H. Palmer

“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 the Christian Religion*, Book 1,
Chapter 16, Paragraph 3**

“We hold that God is the disposer and ruler of all things, —that from the remotest eternity, according to his own wisdom, He decreed what he was to do, and now by his power executes what he decreed. Hence we maintain, that by His providence, not heaven and earth and inanimate creatures only, but also the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which he has destined.”

—**John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 1,
Chapter 16, Paragraph 8**

“If we have one maverick molecule running loose out there, we have no assurance whatsoever that this single molecule may not be the grain of sand in the machinery of God’s eternal plan. It may be the thing that runs amuck and makes it impossible, ultimately, for Christ to return to this planet. It may be the thing that destroys any hope for the consummation of the kingdom of God, leaving all those promises of God unfulfilled. There are no maverick molecules in a universe where God is sovereign.”

–R.C. Sproul

“Not only is every atom and molecule, every thought and desire kept in being by God, but every twist and turn of each of these is under the direct control of God.”

–Paul Helm

“No doctrine is more despised by the natural mind than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. Human pride loathes the suggestion that God orders everything, controls everything, rules over everything. The carnal mind, burning with enmity against God, abhors the biblical teaching that nothing comes to pass except according to His eternal decrees.”

–John MacArthur

“God...brings about all things in accordance with his will. In other words, it isn't just that God manages to turn the evil aspects of our world to good for those who love him; it is rather that he himself brings about these evil aspects for his glory (see Ex.9:13-16; John 9:3) and his people's good (see Heb.12:3-11); James 1:2-4). This includes—as incredible and as unacceptable as it may currently seem—God's having even brought about the Nazis' brutality at Birkenau and Aushwitz as well as the terrible killings of Dennis Rader and even the sexual abuse of a young child...”

**–Mark Talbot, taken from a chapter in John Piper's book
*Suffering and the Sovereignty of God***

“...when we talk about the sovereignty of God we are referring to his total control of all things, like the roll of the dice in every human game (Proverbs 16:33). Or like the fall of every bird from the branches in the forest in every jungle in the world (Matthew 10:29). That’s my assumption about the definition of the sovereignty of God.”

–John Piper

“God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass (Eph. 1:11, Rom. 11:33, Heb. 6:17, Rom. 9:15, 18): yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin (Jam. 1:13, 17, 1 John 1:5), nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established (Acts 2:23, Matt. 17:12, Acts 4:27, 28, John 19:11, Prov. 16:33)”

—Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 3 Section 1

“Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions (Acts 15:18, 1 Sam. 23:11, 12, Matt. 11:21, 23), yet hath He not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions. (Rom. 9:11, 13, 16, 18)”

—Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 3 Section 2

“Foreknowledge of future events then is founded upon God’s decrees, hence if God foreknows everything that is to be, it is because He has determined in Himself from all eternity everything which will be.”

–A.W. Pink

Question 7. What are the decrees of God?

Answer: The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass

Question 39. What is the duty which God requireth of man?

Answer: The duty which God requireth of man, is obedience to his revealed will.

–Westminster Shorter Catechism

What does the Bible say about God's Decrees

- The word *decree* occurs 49 times in 48 verse. The word *decreed* occurs 5 times in 5 verses. The plural *decrees* is used twice in 2 verses. Out of the 56 times it is used in the bible, only 8 times is it connected to God.

- The decrees of God are:

Concerning the rain (Job 28:26), His “place” (Job 38:10), Jesus Christ (Ps.2:7), the heavens (Ps.148:6), a consumption (Is. 10:22), the sand (Jer.5:22), and Nebuchadnezzar (Dan.4:24)

2 Wills of God

- **Decretive, Sovereign, or Hidden Will:** The will of God whereby he sovereignly ordains everything that comes to pass. In other words, everything that happens is God's Decretive will.
- **Permissive, Preceptive Will:** God's revealed law or commandments. In other words, the things God says that he wants in the Bible

1 Thes.4:3—“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication;”

1Tim.2:3-4—“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”

Calvinistic Sovereignty = Divine Determinism

**According to the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,
“theological determinism is the view that God determines
every event that occurs in the history of the world.”**

Etymology of the word "Sovereign"

the etymology of "sovereign": it is first used in the late thirteenth century, and comes from the Old French "soverain" meaning "ruler, superior, master". It is used as an adjective since early fourteenth century, meaning "great, superior, supreme" from Old French "soverain" "highest, supreme, chief" from Vulgar Latin "supranus" "chief, principal". It was also used to describe remedies or medicines as "potent in a high degree" from since the late fourteenth century. — <https://www.etymonline.com/word/sovereign>

The Terms “Sovereign” “Sovereignty” “Sovereignly” used in the Bible

- KJV— 0 times
- NKJV—5 times
- ESV—4 times
- NASB—8 times
- NIV—297 times
- NLT—291 times

It is interesting to note that almost 40% of Bibles (22 in total) on biblegateway.com have no occurrences of the word “sovereign” in them at all, and that 11% of the Bibles (6 in total) have from 100 to over 300 occurrences of the word sovereign.

Differences in english translations

“therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves.”
(Eze. 26:3 NIV)

“Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up.”
(Eze. 26:3 KJV)

The Hebrew “Adonai” which in many versions is translated as “Lord” is translated “Sovereign” in a few of the more recent English translations.

“Adonai” occurs 434 times in the OT. It is the plural form of “adon”, which occurs 335 times, and has the meaning of “lord, master or owner”. “Adonai” as a plural form is almost exclusively used when referencing Jehovah.

“Adon” and “Adonai” are the same word with one being singular and the other plural. The meaning is the same. “Adon” has been used numerous times in scripture to refer to man. For example, in Genesis 18:12, Sarah refers to Abraham as “adon”. So, overall, the meaning is simple in that it denotes one who has ownership, power or authority over another person or entity.

If we compare the meaning of “adonai” to the meaning of “sovereign”, we do find an overlap in the meanings. We found that “sovereign” means “supreme, highest, chief, master or ruler” and “adonai” means “lord, master or owner”. They both have the same meaning of “master”, but “sovereign” doesn’t mean “lord” or “owner”, and “Adonai” doesn’t mean “supreme” or “highest” or “chief” or “ruler”.

Heb. word *malku* - "king, kingdom, reign, royalty"

"The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruled over all." (Psalm 103:19 KJV)

"The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all." (Psalm 103:19 NASB)

—see also Dan. 7:27

Bible Verses on God's Sovereignty

- 1 Chronicles 29:11-12
- Psalm 22:28; 47:2; 115:3,16
- Daniel 4:35
- Isaiah 45:5-9 (Jeremiah 19:3-5; 1 John 2:16);
46:9-11
- Colossians 1:16-17

God is ...

- God is holy (Isaiah 6—“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of host”; also Ps. 33:21;145:17)
- God is love (1 John 4:8,16)
- God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5)
- God is not the author of confusion, but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33)
- The LORD is righteous (Psalm 129:4)
- God is my strength and power (2 Samuel 22:33)
- God is a merciful God (Deuteronomy 4:31)
- God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God (Deut.4:24;Heb.12:29)
- The LORD is good (Psalm 135:3)
- God is gracious and merciful (2 Chron.30:9; Psalm 116:5)

God does...

- guide (Ps.73:24)
- direct (Prov.3:6)
- withhold (Gen.20:6)
- harden (Ex.14:17)
- lead (Ps. 139:24)
- God's influence is not the same as God foreordaining every thought and action of man.

Biblical View of Sovereignty

- God is Omnipotent (all powerful). He is the Master and Ruler of the Universe. He can do as he pleases but we cannot assume that he is pleased to determine, or cause, every thought, deed, and action of every creature at all times in all places. (1 Col. 1:21)
- “A distinction has to be drawn between the limitless power of God and how He chooses to use that power.” -Leighton Flowers
- “The main alternative to this strong doctrine of God’s sovereignty (divine determinism) is divine self-limitation.” -Roger Olson
- Psalm 81:8-16; Matthew 23:37

“it may be quite sensible for a mother to say to the children, “i'm not going to go and make you tidy the schoolroom every night. You've got to learn to keep it tidy on your own.” Then she goes up one night and finds the teddy bear and the ink and the French Grammar all lying in the grate. That is against her will. She would prefer the children to be tidy. But on the other hand, it is her will which has left the children free to be untidy. The same thing arises in any regiment, or trade union, or school. You make a thing voluntary and then half the people do not do it. That is not what you willed, but your will has made it possible. it is probably the same in the universe. God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go either wrong or right.”

–C.S. Lewis

“Here is my view: God sovereignly decreed that man should be free to exercise moral choice, and man from the beginning has fulfilled that decree by making his choice between good and evil.

When he chooses to do evil, he does not thereby countervail the sovereign will of God but fulfills it, inasmuch as the eternal decree decided not which choice the man should make but that he should be free to make it. If in His absolute freedom God has willed to give man limited freedom, who is there to stay His hand or say, “What doest thou?” Man’s will is free because God is sovereign. A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures. He would be afraid to do so.”

–A.W. Tozer

Higher View of God's Sovereignty

- God created men and angels but foreordained all of their actions, thoughts, desires, etc. He knows the future because he has causally determined the future. Free will is defined as choosing one's greatest desire but the desire is ultimately determined by God. Thus, his Decretive Will or Sovereign Will is synonymous with everything that happens.
- God created men and angles with libertarian free will (otherwise choice; the chooser is the source of the choice),and He is able to accomplish His plans and purposes despite billions of choices being made by his creatures because He is the only wise and powerful, Sovereign God. He knows the future, as well as all possible alternate choices of his creatures and their effects because He is essentially omniscient (all knowing). He limits the exercise of His power because it pleased Him to do so. His Sovereignty is balanced by His many other attributes—Holiness, Righteousness, Love, Goodness, etc.