

Free Will And The Sovereignty of God

Introduction

Am I in control of my own destiny or is it all planned out already and I am just a pawn in a much larger scheme? Sometimes I feel like I have no control over my life. Do you feel that way? The issue is of "Free Will" verses the Sovereignty of God. This has been a source of controversy in the church for centuries. Is God in control or am I?

The **Sovereignty of God** is the Biblical teaching that all things are under God's rule and control, and that nothing happens without His direction. [God](#) works, not just some things, but all things, according to the counsel of His own will (see [Eph. 1:11](#)). His purposes are all-inclusive and never thwarted (see [Isa. 46:11](#)); nothing takes Him by surprise. The sovereignty of God is not merely that God has the power and right to govern all things, but that He does so, always and without exception. In other words, God is not merely sovereign in principle, but sovereign in practice.

"Although the sovereignty of God is universal and absolute, it is not the sovereignty of blind power. It is coupled with infinite wisdom, holiness, and love. And this doctrine, when properly understood, is a most comforting and reassuring. Who would not prefer to have his or her affairs in the hands of a God of infinite power, wisdom, holiness and love, rather than to have them left to fate, or chance, or irrevocable natural law, or to shortsighted and perverted self? Those who reject God's sovereignty should consider what alternatives they have left." Loraine Boettner.

God created all beings including the angels but some have fallen. Let us be sure that this does not make God the author of sin, for, as man, they fell from their created state. This includes all false gods. But God is over them, whether they be angels, demons, or the god of this world, the devil. The Psalmist said, "..Thou are exalted far above all gods", Psalm 97:9, and again, ".. Our Lord is above all gods," Psalm 135.5, and also "O give thanks unto the God of gods." Psalm 136.2.

Man may fight against God but he cannot win over Him. He often uses evil man to accomplish His will in the battle. Jesus is said to have been slain from the foundation of the world, and the cross is one of the most credible evidences of Gods Sovereignty. "Crucify him," "Crucify him", was their cry, but when they nailed Him to the cross, they did not realize they were fulfilling God's will for His Son. Peter said, "Him (Christ), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts 2:23. But this God of all power was not defeated in this evil act, for the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. By it the devil was defeated and all his ministers of (self) righteousness. This is also a great example of Sovereignty and free will operating at the same time.

Judas, the one who betrayed him, had betrayed himself, and met his just due. John wrote, "...Jesus knew from the beginning...who should betray him. And he said, .. no man

can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father .. Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil (i.e., slanderer) ... He spake of Judas ... for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve." (John 6:64-71.) Our God cannot fail, lie, or sin. Neither is He frustrated at man's failure.

God is the author of His sovereign grace and mercy. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy... And whom he will, he hardeneth." (Rom. 9:15-16, 18.)

Many Christians have doubts about God's sovereignty. Yet there is one aspect of the Christian life where they profess, maybe unknowingly, that God is sovereign. They may say, as many do, "God has done all He can do, now the rest is up to you." How contradictory! They may stand on their feet and deny this blessed, comforting, enabling doctrine, but when they bend the knees in prayer, asking God to save, do they not realize they are calling on a sovereign God, who only He has the right and the ability to save? The question is, If God has done all that He can do, why pray to Him? But we pray knowing He is the only one who can do what man cannot otherwise do. This power belongs to God, and not man. (Excerpts from Sovereign Grace Baptist Proclaimer)

Now that you have a clearer understanding of the Sovereignty of God, let's talk about the Free Will of man. It's important to see that man is not sovereign. He is rarely in control of the events that shape his life. However, God has still given man a free will to choose his own lifestyle. In effect, we can be evil, nice, straight, gay or be and do anything we want. Our choices, however, comes with consequences. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Gal. 6:7)

Pastor Steve Weaver writes, "A good definition of free will is the ability of the mind to make choices in accordance with our natures." This definition of "free will" also applies to God's free will. He too is bound by His nature. Therefore, He cannot sin! Why? Because it is not His nature! But God does have a free will and, unlike human beings, He has an accompanying good and holy nature."

Jonathan Edwards, a 17th century Christian preacher and theologian, said that the will is the mind choosing: though there is a distinction between mind and will, the two are inseparable in action. We do not make a choice without our mind's approving that choice. We choose according to our strongest inclination at a given moment.

The Bible teaches that I'm not free to choose God because it is contrary to my nature. That's why we need new natures that are given to us by the Holy Spirit at regeneration. Unless a man is "Born Again" he cannot enter or even see the kingdom of God (John 3).

Though man is commanded to seek the Lord while He may be found, and to come to Christ, we watch in vain for man to do so. Romans 3:11 literally reads, "There is no God seeker." John 6:44 says, "No one can come to Me, (Jesus), unless the Father who sent Me

draws him and I will raise him up on the last day." Literally, the verse says, "no one is able."

Gerhard Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says that the word translated draw in John 6:44 means "to compel by irresistible authority." It was used in classical Greek for drawing water from a well. We do not entice or persuade water to leave the well; we force it against gravity to come up by drawing it. So it is with us. We are so depraved that God must drag us to himself." (Chosen by God)

The controversy is in whom God has chosen to be His sons and daughters. Hyper-Calvinists believe that some are chosen and some are not from the foundation of the world. Free Will folks, of which I am one, believe that what Jesus said, as recorded in John 3:16, qualifies all that accept His invitation. Listen to the verse and pay particular attention to the word, "WHOSOEVER" "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Jesus died for the sins of the whole world...every man, woman, boy and girl. The compelling call of God, through Jesus is an open invitation to whosoever will. These are the chosen of God that are pulled out of sin and given a new heart that can believe and worship Him.

Now let's look at how free will and sovereignty work hand and hand in our daily lives to fulfill God's master plan for the ages. Miles Monroe, a famous evangelist, once explained it this way...when God created the earth; He drew up a master plan, like an architect, that took into account every soul and every action that man would take. Nothing was left out.

God is never taken by surprise because He saw it before the world was. It was put into His plan. Then He began to create, taking into account who would accept Jesus and who would not; who would need deliverance; who would need help, etc. Every prayer and every need was seen beforehand. Your provision was made way back then and is waiting for the time you need it. You just need to grab it by faith.

This pre-design gives us free will to choose without violating God's Sovereignty. I know that some will say, I prayed and believed but didn't get what I asked for. My provision didn't materialize. It could be as James 4:3 says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts." David Wilkerson, the author of *The Cross & The Switchblade*, offers six reasons that prayers go unanswered.

1. Our Prayers Are Aborted When They Are Not According To God's Will.
2. Our Prayers Can Be Aborted When They Are Designed To Fulfill An Inner Lust, Dreams, Or Illusions.
3. Our Prayers Can Be Denied When We Show No Diligence to Assist God In The Answer.
4. Our Prayers Can Be Aborted By A Secret Grudge Lodged In The Heart Against Another.

5. Our Prayers Can Be Aborted By Not Expecting Much To Come of Them.
6. Our Prayers Are Aborted When We Ourselves Attempt To Prescribe How God Should Answer.

See his full explanation at <http://www.tscpulpitseries.org/english/undated/tssixrea.html>

The devil's final strategy in deceiving believers is to make them doubt the faithfulness of God in answering prayer. Satan would have us believe God has shut His ears to our cry and left us to work things out for ourselves. That's just not true. If you do not see the hand of God, you can bet that the problem is with you, not God. I'd suggest that you go back before the throne of God and stay there until you get an answer. Don't forget to take your Bible with you. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

One final thought. You may not be hearing the Lord because you are not "Born Again." Listen to what Jesus said, John 10:26-27, "but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." If you are not hearing His voice, well, what should I say? You are not of His flock? Only you can determine that. It's a total life-changing commitment to follow Jesus. Maybe you did not make that kind of commitment. He must be Lord of all or He is not Lord at all.

Until Next Time

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