

make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (*vv31-33*). Today people say, "Oh, God would never do anything as cruel as that. God is a God of love." But the truth is, this treatment was the essential means necessary to bring this proud king to a knowledge of God. So it was a very gracious act.

God's Sovereignty Gladly Acknowledged

"And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever" (*v34*). There are three things in this verse that always go together, and they always follow the same order: **(1)** A right view of God—"I...lifted up mine eyes." **(2)** A right understanding of reality—"Mine understanding returned." **(3)** A right attitude of worship—"I blessed... praised and honored."

The apostle Paul shows in the first chapter of Romans the exact opposite. Instead of looking up to God, Paul says that men have: **(1)** deliberately turned their eyes away from God and rejected his revelation (*Rom 1:18-20*); **(2)** Their foolish hearts were darkened because their mind had become vain, and like Nebuchadnezzar, they were given over to senseless insanity in morality and life style (*Rom 1:21-32*); **(3)** They refused to glorify God and give him thanks, but instead they exalted the creature and boasted about themselves and their own power (*Rom 1:21,22*). Either the three things in Nebuchadnezzar's experience or the three things in Romans will always occur. Every person fits one of these two descriptions. There is no neutrality.

God's Sovereignty Described

(1) The superiority of his kingdom—"Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation" (*Dan 4:34b*). **(2)** The insignificance of his creatures—"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing" (*v35a*). **(3)** The sovereignty of his will—"He doeth according

to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (*v35b*). **(4)** The certainty of his purposes—"At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me" (*v36*). **(5)** The supremacy of his person—"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven" (*v37a*). **(6)** The singleness of his character—"All whose works are truth, and his ways judgment" (*v37b*). **(7)** The strength of his position—"And those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (*v37c*).

That is our sovereign God! That is the God of the Bible! God can do **any thing** he wants to do, **any time** he wants to do it, **any way** he wants to do it, for **any purpose** he wants to accomplish. "Any thing, any time, any way" includes any and every person, as well as all events. More specifically, it actually means you and me and all of our loved ones and everything that pertains to us. Normally, this truth would be learned at conversion. However, with the current distortion of the gospel of grace in modern evangelism, many sincere Christians are ignorant of this awesome fact—"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (*Dan 4:35b*). How the masses today need to be reached with this God-honoring and man-humbling truth! Most people's view of God, though, is that he's no more than a "Big Man." God himself said, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself" (*Psal 50:21*). This is the trouble today—people's conception of God is too human.

God's Sovereignty Over All Things

"For of him, and through him, and to him, are **all things**: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (*Rom 11:36*). There are three different Greek prepositions in this verse. They show the truth of God's absolute and total sovereignty over all things. The verse states that all things, without any exception, are: **(1)** "of" God—the Greek is *ek* and means "out of, or out from." **(2)** "through" God—the Greek is

dia and means "by means of, or because of." **(3)** "to" God—the Greek is *eis* and means "into." In other words, all things have their source in God's decrees or purposes, and all things that happen do so only because God's power has brought them to pass, and finally, everything that God plans and then brings to pass will ultimately bring glory to him since they all move into him or unto him as their final end. That's the biblical truth about our sovereign God. The response of faith is not, however, to grit our teeth and submit to this truth because God is stronger than we are and we can do nothing about it (implying that we would if we could). No, the child of God bows his head in worship, and says with the apostle Paul, "To whom be glory forever."

The essence of true repentance and faith is confident surrender to God as absolutely sovereign. The Psalmist put it beautifully when he said, "My times are in thy hand" (*Psal 31:15*). God would encourage us with these words, "Be still, and know that I am God" (*Psal 46:10*). The contest since the Garden of Eden has been, "Who is really God?" Are we the master of our own fate, our own god? Or is the God who "made the heavens and the earth" really the sovereign Ruler of everything—including you and me?

The Christian faith involves submission to the sovereignty of God in all things—"And we know that **all things** work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (*Rom 8:28*). This promise is as true as God himself! It enables believers to bow to God's will in all circumstances of their lives in worship and praise to him. It is essential for us to learn at conversion that a life of faith is nothing less than joyfully giving up, and admitting that God is God. The key word here is "joyfully." A believer does not grudgingly acknowledge that God is sovereign; he does so with joy and confidence. Let's turn now to four specific areas of God's sovereignty:

God's Sovereignty in Creation

God was sovereign in creation. He did not create from necessity, but from his own imperial pleasure. And in creating, he was free to create whatever he pleased. He did not create for the sake of creatures, but for his own sake. "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of

evil" (*Prov 16:4*). "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor...for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (*Rev 4:11*).

God's Sovereignty in Administration

God is the sovereign Ruler in his universe. He is in control of all things and all men, of Satan and all demons. He rules everywhere as it seemeth good to himself. He seeks counsel from none. He controls and directs in the realm of nature. God's Word rarely ever uses the expression, "it rains." It speaks of God sending rain (*Matt 5:45; Acts 14:17*). The Bible does not ascribe the recurring seasons to the laws of nature; it says that God changeth the times and the seasons (*Dan 2:21*). Job did not talk about his disease as the cause of death, but looked up to God, and said, "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living" (*Job 30:23*).

And there have been demonstrations of God's control over, and direction of, irrational creatures. He shut the mouths of the lions so that Daniel was not hurt (*Dan 6:22*). He directed the cock to crow just when he said it would (*Mark 14:30, 68-72*). He caused the cows, contrary to natural instinct, to leave their calves and go straight to the border of Israel with the ark of God (*1 Sam 6:12*).

God also controls men, all men whether good or bad, individually or collectively. He exerts upon the wicked a restraining power. He doesn't allow them to do all that their evil nature would lead them to do. God said to Abimelech, "I also withheld thee from sinning against me; therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (*Gen 20:6*). How often today men say that God will not infringe upon man's "free will." But if God had not controlled the will of Abimelech, that heathen king would have harmed Sarah. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (*Prov 21:1*). God was controlling and directing the will of Cyrus, king of Persia, when he ordered the building of the temple at Jerusalem (*Ezra 1*). God was controlling and directing Titus and his army in the destruction of Jerusalem; yea, they are called "his armies" (*Matt 22:1-7*).

God's Sovereignty in Physical Healing

Many precious believers today are falsely taught that it is always God's will to heal—particularly by those who pose as "divine

healers.” Both the Scriptures and experience show us that God may use physical afflictions for refining, correcting, and chastening his children (*Heb 12:3-11; Job 23:10; Psalm 119:65, 67, 68, 71; John 15:2; 1 Pet 1:6, 7*). God’s Word teaches that he can heal anyone, anytime, but that he does not heal everyone, every time. He is sovereign as to whom he heals.

The apostle Paul learned this truth when God explained why his thrice-repeated prayer for personal healing was not granted (*2 Cor 12:1-10*); and also, when one of Paul’s faithful helpers, Trophimus, was unable to accompany him because of sickness (*2 Tim 4:20*). And his prescription to ailing Timothy was, “Use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities” (*1 Tim 5:23*). When we pray for healing for ourselves or for others, we must never forget that such healing is always God’s prerogative based upon what he knows is best for each of his children. God heals whom and when and how he pleases. We must learn to pray, “Lord, if thou wilt thou canst heal me.” It may be his will for you to remain sick, for your good and for his glory. It may be his will for that “thorn in the flesh” to remain, that he may receive all the praise for the sufficiency of his grace (*2 Cor 12:7-9*).

God’s Sovereignty in Salvation

By this we mean that God was under no obligation to save his rebellious creatures. His purpose to save was entirely free to the praise of his glorious grace. The sovereignty of God in salvation also means that God saves whom he pleases—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy” (*Rom 9:15*). The last vestige of old Adam that we are willing to give up is our fancied “free will.” The greatest obstacle in man’s conversion is his belief that his “free will” alone determines his destiny. It’s tragic today that so many sincere but misguided preachers confirm this folly in the sinner’s heart! To tell a lost man that God “has done all he can, and now it’s all up to you,” is to point a sinner to his own depraved will and dead heart as the only ground of hope. It’s telling the sinner that his will is stronger and more powerful than the Almighty!

How can sinners *be humbled* before God under such a message? Why would men bow and seek grace from a God who’s “done all he can” and whose “hands are tied” until sinful man decides to “let him have his way”

in their life? The Bible knows of *no* such scenario. The will of a sovereign God is not subject to veto by his creatures! The God of the Bible “worketh **all things** after the counsel of **his own will**” (*Eph 1:11*). The “free will” of man is not to be praised for his salvation, but the **free will of God**—“It is not of him that will-eth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (*Rom 9:16*). The “free will” of man is not the cause of his new birth, but the **free will of God**—“The Son quickeneth whom he will.” “Of his own will begat he us.” “The wind bloweth where it pleaseth...so is every one that is born of the Spirit”—“which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (*John 1:13; 3:8; 5:21; James 1:18*).

God’s Word literally abounds with this truth that **“Salvation is of the Lord”** (*Jonah 2:9*). “He **shall save** his people from their sins” (*Matt 1:21*). “**All** that the Father giveth me **shall** come to me” (*John 6:37*). “**As many** as were ordained to eternal life believed” (*Acts 13:48*). “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (*John 15:16*). “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation” (*2 Thess 2:13*). “Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and **causest** to approach unto thee” (*Psalms 65:4*). The Scriptures teach **Free Grace**, not free will. This truth should both humble us and bring forth the loudest praises! God removes the heart of stone and gives a new heart. He gives sight to the blind, and life to the dead. **He deserves all** the glory and praise: “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (*1 Cor 1:31*).

*’Tis not that I did choose thee,
for Lord, that could not be;
This heart would still refuse thee,
hadst thou not chosen me.*

*’Twas sovereign mercy called me,
and taught my opening mind;
The world had else enthralled me,
to heavenly glories blind.*

Unbelievers gnash their teeth, and cry, “I’m the master of my own fate, the captain of my own soul!” This is the essence of unbelief—deliberate rebellion to God as sovereign: “We will not have this man to reign over us” (*Luke 19:14*). That’s the real heart attitude of every lost person. The heart of a sinner’s rebellion to God is the sinner’s implacable hatred of God’s sovereign authority; and it is the preaching of God as sovereign that brings man’s hatred of God to the surface.

C. H. Spurgeon & God’s Sovereignty

The following is from Charles Spurgeon as he preached on God’s Sovereignty—

“The God of heaven and earth ask this question of you this morning, ‘Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?’” (*Matt 20:15*). There is no attribute of God more comforting to his children than the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe troubles, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children of God ought more earnestly to contend than the dominion of their Master over all creation, the throne of God, and his right to sit upon that throne.

“On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite, almighty God. Men will allow God to be everywhere except upon his throne. They will allow him to be in his workshop to fashion worlds and to make stars. They will allow him to be in his almonry to dispense his alms and bestow his bounties. They will allow him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the mighty waves of the ever-moving ocean.

“But when God ascends his throne, his creatures gnash their teeth; and when we proclaim an enthroned God, and his right to do as he wills with his own, to dispose of his creatures as he thinks well, without consulting them in the matter, then it is, that we are hissed at and reviled, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on his throne is not the God they love. They love him anywhere better than they do when he sits with his scepter in his hand and his crown upon his head. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon his throne whom we trust. It is God upon his throne of whom we have been singing this morning; and it is God upon his throne of whom we shall speak in this discourse.” □

*A message by John Reisinger
(with a few additions)*

OUR SOVEREIGN GOD

“Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased” —Psalm 115:3

“Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in earth, in the seas, and all deep places” —Psalm 135:6

“He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth” —Job 23:13

“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” —Isaiah 46:10

“According to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” —Eph 1:11

The sovereignty of God is the exercise of his supremacy. God is the one supreme and independent Being. He is the only one who has the right and the power to do absolutely as he pleases. He is the only one who has the right to act for his own glory. The sovereignty of God means that he does as he pleases, always as he pleases, and only as he pleases. God is in control of everything, and is directing all things after the counsel of his own will and to the praise of his own glory. He even makes the wrath of man to praise him, and restrains that which will not bring him honor—“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain” (*Psalms 76:10*). First of all, let’s consider: **The testimony of a pagan king to the absolute sovereignty of God—Daniel 4:30-37**

God’s Sovereignty Ignored and Rejected

“The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?” (*v30*). One can feel the pride and arrogance of this pagan king. He has no thought of God but only his own self-appointed importance.

God’s Sovereignty Experienced

“While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall