

# The Sovereignty of God<sup>1</sup>

March 19, 2017

**Psalms 115:3, Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28 and Isaiah 40:23**

God has the power and right to govern all things and He does so at all times without any exception.

"God is absolute and eternal and infinite. Everything else and everybody else is dependent and finite and contingent. God himself is the great supreme value. Everything else that has any value has it by connection to God. God is supreme in all things. He has all authority, all power, all wisdom — and he is all good "to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him" (Lamentations 2:5). And his name, as Creator and Redeemer and Ruler of all, is Jesus Christ....The church has not been spending its energy to go deep with the unfathomable God of the Bible. Against the overwhelming weight and seriousness of the Bible, much of the church is choosing, at this very moment, to become more light and shallow and entertainment-oriented, and therefore successful in its irrelevance to massive suffering and evil. The popular God of fun-church is simply too small and too affable to hold a hurricane in his hand. The biblical categories of God's sovereignty lie like landmines in the pages of the Bible waiting for someone to seriously open the book. They don't kill, but they do explode trivial notions of the Almighty." ~ **John Piper**

## 1) God is sovereign over Satan's delegated world rule.

In the Bible, Satan is sometimes called:

"The ruler of this world." (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)

"The god of this world." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

"The prince of the power of the air." (Ephesians 2:2),

"Cosmic power over this present darkness." (Ephesians 6:12).

We should probably take him (Satan) seriously when it says in Luke 4:5-7 that *"Then the devil took Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.'"*

Of course, that is strictly true; **If the Sovereign of the Universe bows in worshipful submission to anyone, that "one" becomes the "Sovereign of the Universe"**. Satan's claim that he can give the authority and glory of world kingdoms to whomever he wills is a **half-truth**. No doubt, he does play havoc in the world by maneuvering a Stalin, a Hitler or Saddam Hussein into murderous power, but he does this only at God's permission and within God's appointed limits.

*"Daniel answered and said: 'Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings.'"* **Daniel 2:20**

*"... That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men."* **Daniel 4:17b**

When the kings are in their God-appointed place, with or without Satan's agency, they are in the sway of God's sovereign will. As Proverbs 21:1 says, *"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water He turns it wherever he wills."*

Do they think that their sin, evil, and rebellion against Him can thwart the counsel of the Lord? Psalm 33:10-11 answers, *"The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he makes the plans of the people to no effect. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations."*

God is sovereign over the nations, over all their rulers and all the satanic power behind them. They do not move without His permission, and they do not move outside His sovereign plan.

## 2) God is sovereign over Satan's hand in persecution.

*"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experiences by your brotherhood in the world."* (**1 Peter 5:8-9**). So the sufferings of persecution are like the jaws of a satanic lion trying to consume and destroy the faith of Believers in Christ. *"For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good, than for doing evil..."* (**1 Peter 3:17**) In other words, if God wills that we suffer for doing good, we will suffer. If He does not will that we suffer for doing good, we will not. The lion does not have the last say. God does.

The night Jesus was arrested, satanic power was in full force (Luke 22:3; 22:31). Jesus spoke into that situation one of His most sovereign words. He said to those who came to arrest Him in the dark, *"Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."* (**Luke 22:52-53**). *The jaws of the lion close on me tonight no sooner and no later than my Father planned. 'No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay*

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<sup>1</sup> General outline; John Piper

it down of my own accord' (John 10:18). "Boast not yourself over the hand that made you, Satan. You have one hour. What you do, do quickly." God is sovereign over Satan's hand in persecution.

### 3) God is sovereign over Satan's life-taking power.

*"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do." He was a murderer from the beginning..." John 8:44a*

*"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10*

*Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who can deliver from My hand." Deuteronomy 32:39*

*"The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up." 1 Samuel 2:6*

*Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. James 4:13-16*

If the Lord wills, we will live, and if He does not, we will die. God, not Satan, makes the final call. Our lives are in His hands ultimately, not Satan's. God is sovereign over Satan's life-taking power.

### 4) God is sovereign over Satan's sickness-causing power.

*"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." Acts 10:38.* There is no doubt that Satan causes much disease.

This is why Christ's healings are a sign of the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God and its final victory over all disease and all the works of Satan. It is right and good to pray for healing. Christ has purchased it in the death of His Son, with all the other blessings of grace, for all His children (Isaiah 53:5). He has not promised that we get the whole inheritance in this life and He decides how much. We pray and we trust His answer. *If you ask your Father for bread, he will not give you a stone. If you ask him for a fish, he will not give you a serpent* (see Matthew 7:9-10)? It may not be bread, and it may not be a fish; but it will be good for you. That is what He promises (Romans 8:28).

Beware lest anyone say that Satan is sovereign in our diseases. He is not. When Satan went to God a second time in the book of Job, God gave him permission this time to strike Job's body. Then Job 2:7 says, *"So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes."* When Job's wife despaired and said, *"Curse God and die"* (2:9), Job responded exactly as he did before. He looked past the finite cause of Satan to the ultimate cause of God and said, *"Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"* (2:10).

*"Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold." (Job 42:11).* Satan is real and full of hate, but he is not sovereign in sickness. God will not give him even that tribute. As he says to Moses at the burning bush, *"So the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?" (Exodus 4:11; see also 2 Corinthians 12:7-9).*

### 5) God is sovereign over Satan's spiritual bondage.

"Satan enslaves people in two ways. One with misery and suffering by making us think there is no good God worth trusting. The other is with pleasure and prosperity making us think we have all we need so that God is irrelevant. To be freed from this bondage we must repent. We must confess that God is good and trustworthy. We must confess that the pleasures and prosperity of life do not compare to the worth of God. But Satan hates this repentance and does all he can to prevent it. That is his bondage." ~ **John Piper**

When God chooses to overcome our rebellion and Satan's resistance, nothing can stop Him. When God overcomes him and us, we repent and Satan's power is broken. *"And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will". 2 Timothy 2:24-26.* Satan is not sovereign over his captives. God is. When God grants repentance, we are set free from the snare of Satan and spend our days celebrating our liberation and spreading it to others.

### Prayer Focus:

**That I would recognize and submit to God's sovereignty and that I would trust God in ALL THINGS.**