

# Sovereign Grace Series

## Lesson #4 – God’s Absolute Sovereignty <sup>(2004)</sup>

### Amplifying Attachments for Lesson #4

File #	Title
1133	Selected Quotes About God’s Sovereignty
1191	The Supremacy of God; A. W. Pink
1247	God’s Absolute Sovereignty; What is Romans 9 about.

### Applicable Sections of Confessions:

- **LBC of 1689** Ch 2, Item 2. Ch 5, Item 2.
- **AoP of 1858** IV. Providence (attachment Lesson #1)

## I. What is Meant by “Sovereignty”?

### A. A Dictionary Definition:

- a. Supreme power, b. Freedom from external control: Autonomy c. Controlling influence.

### B. Theological definitions of “Absolute Sovereignty”:

- God’s purpose in carrying out His will without any intervening possibility of failure regarding His intentions and plans.
- That God “*is the Most High, doing “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 4:35* - from **A. W. Pink’s The Sovereignty of God**

### C. Various Views:

1. God is **absolutely sovereign** and exercises that sovereignty completely according to His will.
2. God is **sovereign** but chooses to exercise His sovereignty selectively.  
(Allows created beings’ “free will” to rule in some matters.) (Arminianism)
3. God is very powerful and very knowledgeable, but **not sovereign**. (Open Theism)

We all have opinions and preferences in this matter, but the question is: What does Scripture directly teach?

## II. What Then Does Scripture Teach?

### A. Specific Scriptures that Teach God’s Absolute Sovereignty:

1. **Deut 31:16-17** *The LORD said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, ‘Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?’”* NASU
2. **Job 23:13-16** *But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does. For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such decrees are with Him. Therefore, I would be dismayed at His presence; when I consider, I am terrified of Him. It is God who has made my heart faint, and the Almighty who has dismayed me, - - -* NASU
3. **Job 42:2-3** *I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.* NASU
4. **Ps 24:1** *The earth is the LORD’s, and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it.* NASU
5. **Ps 33:8-11** *Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.* NASU
6. **Prov 16:4** *The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.* NASU
7. **Prov 16:33** *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.* NASU
8. **Prov 20:24** *Man’s steps are ordained by the LORD, how then can a man understand his way?* NASU
9. **Prov 21:1** *The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD: He turns it wherever He wishes.* NASU

10. **Is 14:24-27** *The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, “Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder. This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back.* NASU
11. **Is 43:11-13** *I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me. It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, and there was no strange god among you; so you are My witnesses, declares the LORD, and I am God. Even from eternity I am He, and there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?* NASU
12. **Is 45:9-10** *Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker – an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, “What are you doing?” Or the thing you are making say, “He has no hands?” Woe to him who says to a father, “What are you begetting?” Or to a woman, “To what are you giving birth?”* also quoted in Rom 9:19-27 NASU
13. **Jer 18:5-6** *Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?” declares the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.* NASU
14. **Dan 2:20-22** *Daniel said, Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.* NASU
15. **Amos 3:6** *If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?* NASU
16. **John 1:11-13** *He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup>But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* NASU
17. **Acts 2:22-23** *Men of Israel, listen to these words; Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know – this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.* NASU
18. **Acts 4:27-28** *For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.* NASU
19. **Rom 9:10-15** *And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.” Just as it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” NASU*
20. **Eph 1:9-12** *He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him <sup>10</sup>with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, thing in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him <sup>11</sup>also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, <sup>12</sup>to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.*
21. **Eph 3:8-12** *To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.* NASU

## Other Important Sovereignty of God Passages:

Ex 9:3-7	1 Chr 29:11	Job 26:5-14	Psalms 2	Ps 119:89-91	Ps 127:1	Ps 139:15-18	Ecc 3:14-15
Is 14:24-27	Is 40:12-17	Is 45:6-7	Is 55:8-11	Eze 20:33-40	Dan 4:34-37	Dan 6:25-27	Dan 7:13-14
Rom 9:18-29	Rom 11:33-36	Eph 1:18-23	Phil 2:12-13	2 Tim 2:8-11	James 4:13-17	Rev 5:12-14	Rev 1:10-12

### B. Specific Stories that Illustrate God's Absolute Sovereignty:

- Lame man at the pool of Bethesda in John 5:2-9. Jesus demonstrates that the power to heal is from Him, not from the pool. **Note:** The second half of v.3 and all of v. 4 are textual variants.
- Judas pre-chosen to betray Christ – Christ knew of this coming betrayal with certainty.  
See Jn 6:62-71; then Jn 13:1-4; then vs 10-11; then verse 17 -19 (including a quote from Ps 41:9)
- Consider King Saul's death as described in - 1 Chron 10:4 vs. 1 Chron 10:13-14
- Consider Saul's (Paul's) calling, salvation to ministry - Acts 9:1-19 (esp. 15-17)  
A miraculous intervention by Christ without any prior desire on Paul's part.
- Compare how God treats Moses to how He treats Hezekiah.  
God prohibits Moses from entering the promised land. Dt 3:23-27  
Hezekiah through prayer was given 15 more years to live. 2 Kng 20:1-7
- God's dominion of Pharaoh for His own purpose:
  - Ex 4:21 - - *but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.* \*\*
  - Ex 6:1 - - *under compulsion he will let the go and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land.* <sup>1</sup>
  - Ex 7:3 - - *I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders* - - \*\*
  - Ex 7:13 - - *Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them,* - - \*
  - Ex 7:22 - - *and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them,* - - \*
  - Ex 8:15 - - he (Pharaoh) hardened his heart and did not listen to them, - - ★
  - Ex 8:19 - - *But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.* \*
  - Ex 8:32 - - *But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.* ★
  - Ex 9:7 - - *But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.* \*
  - Ex 9:12 - - *And the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen to them,* - - \*\*
  - Ex 9:34 - - *But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants.* ★
  - Ex 9:35 - - *Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not let the sons of Israel go,* - - \*
  - Ex 10:1 - - *God to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants,* - - \*\*
  - Ex 10:20 - - *But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart,* \*\*
  - Ex 10:27 - - *But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart.* \*\*
  - Ex 11:10 - - *yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart.* \*\*
  - Ex 14:4 - - *I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them;* \*\*
  - Ex 14:8 - - *The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after* - - \*\*
  - Ex 14:17 - - *behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them* - - \*\*

X <sup>1</sup> God compels Pharaoh	1X	}	16X God sovereignly controlled Pharaoh's heart!
* Pharaoh's heart was hardened (passive)	5X		
** God hardens Pharaoh's heart	10X		
★ – Pharaoh hardened his own heart	3X		
- Consider Assyria's role in God's sovereign hand - Is 10:1-12: God ordains that Assyria will bring judgment on Israel and yet is accountable for their sinful motives against God's people. ??? Wicked people serve God also, but not willingly! (Look at II. A. 6. Pr 16:4 above.)

**Job 26:14** "Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; And how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?"

### III. Consequences of God's Absolute Sovereignty:

- God operates under no rule or authority other than His own. **Eph 1:7-14**
- His actions are derived from nothing other than His own desire or purpose.
- He is not in any way obligated to another.
- His will and purpose is supreme over all other desires, purposes, or creatures.
- His will and subsequent actions are without any legitimate blame or criticism.
- All things are under God's complete authority and control.
- God is never surprised or caught off guard by human events or circumstances.
- God is never a victim of anything that men or angels or demons might do.
- God's purpose is being carried out fully as time moves forward.
- God's purpose is for our (the elect) good and for His glory.
- Nothing in all of creation is out of His control.
- God's sovereignty exists in the context of all of His other attributes such as:
  - Holiness      Heb 12:18-29      - Perfection      2 Sam 22:31-33
  - Mercy          Eph 2:3-10              - Justice          Job 37:23-24
  - Righteousness      Job 37:23              - Wrath          Eph 2:3
  - Love              1 Jn 3:16                - Purpose        Rev 4:11
  - Immutability      James 1:17-18      etc., etc.

**And yet, man is accountable to God for his own moral choices. ???**

Here is a mystery, a paradox, but **NOT** a contradiction!

### IV. Meaning and Impact:

We are secure in our lives and in eternity because:

- God loved and chose us, independent from our own will. His will and purpose is immutable!
- God is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfect in holiness, immutability, and righteousness.
- God expressed His will toward us in salvation through Christ Jesus and adopted us into His family.
- God is fully able to accomplish all that He has purposed in accordance with His own will.

**God is Not dependent on nor derived from any created thing in the sense that:**

Also known as His absolute Aseity – “God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify Him and bring Him joy. This attribute of God is sometimes called His self-existence or His Aseity (from the Latin words *a se* which mean “from himself”).”

**Wayne Grudem; *Systematic Theology*; p. 160**

- He is certain in His existence and in His attributes, meaning that there can be no change in His existence or His attributes.
- He is logically necessary for the existence of all things requiring creation in order to exist.
- His existence is necessary and without cause of any kind.
- He is not subject to circumstances, to chance, or to unknown external effects.
- He is not dependent on or conditioned by anything other than Himself.

### V. Conclusion:

Which view (from I. C. above) seems best to fit the Scriptural teaching?

1. “**God Exercises Absolute Sovereignty**”, (Sovereign Grace)
2. “**God Self Limits His Sovereignty**”, (Arminianism) or
3. “**God Is Not Absolutely Sovereign**”? (Open Theism)

## *Some Important Quotes*

“I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes - that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit, as well as the sun in the heavens - that the chaff from the hand of the winnow is steered as the stars in their course. The creeping of an aphid over the rosebush is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence - the fall of...leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche.”  
**Charles Spurgeon**

“There is not an inch of any sphere of life over which Jesus Christ does not say, ‘Mine.’” **Abraham Kuyper**

**re. the doctrine of God's sovereignty** – “This refutes the wicked charge that this teaching is a horrible misrepresentation of God and dangerous to expound to His people. Can a doctrine be horrible and dangerous that gives God His true place, maintains His rights, magnifies His grace, attributes all glory to Him, and removes every ground of boasting from the creature? Can a doctrine be horrible and dangerous which affords the saints a sense of security in danger, that supplies them comfort in sorrow, that begets patience within them in adversity, that evokes from them praise at all times? Can a doctrine be horrible and dangerous which assures us of the certain triumph of good over evil, and which provides a sure resting-place for our hearts, and that places the perfections of the Sovereign Himself?

No, a thousand times no! Instead of being ‘horrible and dangerous’ this doctrine of the sovereignty of God is glorious and edifying, and a due comprehension of it will but serve to make us exclaim with Moses, ‘*Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*’” Ex 15:11

**A. W. Pink**; from *The Sovereignty of God*; p. 256

Every link in the chain of redemption is forged on God's anvil from start to finish. Even God cannot achieve an end without a means. In order to secure the predestined end, He foreordains each step and causal link, sovereignly acting to see that each cause and effect occurs. I will have already shown that He had to move the entire Roman military bureaucracy several years earlier to make certain that at the end of the empire-wide census, one particular pregnant girl was in the right town at the right moment just so the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and not up north in Nazareth! The entire Roman bureaucracy was predestined to keep in step with the body chemistry of one unknown Jewish girl in the far outer reaches of the first century Roman Empire.

**R. K. McGregor Wright**; *No Place for Sovereignty*; p. 94

Every truth in God's Word is not only there for our information but also for our inspiration. The Bible has been given to us not to gratify an idle curiosity but to edify the souls of believers. The sovereignty of God is more than an abstract principle which explains the rationale of the divine government: it is a motive for godly fear. It is revealed to promote righteous living and to bring our rebellious hearts into subjection. A true recognition of God's sovereignty humbles the human heart like nothing else does, and brings a person into lowly submission before God, causing us to relinquish our own self-will and creating delight in the perception and performance of the divine will.

**A. W. Pink**; from *The Sovereignty of God*; p. 199

No event in history will bring more glory, honor and praise to God than the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the place of His people. Yet again we find one single act, freely engaged in by evil men for evil motives, yet, at the same time, eternally predestined for good by God. The Potter is indeed free. He can, and does, decree whatsoever comes to pass, for His own glory (Eph 1:11). And yet the Potter is the righteous judge of all the earth who always does right.

**James, R. White**; *The Potter's Freedom*, p. 49