

SOVEREIGN FATHER

A 3 part mini-series at Godfirst within our 30 part series on Ephesians

Part 1: Sovereign over All

Part 2: Sovereign over Salvation

Part 3: Sovereignty and Church vibe

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Eph 1:1-14 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace and peace to you from **God our Father** and the **Lord Jesus Christ**. ³ Praise be to the God and **Father** of our Lord **Jesus Christ**, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in **Christ**. ⁴ For **he** chose us in **him** before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ **he** predestined us to be adopted as his sons through **Jesus Christ**, in accordance with **his** pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of **his** glorious grace, which he has freely given us in **the One** he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹ And he made known to us the mystery of **his will** according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in **Christ**, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even **Christ**. ¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, **you** were marked in him **with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit**, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Dan 4:35 No one can stay his hand or say unto Him 'what doest thou?'

1 Tim 6:15 The only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Sovereign over All

Over the detail of our lives: Pr 16:9, Jer 10:23, Mt 6:32, Phil 4:19

Over chance: Pr 16:33

Over history: Jesus was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge...doing what you power and will had decided before hand should happen (Acts 2&4)

Over nations: Ps 22:28, Acts 17:26, Pr 21:1, Rms 13, Is 40

Over good and bad: I create well-being and I create calamity. I am the Lord who does all these things Is 45:5, Lam 3:37, 1 Sam 2:6, Eccl 7:13, Is 45:5, Jer 29, Ex 21:13, 1 Pet 4:19, Acts 2:23.

Over nature: Ps 104. Job 38-41. Mt 10:29, Col 1:16-17. Wayne Grudem: If Christ were to cease his continuing activity of sustaining all things in the universe, then all except the triune God would instantly cease to exist. Bruce Ware: The universe is governed by God. Not one atom, despot or demon acts in any respect to hinder what God has ordained.

Sovereignty and Freewill

Simply stated, the Bible, without any sense of embarrassment or apology, presents God as absolutely Sovereign, and Man as absolutely morally responsible for his own actions. God's sovereignty over-arches all things, including the free will choices of man, ensuring that God is always in full control, and always gets his way, but at no time does his sovereignty compromise the genuine choices that man makes or the fairness of man being held fully responsible for his choices and resulting actions. Take a look:

The Cross: Wicked men consciously conspired to crucify Jesus (Acts 4:27-28). The Father instigated the cross (Isa 53:6, 10; Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27-28). Jesus freely chose the cross (Mt 6:39).

Salvation: We must choose God (Mt 10:9), but ultimately that is only possible because God chooses us (Jn 15:16).

Paul's storm (PJ read Acts 27) ²³ "Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me ²⁴ and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' ²⁵ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me." This was the sovereign determination of God. One might then assume that in the confidence of this truth they would then abandon all responsible seamanship because 'God has spoken' but on the contrary, they immediately set about lightening the boat and running her aground in the most responsible way possible.

Guidance: In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps (Pr 16:9). Here we see a man making his plans, free and uncoerced in his own heart, but the Lord ensuring that these plans ultimately fit with His master plan.

NB God doesn't suspend his sovereign power or sovereign knowledge at anytime. At all times he is fully sovereign but at all times man is morally responsible for all his decisions, and his decisions are meaningful.

Sovereignty and Prayer

Give us this day our daily bread...your Father knows what you need (Mt 6:11, 32)

Prayer to a non-sovereign God would be pointless & high-risk

Prayer is Effective!

Jms 5:13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up...The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Spurgeon: But to the question "So why pray?" we should answer "So why breathe, eat or move?" The answer is of course that our prayers are within the predestination, and that God has ordained the prayers of his people as much as anything else. When we pray, we are producing links in the chain of ordained facts.

Let's talk a bit about unanswered prayer

Unanswered prayer can be frustrating: Why do you hold back your right hand? Why don't you destroy my enemies? (Ps 74:1) Does He who implanted the ear not hear? (Ps 94:9)

Unanswered prayer teaches us patience and character: Bruce Ware: You can measure your spiritual temperature by whether your prayers are richly seasoned with expressions of longing for your own growth in godliness. Do you plead with God to make you more joyful, more loving, more patient, more kind, more gentle, more earnest, more disciplined? Or do you only pray that he get you out of this and that financial pinch or sickness or predicament at work. If so, call to mind that God did not create us and redeem us merely to live and live well off; he created and redeemed us to be holy as he is holy, to walk in his good will and so bring glory to him.

But within God's sovereignty, unanswered prayer is a blessing:

God has not always answered my prayers. If He had, I would have married the wrong man – several times. (Ruth Graham)

I thank God that He is not prepared to do everything that I ask Him... I am profoundly grateful to God that He did not grant me certain things for which I asked, and that He shut certain doors in my face. (Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

It may be your prayer is like a ship, which when it goes on a very long voyage, doesn't not come home laden so soon, but when it does come home it has a richer freight. (C.H. Spurgeon)

Sovereignty and Worship

He is not served by human hands as though he needed anything (Acts 17:24-25).

He lives in a high and lofty place (Isa 57:15)

His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Is 55:8-9)

The earth is his footstool (Isa 66:1)

If He needed food he would not inform us (Ps 50:7-12)

There is nothing that we have that we did not receive from him (1 Cor 4:7)

C.S. Lewis: Bottomlessly selfless, God has everything to give and nothing to receive.

Dorothy Sayers: We have cut the claws of the Lion of Judah, certifying Him a household pet for pale priests and old ladies.

Rev 19: With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

But here is where things get extraordinarily, unbelievably amazing: For this is what the high and lofty One says – he who lives forever: 'I live in a high and lofty place, **but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit.**' (Isa 57:15)

This self-sufficient, eternal Sovereign God has come to his people, restored our lost humanity through a despicable death on a cross, and he now calls me his son, his friend, and pledges to work everything that happens to me together for my good (Rms 8:28)! No wonder His Sovereignty and our election by him are 'to the praise of his glorious grace' (Eph 1:5-6, 11-12)!