

JUST HOW SOVEREIGN IS GOD?

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As mentioned recently ... lots of people don't believe there is a God. But those who do ... often have an inaccurate view of who God is and what He's like.

I have covered the fact that most believe that God loves everybody — always — unconditionally. Many sincere churches believe that. Too many have **NO FEAR OF GOD.**

Part of the problem is inaccurate preaching — giving an unbalanced picture of God. Endless talk of the Love of God (John 3:16) — very rarely mentioning sin ... judgment ... hell.

The trouble with inaccurate preaching: it can lead to wrong behaviour.

Some people genuinely believe that since God loves them unconditionally ... that they can live anyway they please. Dangerous!!

Some hear preaching that “once saved ... always saved”. So ... in extreme cases — they live quite wicked lives — believing they'll still “go to heaven”. Dangerous!!

Bad preaching can lead to real-life problems!

One common misunderstanding I'd like to cover today is:

The view that God is Sovereign and that everything that happens in our lives is God's Sovereign Will.

It is a commonly-held view — but there are at least 2 problems.

1. It makes God to blame for some horrible evils.
2. It can make us very passive? After all ... if something is God's will in our lives — we should not resist it?

But ... what if it's not God's will?

According to the dictionary: A Sovereign is a supreme ruler. That is true of God. **But it doesn't mean that God is responsible and accountable for everything that happens to/by His subjects.**

There are lots of places in scripture that show that God — though Sovereign — often doesn't get His will.

Matthew 6:9-10

9 **In this manner, therefore, pray:**

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Why pray for God's will to be done — **if** God always "gets His will"? If that were true — then we would have a problem with what Jesus said.

1 Timothy 2:3-4

3 **For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,**

4 **who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

God desires all men to be saved. That's what He wants. Will He get it? **NO!** Because God's will doesn't always come to pass..

Genesis 2:15-17

15 **Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.**

16 **And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;**

17 **but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."**

It was God's will — DON'T EAT — a simple test?

Genesis 3:17-19

17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’:

“Cursed is the ground for your sake;

In toil you shall eat of it

All the days of your life.

18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,

And you shall eat the herb of the field.

19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

Till you return to the ground,

For out of it you were taken;

For dust you are,

And to dust you shall return.”

TOIL ... TROUBLE ... DEATH!!

That was not God’s will. It was the opposite!

Who was responsible? The serpent and Adam and Eve.

Yet ... many church denominations teach that “God is Sovereign and totally in charge of everything so it actually was His will”.

Many Protestant churches today ... especially in America ... are Calvinist in teaching. They follow the views of John Calvin (shared by Martin Luther).

There has been a resurgence over the last 20 years or so. John MacArthur is a Calvinist and well-known author ... preacher ... pastor — has his own John MacArthur Study Bible. He is one of many active Calvinists.

JOHN CALVIN:

“I freely acknowledge my doctrine to be this: that Adam fell, not merely by the permission of God, but by His very secret counsel **and decree**”.

“God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of His posterity; but also at His own pleasure **arranged it**”.

But the teaching doesn’t stop at the fall of Adam. They teach that everything is God’s will.

MARTIN LUTHER:

“God worketh all things in all men EVEN WICKEDNESS in the wicked”.

One leading theologian — Dr James White (an author ... teacher ... Calvinist) was asked: “When a child is raped, is God responsible and did He decree that rape?” Answer: “Yes”.

They even go as far as to say that the eternal fate of all men was pre-determined “before time began”. Predestined to be saved — or burn in hell. That is Calvinism.

And everything that happens to you on the way is ... at least “specifically approved” ... or — for most of these denominations — pre-determined.

This type of thinking has permeated much of “Churchianity”.

“If something happens to me (calamity ... illness ... loss) ... I can be confident that God has allowed it to happen and it’s part of His will for me”.

That is NOT BIBLICAL!! Lots of things happen that are not God’s will. WE NEED TO BE VIGILANT!!

Genesis 6:5-7

5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, **and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

6 **And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.**

7 **So the LORD said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”**

God was GRIEVED TO HIS HEART! (Broken hearted!)

The earth is in a terrible state. “Plan A” was a failure! It is finished. That is what happened.

Calvinists and many churches believe God pre-destined the flood “before time”. You have to be mental to believe that?

1 Samuel 8:1, 3-5

1 Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel.

3 **But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.**

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah,

5 and said to him, **“Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.”**

Give us a King! The people wanted to dump their King — God.

1 Samuel 8:6-9

6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, **“Give us a king to judge us.” So Samuel prayed to the LORD.**

7 **And the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.**

8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which **they have forsaken Me and served other gods**—so they are doing to you also.

9 **Now therefore, heed their voice.** However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.”

This displeased God! It was not His will. He wanted to be their King.

1 Samuel 8:10-22

10 **So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king.**

11 And he said, “This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots.

12 He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers.

14 And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants.

15 He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants.

16 And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work.

17 He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants.

18 **And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day.** (Whose will was about to be done here — God's? NO!! The people's will)

19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, **No, but we will have a king over us,**

20 that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD.

22 **So the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed their voice, and make them a king."**

And Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Every man go to his city."

"Their will be done"!

What happened when Israel got their King? They had many terrible kings. National problems ... military defeats ... eventual captivity. NOT GOD'S WILL!! It was their choice.

Ezekiel 33:7-11

7 **"So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. (You warn them to get them to change)**

8 When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

9 **Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.**

10 "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?" ' "

11 Say to them: **'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways!** For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

No pleasure for God in people dying — even wicked people. It was not His will.

God's will was: Turn! REPENT!

God's will was that Israel listen and repent. So He could bless and prosper them. He would get to "show off" His special nation. It didn't happen!

2 Kings 17:7-23

7 For so it was that **the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God**, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; **and they had feared other gods,**

8 **and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel**, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

9 Also **the children of Israel secretly did against the LORD their God things that were not right**, and **they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city.**

10 **They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree.**

11 There **they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger,**

12 for **they served idols**, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing."

13 **Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes**, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets."

14 **Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks**, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. *(THEY stiffened their necks)*

15 And **they rejected His statutes and His covenant** that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; **they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them**, concerning whom the LORD had charged them that they should not do like them.

16 **So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.**

17 And **they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying,** and **sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.**

18 **Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight;** there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone.

19 Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

20 **And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel,** afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight.

21 **For He tore Israel from the house of David,** and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin.

22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them,

23 until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.

God tried His best — but failed. God didn't get what He wanted.

This was the beautiful land of "Milk and Honey" which was left ruined and desolate. That wasn't God's design.

Isaiah 5:1-2

1 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved

A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard:

My Well-beloved has a vineyard (*talking of God's vineyard — the House of Israel and Judah*)

On a very fruitful hill.

2 **He dug it up and cleared out its stones,**

And planted it with the choicest vine.

He built a tower in its midst,
And also made a winepress in it;

So He expected it to bring forth good grapes,
But it brought forth wild grapes.

God expected good grapes. That was His will ... intent ... desire ... expectation.

Isaiah 5:3-4

3 “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.

4 **What more could have been done to My vineyard**
That I have not done in it?

Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes,
Did it bring forth wild grapes?

God didn't get His will — didn't get His desire. There was nothing more that He could have done. The people had free choice.

Isaiah 5:5-7

5 And now, **please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard:**

I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned;
And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

6 I will lay it waste;
It shall not be pruned or dug,
But there shall come up briers and thorns.

I will also command the clouds
That they rain no rain on it.”

7 **For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,**
And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.
He looked for justice, but behold, oppression;
For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.

What more could God have done? He was desperately disappointed. But it was not up to Him. He had given free choice.

The idea that everything that happens is God's perfect will is not Biblical.

People have a major part to play. GOD HAS GIVEN US FREEDOM TO CHOOSE!

Matthew 23:29-39

29 **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,
30 and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’

31 “Therefore **you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.**

32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt.

33 **Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?**

34 Therefore, indeed, **I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,**

35 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

37 **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!**

38 See! Your house is left to you desolate;

39 for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ ”

“You were not willing”. Jesus had always been willing ... but didn’t get His will.

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

15 **“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil,**

16 **in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.**

17 **But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them,**

18 **I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess.**

19 **I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;**

20 **that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days;** and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

Blessing and cursing — It’s your choice!! BUT CHOOSE LIFE!

Many things that happen in life relate to our choices and their consequences.

Proverbs 14:12

12 **There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.**

Lots of choices we make individually ... or as societies — lead to harm.

Kicking God out of schools ...teaching evolution as fact ... abortions ... same-sex “marriages” ... may all seem “right” to some people. But ... it leads to disaster.

Galatians 6:7-9

7 **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**

8 **For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.**

9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW!

A lot of what we’re reaping today is what we sowed many years ago.

Not some special intervention from God.

Luke 6:46-49

46 “But **why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?**

47 **Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them**, I will show you whom he is like:

48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.

49 But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”

Why does the second house fall down? God’s perfect will for us that we should humbly submit to? Pre-determined since before the world was? Or — our failure to respond to Jesus’ instructions?!

We shouldn’t be too quick to “blame God”!

Don’t assume everything that happens in your life is God’s perfect will — specially approved by Him. Occasionally — yes. But we’d better stay alert.

1 Peter 5:6-9

6 **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,**

7 **casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.**

8 **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**

9 **Resist him, steadfast in the faith**, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

We have an adversary — out to devour us!

We wouldn’t be wise to submit to the devil’s interference in our lives? God’s will is for us to resist!

Don’t get confused when people talk about God’s Sovereignty. Yes — God is Sovereign in the dictionary sense. He is Supreme Ruler and has all authority.

But He’s not personally involved and approving of the evil and wickedness on this earth — or all the problems and difficulties that come against us! He’s not Sovereign in that sense.

We are reaping what we sowed over the years. We should be actively vigilant!

