



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XI
Issue 268

The Sovereignty of God

Part 2

by – George Addair

THE ELEMENT OF DESIGN

In a very basic way we have shown that God exercised His Own will in the creation of the universe. We have presented several situations that can be explained only by accepting His sovereignty. None of the events cited were intended to accuse or criticize Him. The illustrations were given to reveal that God has a reason for everything that He does. The vivid differences in His creatures indicates the element of design. To illustrate this, we will examine a familiar aspect of His work, namely the bodies of land and water on earth.

The surface area of the earth is approximately 197,000,000 square miles. Of this, water composes about 145,000,000 square miles leaving 52,000,000 square miles of land. Science has now determined the necessity for this balance. We know that the amount of rainfall is determined by the ratio of ocean to land, and this on the square of the factor of increase or decrease. This means that if the ocean had only half its area, rainfall would be decreased by one-fourth. If this were true, most of the land area of the earth would be similar to the Sahara desert. Vegetation would be all but impossible. On the other hand, if the ocean area were increased by one-half, the land area of the earth would be nothing but a swamp. These extreme conditions are observed, in a very crude way, by an occasional drought or hurricane. These events happen for only a short time, however, and things soon return to normal. The fact that they do occur occasionally does reveal how God has

designed the earth to the best advantage of man.

Another amazing feature of the ocean is the saline content. Life would not be possible without salt and the ocean fills this need. Yet the salt content of the ocean supplies still another need. In the tropics, where ocean water evaporates so rapidly, the salt content of the water is higher than at the poles where evaporation is less. The salt content being higher makes the water heavier and it sinks to the bottom, thereby inviting the water from the poles to rush in to replace the evaporated water. This partially contributes to the ocean currents.

The ocean currents are vitally important to our existence. One current, originating at the Gulf of Mexico, and called the Gulf Stream, is seventy miles wide and three thousand feet deep. It rushes like a mighty river along the coast of Florida and northward parallel to the coast of North America. This stream originating in the tropics is warm, and carries the warm winds with it to the north parts of our continent. Without this warm stream the New England states would be a frozen mass uninhabitable by people. However, the design does not stop there. Up near Nova Scotia this mighty gulf stream meets the mighty Polar Stream head-on. This Polar Stream is on its southward journey to replace the water which evaporated in the tropics. These two mighty forces meeting head-on cannot

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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SOVEREIGNTY (continued from front page)

cancel one another, so the Gulf Stream is diverted toward Europe, still maintaining its warmth. At Nova Scotia it divides, one branch directed past the Azores to make these Atlantic Islands habitable, and the other toward the British Isles, permitting them to be habitable. Without this stream these areas would be abandoned.

The Polar Stream, on the other hand, is not defeated. When it meets the Gulf Stream head-on, it dives deep into the ocean and continues its southward journey. The picture is fascinating. Two mighty rivers headed in opposite directions, one north and the other south, one riding directly above the other. One is very warm and the other is bitter cold. The Polar Stream continues this southward journey until it reaches the vicinity of the West Indies, where it comes to the surface again. This cold stream is the only thing that makes the tropics bearable, due to the intense heat that is there.

The ocean currents are mysterious. We can only recognize a few of the many benefits to mankind, but we can readily see the design of God in them. Most of the earth's population is unaware of their existence, but God in His creative act designed them for our well-being. The man who pioneered the study of ocean currents (oceanography), was led to this study by a Bible verse found in Psalm 8:8,

... and whatsoever passes through the paths of the sea.

Other helpful features of the ocean are recognizable. The healing substance known as iodine comes from its great store of wealth. The ocean also provides food in great quantities, and many things of value such as pearls, radium, gold, oil and other riches.

Can anyone deny the sovereignty of God in creation? Not if he is a rational, unbiased man. Not if he is open to this basic truth,

The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over ALL (Psalm 103:19).

SOVEREIGNTY IN ACTION

Before we approach the subject of the sovereignty of God in action, let us first suppose that He is not completely sovereign. Let us imagine that He is not in full control of every move made within the universe. We agree that He is responsible for the creation of everything. Let us now suppose that after the initial act of creation, He established laws whereby the universe would be governed, and then withdrew from His creation, leaving it to be ruled by these established laws. This is a common theory of some who believe that God does not rule everything as such.

In such a case, we would be living in a world over which there was no presiding governor. We would be subject to impersonal laws created and designed by God. Scripturally speaking, however, this is not true. This view is completely materialistic, and hints of being atheistic.

A casual glance at the universe will reveal that if there were such laws, they are not laws at all, for they are very inconsistent and unpredictable. No two seasons are exactly alike. Suppose God was not controlling the seasons. The wind might sweep us away. We read in John 3:8,

The wind is blowing where it wills, and you are hearing the sound of it.

This tells us that man cannot control the wind. What about earthquakes? Man is literally helpless before them. If we deny that God is completely sovereign then we erase all sense of security. We should rather praise Him for the statement of Hebrews 1:3 (C.V.),

Carrying on the universe by His powerful declaration.

This verse declares that it is God Who is carrying on the universe. Colossians 1:17 confirms this by stating that,

All has its cohesion [held together] in Him.

THE HUMAN FAMILY

Suppose God is not in full control over the actions of all people. Many believe that the “free will” of man prevails over the activities of man. They teach that God cannot or will not intervene in their affairs. They even teach that the “eternal” destiny of man is in his own finite hands. Yet if the free will of man was sovereign, he would rapidly return to a state of barbarism. When you remove divine restraint you commit moral suicide. When you have a vivid picture of the helplessness of man, you realize that the removal of divine restraint is not only impractical, but impossible. After thousands of years, man still is only on the verge of discovering himself and the wonders of the universe.

The divine sovereignty of God reaches into every area of our lives. Suppose every farmer suddenly became obsessed to plant the same crop. We might have an overabundance of corn and no potatoes. Suppose everyone mailed letters only on Tuesday. This would create chaos for the Post Office Department. Suppose everyone went grocery shopping only on Friday.

The sovereignty of God is so real and personal that it reaches into even the so-called insignificant areas of our lives. The true conception of the rule of God is to acknowledge that He is concerned with every area of our lives. Some feel that God is only slightly sovereign. They feel that He intervenes in only the more important things. I think we will all readily agree that for our existence here on earth, nothing is more important than the food grown by the farmer and the merchandising of it to the consumers.

Let us now examine the revelation of Scripture on this subject.

INANIMATE MATTER

That God rules over inanimate matter is clearly shown in Genesis 1 where God says,

“Let there be light,” and there was light.

Day after day, in the Genesis account, we see

matter conforming to the wishes of God. We read in the Psalms,

He spoke and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast.

Continuing through the Bible we see further proof that God controls all matter. It seems likely that there was no rain for the first sixteen centuries after the account in Genesis 1. We read in Genesis 2:6,

There went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

This was likely the means of moisture for the earth. It was probably a form of dew. Centuries later, in the days of Noah, God warned of an impending flood. No one believed this. Their unbelief was no doubt stimulated by the fact that rain had not yet appeared to them. However, at the command of God, the rains came. Genesis 6:17-7:12 gives this dramatic account.

God's power is again demonstrated in the execution of the plagues in Egypt. Light was turned to darkness. Water was turned to blood. Hail fell at His bidding. Death came to the land of the Nile at His command. Exodus 9:23-26 says that God sent all of these things. These are not isolated examples. They are from the abundance of such occurrences found in Scripture. A beautiful verse is found in Genesis 17:14 where God declares,

Is anything too hard for Jehovah? (RSV).

At His Word, fire and brimstone fell on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). The waters of the Red Sea opened at His bidding (Exodus 14). At the word of the Lord the earth opened and swallowed Korah and his company. The furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, even though it was heated seven times hotter than before, failed to singe its victims. The wind and waves obeyed Jesus. The fig tree withered at the command of the Lord. Diseases were healed instantly. The sun went back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz to help the weak faith of Hezekiah. A star heralded the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of this seems to amplify the words of David in Psalm 147:15-18,

He sends forth His commandment upon the earth: His Word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool: He scatters the hoar frost like ashes, He casts forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold? He sends out His Word, and melts them: He causes His wind to blow, and the waters to flow.

Observe Amos 4:7-10,

“And also I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon and the piece whereon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered into one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have you not returned to Me,” says the Lord. “I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmer-worm devoured them: yet have ye not returned to Me,” says the Lord. “I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up into your nostrils: yet have you not returned unto Me,” says the Lord.

Certainly no one could read these passages and deny the power of God over inanimate matter.

IRRATIONAL CREATURES

A vivid example of God’s sovereignty in this realm is found in Genesis 2:19,

Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air: and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them.

Notice that this was before the traditional “fall of man.” Later, when Noah was leading the animals into the ark God said,

Two of every creature shall come unto you (Genesis 6:19-20).

When the plagues came upon Egypt, God exercised full control over the frogs, insects, cattle, etc. The brute beasts of the field as well as the angels of heaven perform the bidding of God. A cow returned the ark of the covenant to the Israelites (I Samuel 6). A raven fed Elijah at the brook Cherith (I Kings 17:2-4). Forty-two she-bears devoured Elijah’s tormentors. Dogs licked the blood of Jezebel in fulfillment of prophecy. The lions’ mouth was closed fast when Daniel was cast into the den, but later they devoured his accusers. A fish was prepared to swallow Jonah. A fish brought tribute money to Peter. A cock crowed twice after Peter denied the Lord. It is very obvious that God controls irrational creatures.

MAN

Experience has shown us that very few people will deny the statements thus far. Yet, when we begin to teach that God is responsible for the actions of man, we immediately begin to hear cries of blasphemy.

To introduce this section I ask you to consider three alternatives. I realize that this is human reasoning but we will not attempt to discuss that for which we have no Scripture to enforce.

God Governs, or He Is Governed

God Rules, or He Is Ruled

God Has His Way, or He Does Not Have His Way

I cannot believe that man is so unruly that the God Who loves him cannot save him. I cannot believe that sin is so bad that God cannot do anything about it, even though He tried. The Scriptures are very emphatic about the fact that “*Christ died for the sins of the world,*” that “*all will receive justification of life,*” and that “*Christ is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.*”

The Scriptures declare that Pharaoh was raised up for the purpose that he was used, namely that he might be an instrument through which God could show His power (Romans 9:17). John 17 proclaims that Judas was lost in order that the Scriptures could be fulfilled. Now think of this! If God used these two “rebels” in order to work out His purpose, is it too much to believe that He is using all “rebels” for the same purpose?

*For in Him we are **living and moving and are** (Acts 17:28).*

This was not spoken to Christians but to the Athenian philosophers, Epicureans and Stoics at Athens. I believe that, in this group of “unbelievers,” **Paul did not hesitate to declare that God was responsible for their every move.** We confirmed the fact that Judas and Pharaoh did things which were contrary to God’s revealed will to mankind, but nonetheless Scripture confirms the fact that they executed God’s hidden will.

*The disposings of the heart and the answer of the tongue is **from the Lord** (Proverbs 16:1).*

There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord that shall stand (Proverbs 19:21).

A man’s heart devises his way, but the Lord directs his steps (Proverbs 16:9).

The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turns it whithersoever He will (Proverbs 21:1).

He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? What His soul desires, even that He does (Job 23:13).

The counsel of the Lord stands, the thoughts of His heart to all generations (Psalm 33:11).

There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord (Proverbs 21:30).

For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who

shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? (Isaiah 14:27).

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else! I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times shall the things that are not yet done, saying, “My Counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

I have looked in vain to find one passage that declares that man defeated the purpose of God. Nimrod desired to build the tower of Babel contrary to God’s wishes, but God stopped this. Esau swore vengeance upon Jacob, but embraced him when they met. Abraham desired to take his father Terah to the promised land against God’s wishes, but Terah died before he reached Canaan. Joseph’s brethren planned to kill him, but God overruled and spared him. Pharaoh refused to release Israel and he later died in the Red Sea. Haman erected a gallows for Mordecai but was hanged on it himself.

He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision (Psalm 2:4).

Moses uttered one hasty word and was excluded from entering the land of Canaan, yet Elijah passionately murmured against God and suffered only a mild rebuke. Uzzah merely touched the ark and was instantly slain, yet the Philistines carried it off in insulting triumph and suffered no immediate harm.

When Jesus was ministering to the people of Capernaum, a profound truth was revealed. The people of Capernaum did not respond to His teachings. Jesus said that if the works performed there had been done in Sodom, that Sodom would have repented. If such a display would have caused Sodom to repent, why did not God give Sodom such a witness? God chose not to give them the “same” opportunity that He gave to Capernaum. Why did God choose to favor one city above another? We can only conclude that God did not want Sodom to repent at that time. Ezekiel 16:53-55 tells us that Sodom will yet have her opportunity. Another in-

interesting thought is this. If God knew beforehand that Capernaum was not going to repent, why did He witness to them in the first place? Does God do things uselessly or foolishly? Certainly not – it was simply His plan to do them in that manner.

These are only a few of the many references in the Bible to prove that God is working His plan, and that nothing in the universe can alter His purpose. Let us learn to praise Him and fully recognize that He holds everything in His hand. Only by understanding this can you fully have peace in your heart. It enables us to know that the efforts of man contribute nothing towards God's plan, and that Satan is not a force that can change anything that God has decreed. This is the greatest source of comfort and security available to man today.

Suppose for a moment that Satan literally rebelled and left heaven of his own volition, as tradition teaches. He became one of the most influential creatures in that he has misled literally millions of people away from God. As a result, according to the teachings of tradition, most of mankind is unable to avoid the eternal torment which awaits billions of people. If this is really what happened, what assurance do we have that another heavenly creature will not rebel at some future time and lead the universe astray again? If I did not believe that "*all things were being worked after the counsel of His [God's] will,*" then I would have no security at all, not for the present nor for the ages to come. Let us praise God for all that He has done, for He said in Isaiah 45:7,

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.

RECOGNITION OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Now we will observe the practical application of this great doctrine to ourselves. To many, the doctrine of the absolute Sovereignty of God is repulsive. They find themselves unable to comprehend or accept any teaching that excludes the will of man from being dominant. They feel that to accept the truth of the Sovereignty of God would take away the responsibility of man and consequently make God responsible for everything in the uni-

verse. Most of these people have a distorted view of sin. They are prone to living under the weight of tradition and the misconceptions of society.

However, a true view of the Sovereignty of God will do more to edify a person than any other teaching in existence. This doctrine alone gives God His true place in the minds and hearts of believers, and is the only doctrine that exalts Him as the Scriptures do. It takes away the sorrow and remorse of the human heart and makes the heart delight in knowing that His will is being done in *all things*.

COMPLETE SUBMISSION

A true recognition of the Sovereignty of God will result in a complete submission to Him. It is natural for a person to object to difficulties, and for him to rebel at opposition to his daily course of life. We find that it is natural to suppose that the things which we have are unconditionally ours. We feel that our own planning and our own efforts are the reasons why we enjoy "success." Or, when we experience failure, it is frequently blamed upon circumstances or upon some other person. When God's Sovereignty is fully recognized, it then prompts us to completely submit to Him, and to accept the fact that *without Him we are nothing*. Even the ability a man has to accomplish anything, even to think, is because of the favor God has shown to him. The Scriptures declare that God has the right to take the same lump of clay and make one vessel of honor and another vessel of dishonor (Romans 9:21). In Genesis 18:21, Abraham said,

Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?

When Eli was informed by Samuel that his two sons were to be taken in death, he replied,

... It is the Lord; let Him do what seems Him good (I Samuel 3:18).

In the period of one day, Job lost his flocks and herds, and also his sons and daughters, in a cyclone. He said,

*The Lord gives and the Lord takes away ...
Blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21).*

The supreme example of complete submission to God is seen in the experience of Jesus prior to His death. He did not look with joy to the cross, yet He was willing to submit himself to this event. He recognized the merit of submitting His will to the will of the Father when He said,

Father, if You be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done (Luke 22:42).

Unless a person acknowledges the Sovereignty of God, he will be unable to understand the depth of Romans 8:28, which says,

We know that all things work for good to them who love God.

How could we possibly say that tragedy is good when it creates such sorrow? Only if we believe that God is in full control of every situation can we believe that all things work for good. Ephesians 5:20 says we are to give thanks to God always. If we believe that He controls all things, then it is possible to give thanks for all things. Philippians 4:4 says we are always to rejoice in the Lord. This is possible only if we trust in His full Sovereignty. Yet, if we do not completely resign our wills to His will, and fully trust Him to be in full control of every situation, it is not possible to believe that all things work together for good; and our thanksgiving and praise of Him are absent. Strength and security are natural results of a full belief in His Lordship.

Echoes of Grace



God will bless you over-and-above what you may ask or think for God's truth you proclaim.
– **NM**

It occurred to me that I had not written to say what a joy and blessing your *Daily Email Goodies* are – for that is exactly what they are. I thank Father for giving you His words which He works through you, to share with me and all the others who are blessed, and touched, and uplifted, and encouraged by what you write. – **Email**

Thank you so much for the *Daily Email Goodies*. The messages have been such a blessing! They have been uplifting, convicting, and encouraging. I want to be sure that I continue to receive them.
– **ID**

I Am ... Who and What God Says I Am is one of the most powerful and convicting articles that has come across my desk in a long time. Wow,

do I have a much different perspective regarding who and what I am. – **VT**

This *Daily Email Goodie* [#2521] is a GREAT message on the heels of the nation's political elections. I will keep this in mind as I listen to the family rail about "what's wrong with this country" or complain "about the future" and this country's leaders during the upcoming Holiday seasons.

Our (the Elect's) allegiance is not to this country, or any other worldly system. But no matter what system we find ourselves in here, we will remain calm, happy, and even-minded. Paul (and you, today) have so wonderfully reminded us of this important truth. – **MD**

Just read your most recent *Daily Email Goodie* [#2522]. Indeed, we love and serve a "happy God!" Great word, my dear brother ... great word, indeed!

I always look forward to your writings and daily goodies ... You are a blessing! – **VA**