

Studies in the Scriptures

The Almighty God

Although having a Biblical understanding of Sin is important, it is only important because of the God whom we have sinned against. It is of utmost importance, therefore, to know God, we must see and savor His beauty. However, unfortunately the attributes of God have been seen by many as boring, laborious, and only to be contemplated by ivory tower theologians. However, God expects His people to know Him. It is not enough to make a profession, for a simple profession can potentially be no more than self-deceit which leads many professors to hell. One's profession is worthless (Matthew 7:21-22), anyone can make a profession, and in our day people claim to be Christian without understanding the True Christian God. If most self-proclaimed Christians in our day knew the Biblical God, they would hate Him with every fiber in their bodies. Not many will enter into paradise with the King of Glory. Most who believe they know Him only worship a figment of their imagination derived from secularized Christianity and contemporary Christian music, which if examined by those who love God, would be found lacking and deceitful at best. Therefore, an examination of who God is and what makes Him unique is vital. God's indictment to our generation is as clear as His indictment against all humanity, and has been for all time, "My people are fools; they do not know me. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good!" (Jeremiah 4:22). Let us who love the Lord God seek to know Him, for He has chosen to reveal Himself to us, through His written word. Let us exalt Him for who He actually is, not who we want Him to be.

An attribute is simply a quality or characteristic that makes up one's personality, existence, or manner of conduct. Therefore, when we discuss the attributes of God, we are discussing those qualities that make God, God – those qualities which set Him apart from everything that exists. Although to a degree we all share in some characteristics that pertain to God, we do not share in all of His attributes, nor to the same degree. For example we can know things, but we cannot know things to the same degree as God knows things because His knowledge is infinite and ours is limited. Now that solitary attribute, which among many others separates God from the created work of His hands, when examined to a greater degree, which above all other attributes offends man, is the Sovereignty of God. God's Sovereignty is the degree to which God governs, controls, and determines those things which come to pass. So when we refer to God's Absolute Sovereignty, we are referring to God's complete and total control over all things.

God shows His Sovereignty in creation not only in the act of creating, but in His ordaining and governing of that which He has created. For example, the bird did not have a say in its being a bird, and the beast did not have a say in its being a beast. A man could never become a fish of the sea, in as much as a fish could become a man. God has alone decided these things without consideration to anything other than His own desire. "He sovereignly chose to place each of His creatures on that particular footing which seemed good in His sight" (Pink).

The Christian religion has been defined by the superiority of God and the inferiority of the rest of the created order. God is superior to His creation and supersedes it at all times. He is the one who does as He pleases amongst all Creation. He upholds and destroys as He alone sees fit. Hebrews 1:3 says, "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power..." Another place where God not only shows His sovereign rule in His upholding power, but also in His governing of creation is when He replies to Job, "Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, and caused the dawn to know its place...(38:12)". Here God is showing to Job, who questioned Him, how His superiority in providence is grounded in His power over creation. Again in Isaiah 46:9-11, "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me. Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all my good pleasure'; Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it."

God has also demonstrated His power over smaller matters of creation, such as weather, when He says in Amos 4:7, "I also withheld rain from you when the harvest was three months away. I sent rain on one town, but withheld it from another. One field had rain; another had none and dried up." He caused the plagues in Egypt and the Red Sea and the Jordan to open and then close at His command. He shut the mouths of lions to save Daniel. He controlled the flames of the fiery furnace and caused every animal to come two by two to the ark. He caused the ravens, who are scavengers by nature, to bring food to God's people. This shows just a few instances of the governing authority of God, and the truth of His control is testified on almost every page of Scripture. There is very little debate amongst theologians within Christianity concerning the sovereignty

of God in creation. However, while many would never deny God's control over lesser beings, most are offended, or hate the Truth that God is equally as Sovereign over man.

Nothing takes God by surprise; there is never an unexpected emergency which concerns Him. For He is the One who "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11), and "of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). God is infinite. Man is finite. His purpose and plan cannot be withheld or thwarted by the creatures of His own hands. This is the same as it was in the judgment on Assyria in Isaiah 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...For the Lord of hosts has planned and who can frustrate it? And as for His out stretched hand who can turn it back?'"

God never allows creation to act against His sovereign will. The Second Helvetic Confession (1566) says it as thus, "We believe that all things, both in heaven and in the earth and in all creatures, are sustained and governed by the providence of this wise, eternal, and omnipotent God". If God were to ever not act sovereignly in any instance in creation, He would then become a reactionary rather than the causal factor. He would not be doing as He pleased, but responding to what something forced His hand to respond to. God is not only sovereign over animals and inanimate objects, but He claims sovereignty over man as well! Let us concenter the following Scriptures:

Exodus 4:11 "The Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?'" **Deuteronomy 32:39** "See now that I, I am He, and there is no God besides Me; it is I who put to death and Give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from my hand." **Proverbs 16:9** "The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps." **Proverbs 19:21** "Many plans are in a man's heart, but the council of the Lord will stand" **Proverbs 21:1** "The kings heart is like channels of water in the hands of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes." **Lamentations 3:37** "Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?" **Daniel 4:35** "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"

When we refer to God as Sovereign, and controlling and ordaining all things, this is not the same as saying that God is actively and directly involved in all things. God, in all that is good, is necessarily directly involved; however, in things which are evil, God is not directly involved. God uses even the wicked to fulfill His purposes, while His hands remain clean. We see this with Pharaoh, the Amorites, and all the other pagan nations that God rose up to attack Israel. God is not equally involved in the outcome of evil as He is involved in the outcome of good. God is involved in deciding what will happen and how it will happen, but is not involved in its happening. God does ordain and is in control over evil, yet He does so in such a way that He remains impeccably Holy and beyond reproach. God is never directly responsible for sin. I say that because the first question raised by people concerning the Sovereignty of God is the existence of evil and sin. Let us develop this point.

The modern day theologian Dr. R. C. Sproul says it very well when he describes the omnipotence of God: "God holds all power over His creation. No part of creation stands outside the scope of His sovereign control." It is also in coherency with another theologian named John Piper who says, "It is not merely that God has the power and right to govern all things, but that He does so always and without exception". The truth is that God, "being infinite in power and man only finite, His purpose and plan cannot be withstood or thwarted by the creatures of His own hands"(Pink).

Many people in modern philosophical religious movements want to limit the sovereignty of God. Many want God to be sovereign, but only as a respecter of humans. They only want a God who can be sovereign and help them when they want help, but they do not want a God who determines every aspect of their lives.

"Forasmuch as some people imagine that they must look on God as a respecter of persons if they believe that without any respect had to the previous merits of men, He hath mercy on whom He will, and calls whom it is His pleasure to call, and makes good whom He pleases. The scrupulousness of such people arises from their not duly attending to this one thing, namely, that damnation is rendered to the wicked as a matter of debt, justice and desert, whereas the grace given to those who are delivered is free and unmerited, so that the condemned sinner cannot allege that he is unworthy of his punishment, nor the saint vaunt or boast as if he was worthy of his reward" (Augustine). This truth that God is in control of all things is amazing, yet terrifying to many.

Here is yet another example where God ordained something before it happened, that would shock most people who believe they served this God. Exodus 4:21-23, "The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My firstborn." So I said to you, 'Let My son go that he

may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn."'' Before Moses even went into Egypt to ask for the people of Israel to be released God had not only told him what would happen, but ordained it for His glory. This is also echoed by the Words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 9:18-23, "So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory"

I know for many that all that has been said is hard. Many of us have been or are currently going through tough times, the death of a loved one, financial crisis's, overwhelming burdens which I can hardly comprehend, however I tell you this, God is not standing back in shock of the things which take place in your life. God is not discouraged, ruined, horror stricken, nor overwhelmed at the catastrophes that may befall you. But I must tell you that if you are a Christian, that when the worst thing imaginable happens you should be content to say, "God is enough", no matter what may befall you I tell you it is for His glory. It is for the radiance of His beauty that these things take place. Sin is not catching God off guard. I'm not claiming to know why or to what extent all the things that happen will glorify God, but I do know from Scripture for certain that all things that happen will glorify God! They will glorify God either in the present, through good things, or the future, in the judgment of sin. But as many of us focus on our own hardships when God's sovereignty over all things is brought up, I would like to leave you with one thing. As I attempt to explain to you the most evil act in human history was meant for the Glory of God!

I would like to say that the Gospel of Christ has its foundation in God's sovereignty over all things, most certainly sin. God designed this world for the purpose of proclaiming His glory – To make a place for Jesus Christ to suffer and die for our sins. "The reason there is terror in the world, is so Christ could be terrorized, the reason there is trouble is so that Christ could be troubled, the reason there is pain in the world is so that Christ could feel pain. This is the world that God prepared for the suffering and death of His Son!" (Piper). Romans 5:8 shows it clearly, God planned for there to be sin so that Christ would be exalted in saving us. There is death in the world so that Christ would die. God ordained the death of His son before the foundation of the World. Rev. 13:8 says, "All who dwell on the earth will worship him (the beast), everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain." God for the purpose of displaying His glory ordained for His Son to be crushed, this is the height of all evil acts in human history, yet it was in the plan and pleasure of God Almighty. Isaiah 53:10 says, "But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief..." To display His love He planned to damn His Son on the behalf of sinners!! Not just on behalf of good men, but sinners and amongst all the sinners in the World God chose few to be beneficiaries of this great atrocity. This is how God shows His love. This is the foolishness of God that is despised by men 1 Cor. 1:18. So when we selfishly want to deny the Sovereignty of God in instances of tragedy we must think how much worse the alternative would be. God allowing evil without a redemptive purpose is the height of human ignorance. This is how God from eternity past, in His infinite wisdom, ordained no better way , than that He display His love through the death of His Son. If there is no sin, then there is no death. If there is no death, then we see no love.

Soli Deo Gloria,

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I pray you are encouraged by what you just read. If there is any way my wife and myself can be more of an encouragement for you, please feel free to contact us. If you have any questions regarding the letter or those to come, feel free to email me at the email address shown above. Gabrielle and I would like to pray for you, you can email us your prayer requests or write them in the space provided. Thank you for your support, through prayer and fellowship. This letter is now a part of your personal ministry, feel free to copy and spread it as much as you would need to, but please do not alter its content. If you know of

someone who would like to be added to this free tri annual letter send their address to my email. Thank you again, and may God be exalted as head above all things in your life!

- Yes, I would like to continue to receive your letter Studies in the Scriptures
- I would like to receive them electronically my email address is _____
- Yes, I would like Gabrielle and Yourself to pray for me, my prayer request is:

- I would like to help support your continued studies as you train at The Master's Seminary I give this gift, by the Grace of God and for His glory
- I, Promise to pray for Gabrielle and your studies at least ___ times a week
- I, would like to give this one time gift of _____
- I, would like to give _____ on a monthly basis