

## THEOLOGY PROPER (49)

This attribute of God's sovereignty is meaningful to us in several ways:

1. It should cause us to stand in awe of God and in a true fear of God.
2. It should cause us to want to obey and please God.
3. It should cause us to realize all things are controlled by His sovereignty.
4. It should cause us to praise and worship God, for He alone is deserving of praise and worship.
5. It should cause us to be totally humbled and amazed at our salvation.
6. It should enable us to Cope with any situation or hardship, knowing God is sovereign.

One question that has always come into play when it comes to the sovereignty of God is "**How does the sovereignty of God relate or connect to the of man?**" In a pure theological sense, the matter of man's will as it relates to God's sovereignty falls under the categories of Anthropology- the doctrine of man and Soteriology- the doctrine of salvation. It is under these doctrinal studies where the most in-depth analysis will take place. However, recognizing that good students of the Bible have questioning minds, it seems fitting to somewhat expose ourselves to key matters that pertain to the issue:

**Question #1-** What do we mean by the term "sovereignty of God?"

When we say "God is sovereign", we are saying **God is the supreme ruler over everything.** Arthur Pink said it well when he said: "The sovereignty of God. What do we mean by this expression? We mean the supremacy of God, the Kingship of God, the Godhead of God. To say God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the Most High, doing according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, so that none can stay His hand or say unto Him what doest Thou? (Dan.4:35) To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purpose, or resist His will (Ps. 1 '15:3) ...Such is the God of the Bible"(Arthur Pink, The Sovereignty of God, p.19)

**Question #2-** Does God reveal in the Bible that He is sovereign over all things and has all power to do whatever He wants, whenever He wants, including control man and rule over and over rule man's will?

If we are honest with the Bible, the answer must be an immediate and emphatic Yes! Without making any apologies, or even any lengthy explanations, God clearly reveals that He is the Sovereign God, who can and does do whatever He wants (i.e. Ps.103:19; Job 42:2; Prov.21:1; Rom.9:15-16; Dan.4:35\*).

**Question #3-** What do we mean by the phrase "Will of man"?

It is generally accepted that when we use the words "will of man" we are referring to one's ability to make a voluntary choice. A voluntary choice naturally presupposes the accepting of one thing and the refusing of another thing.

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**Question #4-** Does the Bible teach that man has a will?

If we are honest with the Bible, the answer again must be an immediate and emphatic Yes! From the earliest glimpse we get of man, in Genesis, there can be no question that God created man with a will (Gen.1:26). The responsibilities given by God to man, clearly indicates the existence of a will (Gen.1:28; 2:15-17)

**Question #5-** What is meant by the term "free-will of man"?

Two questions have always plagued serious students of the Bible when it comes to the matter of God's Sovereignty: 1) Is the will of man free to choose? 2) Is man accountable or responsible for his choices? "Free-will" in the absolute sense is sovereign will. In order to have a "free-will" in an absolute sense, one must be totally "free" from any influences or restrictions and have a will that is subject to no one. It is precisely at this issue that the matter of the "will of man" enters the arena of theology. As Dr. Chafer said: "The fact of the will is a psychological truth, while the freedom of the will is theological." (Vol.2, p.194)

Free will, in an absolute sense, would mean that man, according to his will, chooses to determine everything. It would mean that man, according to his will, is sovereign over everything and is not a servant of anything. Free will, in an absolute sense, would mean that man has absolute freedom to choose in every area of life, without any restrictive influences or promptings. The will would control the mind and not be controlled by the mind. The will would control passions and not be controlled by passions. The will of man would govern everything, including every choice. The will would be subject to nothing else, but be completely free. For example if one had a free will in an absolute sense, one be able to choose any job your heart desired. However, reality says this is not possible since many factors enter into the decision you make to take the job you have. Free will in a limited sense would mean man, according to his will, is free to act in accordance with his nature. Choices can be made, but the choices that will be made will be in accordance with one's nature,

For example, a deer has freedom to choose and act within the nature of a deer. When it comes to being free to choose a meal, a deer may choose from a variety of plants, shrubs, grasses and crops. A deer is free to make a choice. However, a deer will not make a choice to eat meat, because a deer's nature is not carnivorous. In fact, many a deer has starved to death with a dead deer lying right next to it. Had the deer had the nature to be a meat-eater, it could live simply by eating the dead deer. But a deer is not free to choose that which is beyond its nature and therefore, it will not eat meat. If somehow one could transplant the nature of a bear to that of a deer, the deer would eat meat. However, a deer will always be governed in its choice by the nature a deer. Is the deer free to choose its food? Yes. Is the deer free in the absolute sense in that it is free to choose anything, the answer is no! It is not free to choose that which is beyond its nature.

**Free will is the limited ability man has to choose and act in accordance with his nature. Free will is limited, not absolute.**