

- I. Session 25: The Sovereignty of God Part 1: Definitions, its status as an attribute of God, Method in Proving it and the efficacy of God's Control
- a. Purpose: As an introduction to God's sovereignty we shall consider some definitions of God's sovereignty, whether it is an attribute of God, discuss the theological method we shall pursue in proving the sovereignty of God and look biblically at the efficacy of God's Control
 - b. Definition of the sovereignty of God
 - i. Before we give definitions, A.W Pink lamented in the early part of the Twentieth Century this fact: "But, today, to make mention of God's Sovereignty is, in many quarters, to speak in an unknown tongue. Were we to announce from the average pulpit that the subject of our discourse would be the Sovereignty of God, it would sound very much as though we had borrowed a phrase from one of the dead languages."¹
 - ii. Wayne Grudem's definition: "God's sovereignty is his exercise of his rule as 'sovereign' or 'king' over his creation."²
 - iii. Bruce Ware's definition: "God plans and carries out his perfect will, as he alone knows is best, over all that is in heaven and earth, and he does so without failure or defeat. So sovereignty is really a statement about God's control over all that is, his ruling over all that is, and his planning and executing of that plan. He plans and he carries out a perfect will."³
 - iv. A.W. Pink's definition: "We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the god-hood of God. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that God is God. To say that 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 the 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 (Psa. 115:3). To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is "The Governor among the nations" (Psa. 22:28), setting up kingdoms, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as pleaseth Him best. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the "Only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15)."⁴
 - v. Simply put, God's sovereignty is His self-control and His control over all things.
 - c. Is God's Sovereignty an attribute of God?
 - i. There are some theologians who does not think the sovereignty of God is an attribute.

¹ Arthur Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, 2013), Location 234 of 3884.

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 217.

³ Source: <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/sovereignty-god-i/systematic-theology-i/bruce-ware>.

⁴ Arthur Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Pensacola, FL: Chapel Library, 2013), Location 239-244 of 3884.

1. For instance the famous Old Princeton theologian Charles Hodge once wrote, “Sovereignty is not a property of the divine nature, but a prerogative arising out of the perfections of the Supreme Being.”⁵
2. Bruce Ware: “I am including sovereignty here as an attribute, although I am really not convinced that it is an attribute per se. It is almost always discussed within the section on attributes of God in a theology text, and I’ve included it for that reason. But when you think about it sovereignty is not so much an attribute as it is the expression of attributes for a particular function. It is really a functional idea. Sovereignty is rulership, reigning, controlling, governing. So it brings together a whole collection of attributes in order for God to be the Sovereign, the Ruler over all. He has to be omnipotent. He has to have wisdom and knowledge. He has to have moral goodness. All of these things come to bear and focus on sovereignty as the God whose character is good, wise, powerful, holy. All of those things come to bear then in his ruling, leading, and governing over all that is.”⁶

ii. Response:

1. Contra Hodge: Just because God’s sovereignty “arises out of the perfections of the Supreme Being” doesn’t make it less of an attribute of God.
 As an example of the point above, the perfection of God is often seen as an attribute of God yet His Perfection arises out of the sum whole of the attributes of God (His attributes all come together “perfectly”).
2. Contra Ware: It is true God’s sovereignty “brings together a whole collection of attributes” such as “good, wise, powerful, holy.” But mere interdependence of God’s attributes does not make them not an attribute of God.
 - a. Take again the example of God’s attribute of being perfect. For God’s attribute to be perfect He must be good; and vice versa, for Him to be a good God He must be perfect.
 - b. Recall last week how the attribute of God’s grace, goodness and faithfulness are shaped by God’s asiety and yet they still remain attributes of God.
3. Conra Ware: It is not true that God’s sovereignty are only “functional” (that is, it only describes what God does). God’s sovereignty also describes and shapes the attributes of God.

⁵ Source: From Charles Hodge’s classic *Theology Proper*, quoted from <http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/theologyproper.html#n15>.

⁶ Source: <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/sovereignty-god-i/systematic-theology-i/bruce-ware>.

- a. For example, God’s omnipotence is sovereign in that no one else controls His power. That is, in order for God to be truly omnipotent He needs to be sovereign in His power.
 - b. Another example: God’s attribute of love is sovereign in that He is in controls His own love.
 - c. Another example: God’s attribute of goodness is sovereign in that He is not ruled over by someone else who tells him how to be good.
- d. Methodology in Proving God’s goodness
 - i. Since God’s sovereignty is logically dependent upon His attributes of His asiety, goodness, wisdom, omnipotence and holiness, if these doctrines are true than it establishes the sovereignty of God.
 - ii. However, we don’t have to prove from Scripture all these attributes are true before we reach the verdict that God is sovereign.
 - iii. We can demonstrate the sovereignty of God by Scriptural proof of the efficacy of God’s control and the universal scope of His control.⁷
 - iv. For the remainder of the lesson we will only have time to look at the efficacy of God’s control by demonstrating that God will fulfill His plan.
- e. The efficacy of God’s control
 - i. Definition: The efficacy of God’s control “is simply to say that it always accomplishes its purpose.”⁸
 - ii. Biblical Teaching
 - 1. Nothing is too difficult for the Lord: “*Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?*” (Jeremiah 32:27)
 - 2. “*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’;*” (Isaiah 46:10)
 - a. Notice God’s purpose “*will be established*”
 - b. Note also how “*all My good pleasure*” will be accomplished, specifically “*I will accomplish,*” that is, God Himself will accomplish it.
 - 3. If God’s control is efficacious we would expect the Psalms to teach that God’s plan will be fulfilled since Psalms often reveals the attributes of God in the context of worshipping Him. This is what we find in Psalm 33:11, Psalm 115:3, Psalm 135:6 are further verses that teaches this.
 - 4. God’s control is so great no one can reverse it
 - a. “*All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of*

⁷ John Frame, *Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ:Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002), 47.

⁸ Ibid.

heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can [a]ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" (Daniel 4:35)

b. *"Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?" (Isaiah 43:13)*

iii. How do we know the Bible is true with its teaching of the efficacy of God's control? Prophecies of Scripture and the fulfillment of the prophecies are the greatest proof that His efficacy of His control is true in History