

The Sovereignty of God

Part 2: God's Dominion - In Creation

God's sovereignty is expressed in His creative works. His power brought everything into being, His wisdom designed all the intricate details of the universe, and His beauty is reflected in all that we see. All the creative works of God exist in perfect balance. This is truly amazing!

Psalm 19:1-6: ¹The heavens are **telling** of the glory of God; And their expanse is **declaring** the work of His hands. ²Day to day **pours forth speech**, And night to night **reveals knowledge**. ³There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. ⁴Their line has gone out through all the earth, And **their utterances to the end of the world**. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, ⁵Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. ⁶Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

The sovereignty of God in creation can be seen in many ways. When God made the world out of nothing, **He created by His own pleasure and will**. He made the heavens and the earth in all of their glorious array exactly the way He wanted. Consider the following quote from **AW Pink**: *"In the great expanse of eternity, which stretches behind Genesis 1:1, the universe was unborn and creation existed only in the mind of the great Creator. In His sovereign majesty God dwelt all alone. We refer to that far distant period before the heavens and the earth were created. There were then no angels to hymn God's praises, no creatures to occupy His notice, no rebels to be brought into subjection. The great God was all alone amid the awful silence of His own vast universe. But even at that time, if time it could be called, God was sovereign. He might create or not create according to His own good pleasure. He might create this way or that way; He might create one world or one million worlds, and who was there to resist His will? He might call into existence a million different creatures and place them on absolute equality, endowing them with the same faculties and placing them in the same environment; or, He might create a million creatures each differing from the others, and possessing nothing in common save their creaturehood, and who was there to challenge His right? . . . Behold then the exercise of Divine sovereignty long before man ever saw the light. With whom took God counsel in the creation and disposition of His creatures. See the birds as they fly through the air, the beasts as they roam the earth, the fishes as they swim in the sea, and then ask, Who was it that made them to differ? Was it not their Creator who sovereignly assigned their various locations and adaptations to them!"*⁶

Everything God did in creation, He did alone. There was no one to consult regarding its vast design.

Isaiah 44:24: Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, **"I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself, And spreading out the earth all alone,"**

Consider how God has made everything so distinctive, and yet He holds it all in perfect balance! His sovereignty is expressed in every aspect of His creation. Consider **"outer space,"** for example.

1 Corinthians 15:40-41: ⁴⁰There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. ⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; **for star differs from star in glory.**

Or the earth:

⁶ Arthur. W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1930), 28-29.

Proverbs 8:28-29: ²⁸When He made firm the skies above, When the springs of the deep became fixed, ²⁹When **He set for the sea its boundary, So that the water should not transgress His command**, When He marked out the foundations of the earth;

God is the one who endows His creatures with various powers as He see fit. Consider the germ or the ant, the elephant or the whale, or even mankind and angels. With what power, wisdom and beauty God has fitted His creatures with various powers and freedoms!

Genesis 1:20-23: ²⁰Then God said, “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.” ²¹And **God created the great sea monsters, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind**; and God saw that it was good. ²²And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

When God placed man upon the earth, He did it sovereignly – *as He saw fit*. He determined the exact places where the nations would dwell and the specific times they would occupy in the annals of history.

Acts 17:24-26: ²⁴The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; ²⁶**and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation,**

With what **goodness** God has made His creation! He has graced the earth with birds and bees, flowers and the trees! And what about our bodies? They are perfectly paired with our creative minds, enabling us to do what we will. How delightful to contemplate the rich flavors of our favorite meal or to simply appreciate plain old vittles to fill our hungry bellies. How we enjoy the tingling rush of a hot fire on a cold winter’s night or the sweet butterfly kisses of a precious young daughter! **Oh the magnificence of the goodness of God!** How many large volumes would it take to describe the riches of His kindness to us? We could spend a lifetime considering the loveliness of God’s creation – but **how much more lovely is the One** from whom it all flows! How vast is the sum of His goodness? How shall we respond to the sovereign majesty and goodness of God? With simple gratitude and a heart of thanksgiving shall we acknowledge His wonderful goodness to us!

1 Timothy 4:4-5: ⁴**For everything created by God is good**, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; ⁵for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

God does everything with specific intention and intricate detail. The **Scripture plainly declares** that when God’s purpose for the first creation is fulfilled, He will destroy it and create another. He clearly exercises supreme authority over what He has made. Does not the potter have a right over the clay?

Hebrews 1:10-12: ¹⁰And, “Thou, LORD, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the works of Thy hands; ¹¹**They will perish**, but Thou remainest; And **they all will become old as a garment**, ¹²**And as a mantle Thou wilt roll them up; As a garment they will also be changed**. But Thou art the same, And Thy years will not come to an end.”

Isaiah 51:6: “Lift up your eyes to the sky, Then look to the earth beneath; **For the sky will vanish like smoke, And the earth will wear out like a garment**, And its inhabitants will die in like manner, But My salvation shall be forever, And My righteousness shall not wane.

God creates and destroys and does as He sees fit in the heavens and the earth. Everything that exists was created by God's own will and for His own pleasure.

Revelation 4:11: "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; **for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.**"

He is the Creator, the Owner, the Governor of all, and none shall say to Him "What hast Thou done?" No one can question His actions or purposes or resists His will successfully.

Daniel 4:34b-35: ³⁴For **His dominion is an everlasting dominion**, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. ³⁵And 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 hast Thou done?'

Another quote from **A.W. Pink**: "*Learn then this basic truth, that the Creator is absolute Sovereign, executing His own will, performing His own pleasure, and considering nought but His own glory. "The Lord hath made all things FOR HIMSELF" (Prov. 16:4). And had He not a perfect right to? Since God is God, who dare challenge His prerogative? To murmur against Him is rank rebellion. To question His ways is to impugn His wisdom. To criticize Him is sin of the deepest dye. Have we forgotten who He is? Behold, "All nations before Him as are nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God?" (Isaiah 40:17, 18).*

Question #21: How do the following Scripture passages *specifically* testify of God's sovereignty in creation:

Psalms 19:1-6: _____

Isaiah 44:24: _____

1 Corinthians 15:40-41: _____

Proverbs 8:28-29: _____

Genesis 1:20-23: _____

Acts 17:24-27: _____

Question #22: How are you *personally* touched by God's goodness as you consider His creation? _____

⁷ Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1930), 31.

Question #23: How do Hebrews 1:10-12, Isaiah 51:6, Revelation 4:11, and Daniel 4:34-35 reflect God's sovereign right to exercise supreme authority over what He has made? _____

Question #24: Carefully reread the two quotes by A. W. Pink in this section. In what ways do his words deepen your awe and reverence of God? _____

In what ways do his words convict you of sinful attitudes or behavior? _____

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Part 2: God's Dominion - In Providence

The Providence Of God Defined

Although the doctrine of God's providence is one of the great mysteries of the Bible, it is found on almost every page of Scripture. It is, in fact, constantly assumed and implied by the biblical writers. So what does "God's providence" mean, and how is it described in the Bible? **Wayne Grudem** provides an excellent definition in his textbook entitled, *Systematic Theology*:

*"God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) **Preservation** - keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) **Concurrence** - cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) **Government** - directs them to fulfill his purposes."*⁸

This is a profound statement we should consider carefully. Let's begin by looking at the biblical evidence for each of its parts (which he has called *preservation*, *concurrence*, and *government*.)

Question #25: Look up the words *preservation*, *concurrence*, and *government* in an English dictionary and write them out:

Preservation:⁹ _____

Concurrence: _____

Government: _____

Question #26: Do the definitions of these words help you understand any parts of Grudem's definition? If so, explain. _____

Preservation: *God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them.* God's providence includes His continual involvement with all created things. God has not left the world to spin of its own power but is constantly maintaining its activity by His own hand.

Hebrews 1:1-3: God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ²in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He

⁸Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 315.

⁹ *The Oxford American Dictionary and Thesaurus* (2003) lists the following synonymns for preservation: upkeep, maintenance, care, conservation, retention, perpetuation, continuation, safekeeping, safeguarding, protection

appointed heir of all things, **through whom also He made the world.** ³And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and **upholds all things by the word of His power.**

Here the Scripture says of God that He “upholds all things.” Could there be a clearer statement of His “continual involvement?” Consider Colossians 1:17.

Colossians 1:16-17: ¹⁶For by Him all things were created, **both in the heavens and on earth**, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—**all things have been created by Him and for Him.** ¹⁷And He is before all things, and **in Him all things hold together.**

These Scriptures, understood in their immediate context, affirm that God is not merely holding the planets in orbit, but that He also created and preserves people and angels.

Acts 17:28: for in Him we live and move and exist,

Job 34:14-15: ¹⁴If He should determine to do so, **If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath,** ¹⁵**All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust.**

When we think about God’s providence over His world, we should think of it as *continual involvement*. God is separate and distinct from His creation, yet He is governing it by His mighty power. God does not simply intervene occasionally in the events of history when He thinks it is appropriate. He is the glue that holds it all together and the motor that keep it all moving. Without His constant work, the universe would disintegrate. God is not the creation (as is taught by Pantheism), nor has God abandoned His creation to run by itself (as is taught by Deism). Rather, as Wayne Grudem rightly teaches from Scripture, God “*keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them.*”¹⁰

Question #27: Reread the Scripture passages quoted above. What specific words or phrases describe God’s continual involvement with His creation in ways that *preserve* it? _____

Question #28: In what specific ways does knowledge of this aspect of God’s sovereignty encourage and comfort you? _____

Concurrence: *God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he . . . (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do.* Here we see that although God is separate and distinct from everything He has made, He *oversees* everything He has made in a directive way. In theological terms, this is called **concurrence**. When we use this term, we are referring to God’s ultimate control over *nature* and *history*. This idea is supported by the testimony of Scripture.

God’s Control of Nature

When we speak of God’s control of nature, we are referring to His control of planetary movements, weather patterns, animals, people, angels, and demons – in other words, everything

¹⁰ Grudem, 315.