

THE DISCERNER



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Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.

Ephesians 5:6-12 (NAS)

A Succinct Look at the Sovereignty of God

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INTRODUCTION

In a supposed attempt to discern the things of God there are those who have chosen to venture beyond the realm of divine revelation. Led by their own sinful flesh, the devil, and his cohorts they believe that there is something else. Something greater and more vast than Scripture itself by which they might find some divine illumination. But there is no other! Those who claim such have done no more than merely explore the depths of their own dark and sinful minds. Captivated with the discovery of their own sinful flesh, they formulate from its folly a shade. Then, under the impression that it enhances their understanding of God they use the shade to cover the lamp of God's Word. From this point forward they view God and His Word concerning Himself through the shade of man. Their knowledge of God then becomes such that they think He is altogether such a one as themselves.

Unfortunately, it has for far too long been the habit of many within evangelical circles to study the doctrine of the sovereignty of God through the shade of humanity. It is my prayer, if the Lord wills, that this issue of *The Discerner* might be used as a means whereby the conscious mind of the Believer is somehow alerted to the danger of the human doctrines used to shade the divine doctrine of the sovereignty of God. As will be evident through reading and upon the completion of this issue there are many questions yet to be addressed regarding this vast doctrine. However, the Lord willing, I hope to address many of them in future issues.

Such a doctrine as the sovereignty of God cannot be reduced to a three-point message lasting fifteen or twenty-minutes. It cannot even be comprehended in a daily five or ten-minute devotional. No. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is a doctrine that immediately flings to the foot of the throne of God those who would dare to truly know it as it is declared in the pages of Scripture, and it holds them captive there until they cry for His mercy. Only there and then do the precious truths of His might begin to fill the mind. As knowledge of His dominion slays the impotent imposters--chance and fate along with their various teachings, the Christian relishes with joy, the victory of a renewed mind. A mind once held captive by the things of earth, now captivated by Christ, as it is set on things above where Christ Himself is seated at the right hand of God. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is a doctrine that once truly grasped, can never be released, for it is not the Believer that holds the

doctrine, but it is the doctrine that holds the Believer. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is a doctrine that permeates every area of the Believer's life for it is a truth of the person of God that permeates all of His attributes, attributes which are the foundation of the Believer's trust. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is a vast doctrine for it encompasses all the works of God. May we believers not limit it to merely our salvation, but see it in its fullest expanse--God ruling His creation as He brings it to the feet of Christ, to the praise of His glory!

Therefore, and until then might we as did David pray:

“Make me know Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation; for Thee I wait all the day.”¹

...

"LORD, make me to know my end, and what is the extent of my days, let me know how transient I am. Behold, Thou hast made my days as handbreadths, and my lifetime as nothing in Thy sight, surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah. 'Surely every man walks about as a phantom; surely they make an uproar for nothing; He amasses riches, and does not know who will gather them.' 'And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in Thee.'"²

God Is Sovereign

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time-- He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen. 1 Timothy 6:13-16

The Greek word translated by the NAS version, as *Sovereign* is *Dunastes*. The basic meaning of this word is "power." In the sense that it is used of God it means "absolute power." It expresses His absolute right to do with His creation what ever pleases Him (Psalm 115:3; 135:6). There is nothing that is not subject to the power of God. There is nothing that happens apart from His divine will.

*"Thine, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O LORD, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all. "Both riches and honor {come} from Thee, and Thou dost rule over all, and in Thy hand is power and might; and it lies in Thy hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone.
1 Chronicles 29:11-12*

God's power is intrinsic. It is not derived from anything or anyone. God's power is constant. It does not change in quality, or in quantity. Essentially, God is absolutely sovereign by the virtue of His very nature.

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM..."
Exodus 3:14 (KJV)

"For I am the LORD, I change not..." Malachi 3:6
(KJV)

As the "**only** Sovereign" there is no one else like God in power. This only makes sense, doesn't it? The idea that there exists someone or something else that is equivalent to God and His sovereignty negates both. By the very definition of the terms *God* and *sovereign* there can be but one in the absolute sense!¹ The word translated *sovereign* is used elsewhere in the Bible to speak of men (Luke 1:52 and Acts 8:27). Although, the sovereignty mentioned in these cases pertains to a delegated and therefore limited authority. Luke 1:52 shows that even God brings these earthly rulers (*dunastes*) down from their thrones. That they can be brought down reveals that their sovereignty was and/or is not intrinsic, but delegated. God temporally exalts men to accomplish His purpose and then removes them from power. Because His sovereignty is absolute He rules in the kingdom of men (Daniel 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21). Paul further indicates this in the 1 Timothy reference with the phrases "King of kings" and "Lord of lords." Ultimately, as 1 Timothy 6:15 reveals, only God is sovereign in the absolute sense.

The Bible's use of such phrases which describe God as "**Most High**," "**great King**," "**LORD of hosts**," "**Almighty**" declares the absolute sovereignty of God!

*Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "**I am God Almighty**; walk before me, and be blameless." Genesis 17:1*

*For the **LORD Most High** is to be feared, a **great King** over all the earth. Psalm 47:2*

*That they may know that Thou alone, whose name is the **LORD**, **art the Most High** over all the earth. Psalm 83:18*

*"As I live," declares the **King** whose name is the LORD of hosts, "Surely one shall come {who looms up} like Tabor among the mountains, or like Carmel by the sea. Jeremiah 46:18*

*"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the **Almighty**." Revelation 1:8*

*"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because **He is Lord of lords and King of kings**, and those who are with Him {are the} called and chosen and faithful." Revelation 17:14*

*And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! **For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.**" Revelation 19:6*

*And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "**KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.**" Revelation 19:16*

*And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, **the Almighty**, and the Lamb, are its temple. Revelation 21:22*

Scripture declares that God is sovereign² in His **person, power, and independence.**

The superiority of His sovereignty in His Person! (He has no equal)

To whom then will you liken me that I should be {his} equal? says the Holy One.

Isaiah 40:25

In Exodus 9:14 we learn the answer to the question posed in Isaiah 40:25. Exodus tells us that there is no one like God in all the earth.

The superiority of His sovereignty in His Power! (He is the Almighty)

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and marked off the heavens by the span, and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, and weighed the mountains in a balance, and the hills in a pair of scales?

Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.

Isaiah 40:12, 15

The superiority of His sovereignty in His Independence! (He is not controlled by anyone, nor does He react to anyone or anything. He is never informed by anyone or anything.)

Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge, and informed Him of the way of understanding?

Isaiah 40:13-14

These things being true of God there is nothing in all creation (time, space, and matter) that is outside of the sovereign rule of God. The scope of God's sovereignty is absolute. He rules righteously over time space and matter.

✓ **God appoints the times:**

Genesis 1:5,8,13,19,23,31; 2:2; Job 14:5; Psalm 31:15; Daniel 11:27, 35; Matthew 26:2; Mark 14:1-2

✓ **God sets the Boundaries:**

Deuteronomy 32:8; Job 38:8-15; Psalm 33:7-9; 104:2-9; Proverbs 8:27-29

✓ **God controls Matter:**

Genesis 1:1; Psalm 104:10-24; 107:32-43; 147:8-9; Ezekiel 47:6-12; Matthew 21:19

Acts 17:24-26

"The 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; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; 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..."

Three Heretical Views

One of the most difficult aspects of understanding the sovereignty of God is that of dealing with the presence of evil. How did evil come to be in a good God's world? Unless one understands evil as existing by the decree of God he or she is left with a conclusion that is equally as heretical and devastating as is the apostate idea that God Himself is evil. In this chapter we will examine the results of three heretical views that reject the Biblical truth of God's decree of evil:

- God did not know about evil.
- God could not prevent evil.
- God permitted evil.

First Heretical View— God did not know about evil

If God did not decree the existence of evil, then a possible response to the presence of evil is that He did not know about evil and its coming. This would logically lead to another conclusion-- that God is not omniscient (all-knowing). The logic of this view is simple--God did not decree evil's presence, but evil is obviously present. He therefore did not know about evil. Hence, God is not all-knowing. While it may be simple, it is wrong. To say that it is wrong is really not enough. It is heresy! For it clearly contradicts the truth of the revelation of Scripture regarding the nature of God. God is all-knowing. Consider the divine revelation regarding God's knowledge.

"Great is our Lord, and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite." Psalm 147:5

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable." Isaiah 40:28

... "in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." 1 John 3:20

If God is not all-knowing then Scripture is untrue. For in these verses as well as many others it is obvious that there is nothing hidden from the

knowledge of God. Furthermore, if God is not all knowing and therefore did not know about evil then to some extent He must have been surprised upon the discovery of its presence. If this were true then the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are merely afterthoughts of God whereby He only attempts to overcome evil.

Consequently the view which maintains God did not know about evil and its arrival is un-Scriptural on the basis that it denies the omniscience (all-knowing) of God.

Second Heretical View—God could not prevent evil

Another possibility is that God did not decree evil; however, He was fully aware of its coming, but could do nothing to prevent its arrival. This position maintains God's omniscience (all-knowing) but ignores His omnipotence (all-powerful). This too is heretical for the truth of Scripture is that God is all-powerful.

In Genesis 17:1 God introduced Himself to Abram as Almighty. "God Almighty" is the translation of the Hebrew "El-Shaday." The name "Almighty" is used over 40 times in the Old Testament to reference God.

"Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless."

Genesis 18:14

"Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."

1 Chronicles 29:11-12

"Thine, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O LORD, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all. Both riches and honor {come} from Thee, and Thou dost rule over all, and in Thy hand is power and might; and it lies in Thy hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone."

2 Chronicles 20:6

"...and he said, "O LORD, the God of our fathers, art Thou not God in the heavens? And art Thou not ruler over all the

kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Thy hand so that no one can stand against Thee."

Job 42:2

I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted.

Matthew 19:26

And looking upon {them} Jesus said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Luke 1:37

"For nothing will be impossible with God."

Revelation 19:6

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns."

Revelation 21:22

And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple.

Similar to the previous view this position also denies an essential aspect of God's being, His omnipotence. For this reason it too is opposed to Scripture and therefore untrue.

Third Heretical View— God permitted evil

Having, on the basis of Scripture, established that the two previous views are heretical, for God is neither limited in His knowledge nor His power, let us now consider a third view. A view that I believe illustrates the thinking of most of the evangelicals of our day.

God did not decree evil, although He knew of it and could have prevented it, but did not. Thus He permitted it and devised a plan to overcome it.

On the surface this view appears to be acceptable. It seems to acknowledge both God's omniscience (all-knowing) and His omnipotence (all-powerful). Possibly, the intention of this third view is to explain the presence of evil, while at the same time demonstrate the

idea that God has nothing to do with evil. However, it is here that this view, because it is based on a false assumption, begins to break down. The assumption in this case is that God has absolutely nothing to do with evil. This actually sounds good, and if the assumption only meant that God was not evil or could not Himself do evil, it would be more palatable. However it implies more than this, creating the impression that God has no dealings at all with evil especially not in the sense of decreeing it. That evil is something that happens outside of God's decree. That evil is a force or entity that God must grapple with in His omnipotence and eventually subdue.

An additional fallacy of the view that God knew about evil and had power over it but did not decree evil is that God's sovereignty and His omniscience and omnipotence are separate from each other. While we can distinguish between God's sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipotence we should never separate them. They are all wrapped up together and essential to one another in the person of God. Writing on the subject of the omniscience of God, R.C. Sproul states the following:

"God's omniscience also grows out of His omnipotence. God is not all-knowing simply because He has applied His superior intellect to a sober study of the universe and all its contents. Rather, God knows all because He created all and He has willed all. As sovereign Ruler over the universe, God controls the universe. Though some theologians have tried to separate the two, it is impossible for God to know all without controlling all, and it is impossible for Him to control all without knowing all. Like all attributes of God, they are codependent, two necessary parts of the whole."¹

By denying that God decreed evil and its arrival God's sovereignty is denied. Evil then becomes something that originated outside of God's initial plan. This view, like the two previous views, also puts God in a reactionary role when it comes to evil.

Denying that God decreed evil is a denial of God's sovereignty for the denial:

- Establishes evil as occurring outside of the decreed plan and purpose of God. This is a form of dualism which maintains that two forces—good and evil co-exist eternally.

- Exalts Satan (the initial source of evil) and his use of evil men to an un-Biblical position of having an ability to thwart² the decreed plan and purpose of God.
- Renders the divine actions of God as mere reactions.

Ultimately, when one negates the absolute sovereignty of God he or she also negates personal comfort and confidence drawn from the fact of God's omniscience and omnipotence. For in the negation of God's sovereignty a shadow is cast on God's power and knowledge. Likewise, when His omnipotence and omniscience are negated a shadow is cast on His sovereignty. He is then essentially reduced to the level of finite man, reacting to whatever is over the next hill or around the next corner whether He is aware of it or not and allows the next encounter or not.

Denial of the absolute sovereignty of God in any form is heretical, for it contradicts the clear declarations of Scripture concerning the nature and being of God. Therefore this third view is as heretical as the two previous views.

Decree Defined

"The decrees of God are his eternal, unchangeable, holy, wise, and sovereign purpose, comprehending at once all things that ever were or will be in their causes, conditions, successions, and relations, and determining their certain futurity. The several contents of this one eternal purpose are, because of the limitation of our faculties, necessarily conceived of by us in partial aspects, and in logical relations, and are therefore styled Decrees." The decree being the act of an infinite, absolute, eternal, unchangeable, and sovereign Person, comprehending a plan including all his works of all kinds, great and small, from the beginning of creation to an unending eternity; ends as well as means, causes as well as effects, conditions and instrumentalities as well as the events which depend upon them, must be incomprehensible by the finite intellect of man. The decrees are eternal...unchangeable...and comprehend all things that come to pass. The decrees of God are:

- (1.) efficacious, as they respect those events he has determined to bring about by his own immediate agency; or*
- (2.) permissive, as they respect those events he has determined that free agents shall be permitted by him to effect."*
(EASTON'S BIBLE DICTIONARY, M. G. EASTON)

While I've used Easton's definition of decree, I was hesitant for the reason of his use of the words "free agents," "permissive" and "permitted." However, the initial paragraph is clear and accurate. I included the entire definition so as not to be accused of being guilty of misquoting an author by changing the context. If by the use of these terms it is meant that man is an autonomous agent then the definition of decree as given here is violated, for an autonomous creation negates a Sovereign Creator. "Through secondary means" is an alternate phrase, that if included at the end of the first point does no injustice to the definition. Thus, rendering the second point needless. Regarding Easton's use of the words "permissive" and "permitted" I will refer to John Calvin's, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 1, Chapter 18.

"Hence a distinction has been invented between doing and permitting because to many it seemed altogether inexplicable how Satan and all the wicked are so under the hand and authority of God, that he [God] directs their malice to whatever end he pleases, and employs their iniquities to execute his judgements. The modesty of those who are thus alarmed at the appearance of absurdity might perhaps be excused, did they not endeavor to vindicate the justice of God from every semblance of stigma by defending an untruth. It seems absurd that man should be blinded by the will and command of God, and yet be forthwith punished for his blindness. Hence, recourse is had to the evasion that this is done only by the permission, and not also by the will of God. He himself, however, openly declaring that he does this, repudiates the evasion. That men do nothing save at the secret instigation of God, and do not discuss and deliberate on any thing but what he has previously decreed with himself and brings to pass by his secret direction, is proved by numberless clear passages of Scripture."

This single word, "decree" embodies several words and phrases of Scripture that pertain to the sovereignty of God--"ordained," "God causes," "predetermined plan," "purpose," "predestined," "who [God] works all things after the counsel of His will," "beforehand ordained," "determined," "execute," "appointed," etc. In essence, all of the recorded prophecies of Scripture are revelations of God's decree and/or decrees.

The use in Scripture of the English word "decree" (See various translations) at times encompasses both good and evil as they pertain to the conditions of that which is decreed (Job 23:14; Isaiah 10:22-23; Daniel 11:36). However, God is never in any way tainted by sin, but remains absolutely Holy, while men are held responsible and judged for their sin.

God's Decree and Use of Evil

In the evangelical circles of our day about the only time we hear the word *decree* mentioned is during Christmas when the story of the birth of Jesus is read.

"Now it came about in those days that a **decree** went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth." Luke 2:1

It is quite interesting that Luke begins his narrative of the life of Jesus by referencing the decree of the Roman ruler Gaius Octavian (Caesar Augustus). Obviously, the citing of such a decree served Luke's purpose as stated in 1:1-3. In particular, a reference point in time for the birth of Christ.

Not only is the citing of such a decree interesting in the sense of being informative from the perspective of time, but it is also interesting from the perspective of means. As indicated in the book of Daniel, God rules in the kingdom of man. Little did Octavian know that his law, ordering a census would be a means by which God would bring Mary to the city of Bethlehem where she would give birth to Jesus, thus fulfilling the 700 year old prophecy of Micah 5:2:

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, {too} little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."

The Decree Issued

We understand and readily accept the fact that an emperor such as Octavian can issue a decree for a certain purpose, and through his means have those who are subject to him carry it out accordingly. Certainly then it is no big thing for God, the creator of Octavian to issue a decree for His own purpose, and have those who are

subject to Him (both the evil and the righteous) accomplish it according to His will (Psalm 2:7; Proverbs 8:15). As a matter of fact this is exactly what we see in the issuing of the decree by Augustus. God was working Augustus along with Joseph, Mary, shepherds, angels, time, and a multitude of other factors after the counsel of His will. This He did to fulfill that which He had previously decreed in Micah 5:2 regarding the birthplace of the Messiah.

The thought that God predestines all events good and evil should not be a surprise to Believers. The Bible clearly tells us that God, "...causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the labor of man, so that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine which makes man's heart glad, so that he may make his face glisten with oil, and food which sustains man's heart."¹ Now certainly these things compared to the birth of Christ are minor. If He controls the grass to feed the cattle, and vegetation to sustain the physical needs of man, certainly He would not leave the birthplace of His Son to chance! Certainly not. He used those He raised up to demonstrate His power in them that His name might be proclaimed throughout the whole Earth.

Now consider the death of Jesus. Was it not God who fed and provided for those godless men who would one day place His Son on the cross? Did He do this not knowing what would befall His own Son at their hands? Was it a long series of coincidental events that brought these men all the way from conception to the cross of Christ? Not when one reads Acts 2:22-23 and 4:26-28. Any accurate study of the probability of prophecy being fulfilled by chance and random process will reveal that God does not (as some believe) merely use random events as they come available to fulfill His purpose. On the contrary, as the blessed and only Sovereign He controls all things (good and evil) that occur, to the extent that He decreed them, and this He does down to the smallest molecule, to His own end, which ultimately is to His glory alone.

"...also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory."
Ephesians 1:11-12

Pertaining to details, in a similar vein, Jay Adams asks, "Why should the death of Christ be preordained, but not the purchase of nails, hammers and other means of bringing it to pass?"²

The Decree's Extent

Thus we see that the extent of God's decree is not limited to only righteous things. If He is absolutely sovereign and He is, then the extent of His decree must reach beyond the righteous things. Notice that Ephesians 1:11 says that God, "works **all things** after the counsel of His will... "It does not say He works a few things, most things, or even many things after the counsel of His will, but "all things." Nor does it say that He probably works all things after the counsel of His will. God has decreed both good and evil.

Examine the writings of others as they describe God's decree, and/or acknowledge His sovereignty by seeing the extent of His decree to include both good and evil:

"Stressing the sovereignty of God, the decree (all aspects of God's plan named as a unity) or decrees (all aspects of God's plan named as a plurality) of God states that God, apart from any decision of man, has planned and appointed everything that happens."³

"God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass..."

The Westminster Confession Of Faith (1646), 3.1

"...pre-destination includes the salvation of the elect and also all other acts and events in the universe, both good and evil (Acts 4:27-28, Gk.)."⁴

C.I. Scofield

"Our lives are not the haphazard result of the moving of blind chance. All that comes to pass in our lives is according to the eternal plan of the all-wise, all-powerful and all-loving Father."⁵

Donald Grey Barnhouse

"Plainly it was God's *will* that sin *should* enter this world, otherwise it *would not* have entered, for nothing happens save as God has eternally decreed."⁶

A.W. Pink

"He [God] is not responsible for sin, though He decreed it."⁷

Jay Adams

Since God is absolutely sovereign and nothing can happen apart from His decree, it stands to reason that since evil is present then He must have decreed it. If not, then God is not absolutely sovereign and this would be a clear contradiction of Scripture which states that only God is sovereign (1 Timothy 1:16). As mentioned in the previous chapter, if God is not sovereign in the absolute sense, then He ceases to be God.

That God decreed evil is often rejected on the premise that in so doing God would have to be evil or would become evil. However, when we consider God's holiness and His inability to sin as taught in Scripture we see that: **God is holy** (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8), **righteous** (Psalm 7:11; 2 Timothy 4:8), and **good** (Luke 18:19). That **God cannot sin** (commit evil) and **cannot even be tempted to sin. Nor does He tempt anyone to sin** (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 145:17; James 1:13). While these verses and many others in the Bible teach us about God's nature and ways, they do not teach us that God has nothing to do with sin or evil. As a matter of fact Scripture teaches just the opposite. Consider the following subjects and how they illustrate God dealing with evil:

- Satan has immediate access to God and God speaks with him (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6).
- An evil (deceiving) spirit had access to God and God spoke with him (1 Kings 22:19-23). God even used this deceiving spirit to fulfill His decree of disaster for Ahab (v. 23).
- Judges 9:23 and 1 Samuel 16:14 record God as having sent an evil spirit.
- God raised up evil men such as Pharaoh (Romans 9:17) and Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 27:6-7) to carry out His will.
- Jesus spoke with Satan and demons, He even ate with sinful people (Matthew 4:1-11; 16:23; Luke 8:26-33; Matthew 9:10).

God has had all of these dealings with evil and has not once committed any evil or sin, or even been contaminated by evil or sin (Deut. 32:4; Psalm 94:20). There should be no doubt then that God also could have decreed evil's presence without violating His holiness.

Most certainly God can do nothing to violate His holy nature because He is, in the absolute sense (James 1:17) intrinsically Holy, therefore He can do nothing unholy. Since violating His nature would be unholy, it is

an impossibility. Therefore, when Scripture presents God as having something to do with evil, which it obviously does as stated above, it is incorrect for us to conclude that God is sinful or sins. In all actuality it is the holy aspect of His nature that enables God to have something to do with evil without He Himself being evil, committing evil, or being contaminated by evil. Of course, such action is impossible with man for he is both created and since the fall, sinful. The fact that it is possible for God to have something to do with evil without He Himself being evil, committing evil, or being contaminated by evil seems to the finite mind of man to be a paradox. However, any difficulty man may experience in attempting to understand this aspect of God does not rest with God but in the finite mind of man.

In our finite human minds we are unable in an absolute sense to comprehend the actions of God. As a matter of fact, Scripture informs us that as created beings we cannot ever fully comprehend God, Who is infinite (Isaiah 55:8-9). What we must do is seek to understand God in the light of Scripture. Even this we must do with alertness to the danger of the natural, but destructive tendency to superimpose on God the ways and thoughts of mankind and then begin to view Him accordingly. The result of which is an inaccurate perception of God. In other words, we should not attempt to understand God by looking at Him in the light of man. When this happens all we manage to accomplish is the replacement of the mystery of God with an exalted man.

By illuminating our minds to understand the revelation of Scripture, the Holy Spirit uniquely gives us insight into the nature and actions of God without removing the mystery of God (1 Corinthians 2:6-13). For in Scripture are divine parameters within which we must think of God and His actions. The Believer's responsibility is to discipline his or her mind to think within these divine parameters. Attempts at explanation should exist within the parameters of Scripture. Any violation of Scripture is error and should be rejected. Remember, it is the **Scripture** that is the authority **not the explanation**.

The Decree Executed

The nitty-gritty of the issue is not so much in the question of whether or not God decreed evil and sin, as much as it is attempting to understand and explain the execution of His decree. That is, how God actually accomplishes the decree within the creation without sinning or tempting anyone to sin.

In discussing the method and means by which God executes His decree we must be especially careful to uphold the absolute sovereignty of God and His attributes without compromise. This has been and is the thrust of this Discerner. Not so much to explain the execution of the decree, but rather to set forth the fact of God's absolute sovereignty, and the necessity of the Believer to view God's sovereignty as preeminent when explaining this issue as well as others.

Any view or explanation of the execution of God's decree that compromises God's sovereignty or any one of His attributes must be rejected! Regrettably, many evangelicals place man's so-called free-will on an equal par with God's sovereignty and use both (God's sovereignty and man's free-will) as parameters for explaining the execution of God's decree, thus in theory, they compromise the sovereignty of God. Evangelicals sense or at least seem to indicate that man's will is lost if it is not seen as being on par with God's sovereignty. They sense some need to guard what they see as man's freedom. However, in the light of the Word of God, man's will is not free. It is restrained by desire, and that by his nature, which itself, according to Scripture is a slave to sin.⁸ While we as Christians acknowledge that Scripture certainly teaches man has a will, and thereby conclude he is responsible, mankind's will is not to be put on par with God's sovereignty⁹ for that very will itself is subject to God's sovereignty (Proverbs 21:1).¹⁰ The moment man's will is elevated to such a position so as to balance God's sovereignty; God can no longer be described as being absolutely sovereign.

Because man's responsibility is established by God's sovereignty, compromising God's sovereignty releases the spiritually lost from their responsibility to see the common grace of God providing for and protecting him, even though they are in the devil's arms. In essence, compromise of God's absolute sovereignty becomes a basis for the lost assuming themselves to be their own providers and protectors. The compromise feeds the idea, "If God can't then I must."

Furthermore, compromising God's sovereignty by telling the unrepentant sinner of his own perceived freedom, one causes him to see himself as his own judge. Consequently, he then begins to see himself as the arbiter of his own destiny. Under this impression he will inevitably perceive the false notion to declare his own sentence. And now let me ask you this, what person, unrepentant sinner in this case, ever hated his own flesh enough to sentence himself to destruction and torment for eternity?

For the Believer, compromise of the sovereignty of God leaves him confused and uncomfortable though he is in the hand of God. His perception of God becomes equivalent to that false god Baal, who when his worshipers needed him most was either occupied with something else, or gone aside, or on a journey, or perhaps was even asleep and needed to be awakened. Consequently, the life a believer who compromises the sovereignty of God is like the prophets of Baal. It is filled with all kinds of religious gyrations by which he hopes to move God to action. Thus, the frenzy of their religious activity is the basis of comfort rather than faith in God and His sovereignty (1 Kings 18:20-40).

On the other hand, there are those who dismiss man's responsibility because as they say God is absolutely sovereign and will get His way anyway. This is a kind of "what does it matter anyway mentality since God get's His will regardless." Willingly or unwillingly, such persons fail to see themselves as the clay and God as the potter. And as the potter God has every right over the clay (Rm. 9:19-21), especially to command and require obedience (Acts 17:30-31).

Others attempt to maintain a balance between the sovereignty of God and man's responsibility by postulating man as a free moral agent. However, biblically speaking man is not free and although he certainly is a moral agent possessing a sense of morals his experience is on the immoral side of that condition (John 8:34). Attempting a balance this way is equivalent to solving error with error. When you think about it what an incredible Satanic plan- advance a faulty view of the sovereignty of God (it needs to be balanced) so that it excites the flesh of even religious leaders to respond with an exaltation of the man claiming he is a free moral agent.

God's sovereignty over mankind needs no balance! There is nothing wrong with it. It is not warped. It is neither too heavy nor too light. It is however, both kind and severe (Rm. 11:22) but requires no justification before the ungodly. God in His sovereignty is not a perpetrator of some crime for which we need to get Him off the proverbial hook. Have we become so foolish that we have failed to see that it is not the forgiven saint, but the unrepentant guilty sinner who squirms beneath the sovereign hand of God? The Saint relishes the thought of the absolute sovereignty of God for by faith he knows that God is working all things together for good to them that love Him and are called according to His purpose.¹¹ Humbling himself under the mighty hand¹² of God he looks

forward to the consummation of the ages being completed God's way. A time at which he will be by God's sovereign actions conformed to the image of Christ.¹³

On the other hand, the flesh of the unrepentant sinner anguishes over the thought that God is working all things together for his demise.¹⁴ That he and the sin, which has been the source of his pleasure,¹⁵ will be judged.¹⁶ That the wrath of God is revealed to him,¹⁷ abides on him,¹⁸ is coming¹⁹ and will be poured out on him as he is cast into the lake of fire to suffer forever and ever²⁰ with his master—the devil.²¹ No wonder such a one desires a compromise in God's sovereignty.

Thus, it is not our mission as believers to compromise the sovereignty of God. Instead, it is our commission (Mt. 28:18-20) to convey His grace in the light of His sovereignty.

An Explanation of an Execution of One of God's Decrees

Briefly consider a possible explanation of the execution of a decree. Because God is sovereign and nothing can come to pass apart from His sovereign will (decree) we can safely assume that because evil is certainly present He must have predestined (decreed) its presence. How was this decree executed, or in other words carried out in the realm of creation without God being guilty of sin?

Any Bible student knows that the execution of God's decree regarding the presence and origin of evil is not explicitly spelled out any place in Scripture. I do hold to the familiar view that maintains passages such as Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 can be applied to Satan's fall, believing that while they do pertain to earthly men they do also speak of the force behind such individuals—Satan, as he furiously personifies his own rebellion through human agents. We may never know how the decree for Satan's fall was initially executed. Perhaps God withheld some aspect of His immediate presence from Lucifer, thus giving Lucifer over to himself executing His decree of Lucifer's fall. This is based on the assumption that the execution of the decree for Satan's fall parallels the execution of God's decree regarding the fall of man that would follow shortly in the garden, in the midst of Eden.

God created angels. Of this order of creation God elected (chose) some,¹ while others were not, although they were initially made good.² Of those non-elect angels Lucifer was one. At some point in time God, keeping with His sovereign plan, prevented some aspect of Himself from Lucifer. At which time Lucifer fixed his eyes upon his own beauty and sinned.³ Recorded in Isaiah are the words of his heart, "*I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.*"⁴ His words were a manifestation of the pride that filled his heart, the antithesis of the knowledge of the absolute sovereignty of God. Hence, from the one who once was the anointed cherub evil sprang permeating every non-elect angel. Lucifer, "Star of the morning" became Satan "adversary," the prince of the rulers of the darkness of this world,⁵ those who were once angels then became demons.

As one reads of the fall of Adam and Eve recorded in Genesis 3 a very important question should come to mind- Where was God during the events that led to their fall? The question is often avoided because many misunderstand it to be negatively directed toward God. However, there is a difference between "Where was God?" and "GOD, WHERE WERE YOU!!!" It is very obvious from the text that although He could have, God did not directly intervene in the events and prevent the fall. Previously God dealt directly with Adam's isolation (the absence of Eve). He personally instructed them on various aspects of their location, occupation, and obligation. He had even warned them of their depravation if they disobeyed.⁶ And now at this crucial point He seemed to be silent.

All of the instances I have mentioned where God directly dealt with Adam and Eve constitute God's immediate presence with Adam and the couple, following Eve's creation. In some way God obviously manifested His immediate presence to them. A similar event⁷ also happens shortly after the fall as the Lord confronts the sinners, condemns the serpent, and curses the creation. We are told that Adam and Eve "*heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*" This verse clearly reveals some kind of manifestation of the immediate presence of God in the garden. It is quite possible that the purposed absence of God's immediate presence was key to the execution of His decree of the fall.

That God decreed man's fall and executed the decree by the withdrawal of His immediate presence which in this case served as a restraining factor in no way constitutes sin on God's behalf. Although it is in the context of discussing election, R. C. Sproul describes the execution of God's decree as He hardened Pharaoh's heart.⁸ He describes such an act of God as a "passive hardening." According to Sproul, God accomplishes this by allowing Pharaoh more human freedom by the removal of His divine restraints. This resulted in Pharaoh hardening his own heart as he indulged his own sinful nature. This "passive hardening" is opposed to "active hardening" which according to Sproul would be the direct intervention of God in Pharaoh's heart and would actually be God creating evil in Pharaoh's heart, thus doing violence to the nature of God. While I am in agreement with Sproul's position I believe the use of the word freedom leads to the wrong impression. That wrong impression being that when a restraint is removed the sinner has some kind of

freedom outside of the sovereign control of God whereby he can give expression to his sinful nature. Obviously Sproul sees this, thus describing God as giving the sinner just enough rope to hang himself. Human words fail us all at times. I myself have used the expression of a prison inmate being at liberty, yet within the prison walls. However, this too gives the impression of some kind of so-called freedom. Therefore when describing what is referred to as a removal of restraint or "passive hardening" we would do well to remember:

1. A life without moral restraints is not the moral freedom it is commonly understood to be. The absence of restraints is however actually a release to the power of sin. What is often expressed as freedom in such cases is merely a false perception of freedom. This is conveyed in Hebrews 11:25 where the Bible speaks of the "passing pleasures of sin." The greatest pleasure sin affords is the sense of freedom it provides its captives just prior to the execution of its death sentence. That brief moment in time when desire deceives the mind into believing that it is getting exactly what it wants. This opened door of so-called freedom is nothing more than the threshold of death--an introduction to the King of Terrors himself--death (Job 18:14). An analogy that comes to mind is the euphoria one might experience just prior to death by overdose. With the exception of the fool such an experience can hardly be called freedom!
2. That when God removes divine restraints from sinners or as is more in line with Scripture "*gave them over to...*" He is not releasing them from His sovereign control, but continues to **direct** even the smallest expression of their sin so that they, while indulging their sinful wills continue in the smallest detail operating under God's sovereign control.⁹ Consequently, the sinner is filling up his sin (Genesis 15:16) all the while storing up the wrath of God (Romans 2:5). A. W. Pink writing on Proverbs 16:9 describes God's directing of the sinner this way:

"What we would here insist upon is, that God's decrees are not the *necessitating cause* of the sins of men, but the foredetermined and prescribed *boundings* and *directings* of men's sinful acts."¹⁰ (Emphasis his)

Regarding the sin of Judas Pink writes:

"God decreed the act and selected the one who was to perform the act, but He did not *make him evil* in order that he *should* perform the deed; on the contrary, the betrayer was a "devil at the time the Lord Jesus chose him as one of the twelve (John 6:70), and in the *exercise* and *manifestation* of his *own* devilry God simply *directed* his actions, actions which were perfectly *agreeable* to his *own* vile heart, and performed with the most wicked *intentions*. Thus it was with the Crucifixion."¹¹ (Emphasis his)

So the answer to the question, "Where was God?" is—He was there! Not in the manifestation of His immediate presence, but in the reality of His omnipresence executing His decree as He directed the actions of man. As the sovereign Creator He can and will do with His creation what pleases Him for His own purpose. Mankind is but His clay.

Can God then be blamed for Adam's sin? No. With reference to Pink's statement regarding Judas, Adam's actions were in perfect agreement to his own vile heart. Remember that although Adam accused both God and Eve when he said "*The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate*" God did not apologize. Neither did He blame Eve for Adam's sin. On the contrary, God said to Adam, "*Because **you** have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, `You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the ground because of **you**; in toil **you** shall eat of it all the days of **your** life.*"

Adam was responsible for his own sin. From man's perspective and certainly from Adam's he had everything he needed including ability, in order not to sin, yet he disobeyed. He was completely responsible and he knew it, as indicated by his attempt to hide when the time of accountability came (Genesis 3:8).

As a result of Adam's fall all of his descendants were radically corrupted (totally depraved). Since then, the Lord need only to remove His restraint of evil and men plunge themselves deeper into their depravity. While from man's perspective things seem to be happening arbitrarily one must realize that it is God who is directing the affairs of this earth to bring about His sovereign will which will ultimately result in an awesome display of His glory. That this includes both demonic activity and the sinful acts of men is evident from Scripture.

God's Absolute Sovereignty Is The Basis Of The Believer's Comfort

If God knew about evil and could not prevent it, or if He had no knowledge of it and was surprised by its appearance, or if God did not decree evil, but knew of its arrival, and could have prevented it, but didn't, then all the actions of God become mere reactions to what appears to be a greater power than His own. The power would be an evil power that has the ability to undermine the plan of God and overpower His efforts. The result of which is devastating.

Views that change the essence of God's nature as revealed in Scripture lay waste to the faith of those who trust in Him. If God did not know of evil's coming, or knowing, could not prevent evil from coming, how can Believers be sure that God knows the blood of Christ will wash away sin? How can any Believer be confident that God has delivered the Christian from the bondage and penalty of sin? Once in heaven, if the Christian even made it there, how could he or she be sure that the deliverance from the presence of sin was final? The answer is obvious-- they could not! There would be no blessed hope for even the promise of the return of Jesus could not be guaranteed.

If God did not decree the existence of evil but only incorporated it into His plan, then in reality all the promises and prophecies of God's Word are no more than wishful hopes that God desires to achieve as He Himself attempts to bring all things into the captivity of Christ! Here too all the actions of God are merely reactions. Worse than even this would be the fact that under this view the ultimate accomplishment of God's purpose rests on the right evil scenario to develop which would afford God the right opportunity to accomplish His desires. Obviously, this kind of reasoning does violence to Biblical doctrine. Nevertheless, I believe this is ultimately the kind of thinking that goes on in the minds of most evangelicals today. When pressed, their hope like that of the god they have created is no more than wishful thinking--pie in the sky!

Essentially, an ignorant and impotent god who reacts to circumstances is no god at all, and to trust in such a being for one's eternal security is no security at all. Belief in such a god could hardly be called faith. A more accurate term would be foolishness. Yet at this very

moment countless professing Christians claim allegiance to such a being. Consider the following from Clark H. Pinnock as he explains his view of divine omniscience:

"Therefore, I had to ask myself if it was biblically possible to hold that God knows everything that can be known, but that free choices would not be something that can be known even by God because they are not yet settled in reality. Decisions not yet made do not exist anywhere to be known even by God. They are potential-yet to be realized but not yet actual. God can predict a great deal of what we will choose to do, but not all of it, because some of it remains hidden in the mystery of human freedom."¹

What Pinnock ascribes to God in this short paragraph is the very opposite of glory. What he does manage to do is exalt man to godhood! Notice that God can only know what is *settled in reality*, thus in the area of foreknowledge he makes God equivalent to man. Consequently God ends up relying on His ability to *predict* and eventually He must bow to the *mystery of human freedom*.

Consider the magnitude of Pinnock's view if one was to apply it to the story of Job. In such a case God was superior to Satan only by virtue of His ability to make a better prediction! Furthermore, because Job had not yet been tested and therefore had not yet chosen to worship God after being tested, God could not have been certain of Job's response and could have likely cursed God rendering Satan the victor. Additionally, under Pinnock's view neither did Job know what he was talking about when he said to God, "I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted."² Not to mention the fact that under such a view of God as Pinnock puts forth, Job could not have known for sure that one day his Redeemer would take His stand on the earth.³ For at the very moment Job uttered those words his Redeemer's coming was *not yet settled in reality*.

That King David did not hold such a view as Pinnock regarding God's omniscience is evident in Psalm 139:2, 4 when he said of God, "...*Thou dost understand my thought from afar*." And "*Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O LORD, Thou dost know it all*." God understood David's thought before he thought it (before it was settled in reality). He also knew David's words before they were settled in reality by being spoken. While such knowledge was beyond David's

comprehension he did not deny God's ability, but confessed that such knowledge was too high for him.⁴ Just as David, might we all humble ourselves under God's mighty hand!

Little assurance can be found in "divine guesswork," but praise the Lord, the Bible does not proclaim God as predicting and reacting, but as acting sovereignly. He not only knew of evil's coming, He decreed its coming. He did so for His own purpose and glory. Consequently, evil is powerless before Him. It is subject to His sovereign rule. The death and resurrection of Jesus is effectual! God can and does deliver the Believer from the bondage of sin and the Christian can know without doubt, based on the truth of God's Word that God by virtue of His absolutely sovereign nature is able (Dan. 3:17-18, 29; 4:37; Matt. 3:9; 10:28; Acts 20:32; Rom. 11:23; 14:4; 16:25; 2 Cor.9:8; Eph. 3:20; 2 Tim 1:12; Heb. 2:18; 7:25; 11:19; James 1:21; 4:12; Jude 1:24).

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, {be} glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."

Jude 1:23-24

Christian's tale

As the sun begins to hide her glimmering rays,
A man on a mountaintop bends his knee and prays.
" Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
I don't ask of Thee for things like gold, or fame,
But here I am today on my knee to say
That I thank Thee again for letting me stay.
Man's life is but a vapor, Your Holy Word states,
And until You let me see heaven's gates
Let me love you more and more with every breath I take.
For every breath I have is for your sake.
O Lord, you know that I sometimes fall and stumble,
But that gives me no excuse to sin and grumble.
Help me always to remember that You are with me, leading me on the
Narrow path.
And I thank You, O Lord, for saving me from Your eternal wrath.

What a blessing it will be to see Your face
In the heavenly place.

Your return for me I know is very soon,
And so is the sinners doom.

So help me to wait with diligence
And strengthen me with perseverance.

I want to thank Thee, O Mighty Lord, for saving my once-condemned
soul.

For without your grace I would have dwelled in the bottomless
Sheol.

Your power and love! Truly amazing! And how You called all things
into being,

Even my seeing!

Without You nothing can exist. O how mighty You are,
You truly are the bright Morning star."

**With that the man ended his prayer and opened his eyes.
Ahhhhh, the sun was beginning to rise!**

A day later this man who followed what was Right
Was put in the arena and forced to fight.
Lions jumped from pits and attacked him,
But in all this he did not sin.

What a brave soul this man must have been
To get on his bloody knees in the arena

And to pray unto heaven from which he was to receive his subpoena.

These last words he did mumble
As he showed God Sovereign and man humble.

" O Lord, the same hand that put together these mighty beasts
Knit me also together piece by piece.

If in this Roman sand
You take your mighty hand
And have me to die,
I would not sigh.

For everything You do is right and just.

And, O Lord, if I were to sit here forever and rust
And go away without a scratch, would I have learned anything?
O but to be with you in eternity and to sing.

And to praise You all the while
Would be better than this temporary exile."

With that the man bent forward into the sandy soil and wrote four
words.

To this day no one knows what the dying man scribbled in the sand.
Perhaps it said, " *I love You, Lord.*"

*Let me love you more and more with every breath I take.
For every breath I have is for your sake.*

Ahhhh, he was about to rise before the Son!

By Kelly Martin

INTRODUCTION

1. Psalm 25:4-5
2. Psalm 39:4-7

1 God Is Sovereign

1. This is in line with the Scriptural teaching that there is but one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). All beliefs, which hold to polytheistic teachings, betray their ignorance. The fool says there is no God. The ignorant pagan says there is more than one.
2. When we consider the sovereignty of God keep in mind that we are doing so in the absolute sense. For this reason I have used the adjective "superior" in describing God's person, power, and independence. Scripture does speak of human rulers as being sovereign but only in the delegated sense (Daniel 4:31, 36; 5:18; Luke 1:52; Acts 8:27). God's sovereignty is intrinsic and it is He who rules righteously in the kingdom of men.

2 Three Heretical Views

1. R. C. Sproul, Essential Truths Of The Christian Faith (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992), 46.
2. The definition of *thwart* ranges from hindering to halting, neither of which is effectual in the decreed plan and purpose of God (Job 42:2; Proverbs 21:30; Ezekiel 17:24; Daniel 9:36).

4 Did God Decree Evil?

1. Psalm 104:14-15
2. Jay Adams, The Grand Demonstration, (Santa Barbara, CA., EastGate Publishers 1991), 57. In this book Adams explains a difficult subject clearly and concisely. In this Discerner I have applied some of his logic.
3. Paul Enns, The Moody Handbook Of Theology (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 633.

4. C. I. Scofield, The Scofield Study Bible, "Predestine," (1967 Edition), Ephesians 1:11 note, p. 1273. Scofield divides the total predestined plan of God into two classes of decreed events: 1) divinely caused; and 2) divinely permitted. Sadly, under Scofield's explanation of *divine permission* God's permission is given in the light of what He knows man will do. His permission is then classified as a decree because God, "foreknowing how men will act under various circumstances," permits only those actions that will fit into His plan. If this were true of God He could hardly be called sovereign. Scofield's comment on predestination reveals his awareness that God decrees all things. However, when attempting to explain the execution of God's decree he fails because of an incorrect view of God's foreknowledge.
5. Donald Grey Barnhouse, Romans, Vol. III of God's Heirs (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., © 1963, Reprint 1994), 151.
6. Arthur W. Pink, The Sovereignty of God, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House 1984), 147.
7. Adams, The Grand Demonstration, 61.
8. Romans 3:23; John 8:34. Walking within the parameters of God's Word Adam and Eve experienced freedom as fully as any created beings are able. However, in violating His Word there was manifested an intent to enjoy a freedom outside of this sacred parameter. Hence it has been the characteristic of fallen man to define freedom as a life without restraints. A discerning observation into this philosophy of freedom exposes the fallen nature of man. For it is not so much that he wants no restraints as much as he wants to set his own restraints. Instead of humility before God the Creator, the creation prideful as it is, is saying, "It is not God's way that is right for me, but my own." Shouting "free-will" the creature fails to see the bondage of such thinking. For the will is restrained by the desire, and that by the nature, which itself is a slave to sin when apart from Christ (Scripture refers to those in Christ as slaves of righteousness. Romans 6:12-18). Such false philosophy is nothing more than Satan's lie, and Adam's sin repeated by countless individuals- the clay saying to the Potter, "Why did you make me like this?" Worship of the creature more than the Creator.
9. Another way I can say this to clarify my point is that by the virtue of safeguarding the doctrine of the sovereignty of God the responsibility of man will be evident. The brighter the true light of God's sovereignty shines the more it reveals the responsibility of man. What must be guarded and preserved are those thoughts that pertain to God and His sovereignty.
10. Ezra 7:27-28; Nehemiah 1:11; 2:4; Psalm 105:23-25; 106:26; Proverbs 16:9; 20:24; Daniel 4:35; Acts 7:10.
11. Romans 8:28
12. 1 Peter 5:6
13. Romans 8:29-30

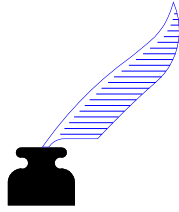
14. 2 Peter 2:9-10
15. Romans 1:32; 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12; Hebrews 11:25
16. Revelation 20:11-13
17. Romans 1:16-19
18. John 3:36
19. Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 3:6
20. Revelation 14:10; 20:14-15
21. Revelation 20:10

5 An Explanation of an Execution of One of God's Decrees

1. 1 Timothy 5:21
2. Genesis 1:31; Exodus 20:11
3. Ezekiel 28:11-19
4. Isaiah 14:13-14
5. Ephesians 2:2
6. Genesis 1:28-29; 2:8-25
7. Genesis 3:8-24
8. R. C. Sproul, *Chosen By God*, (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986), 144-145.
9. This "micro management" is essential to acknowledge; otherwise God's sovereignty is in theory thwarted.
10. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, 157
11. *ibid.*

6 God's Absolute Sovereignty Is The Basis Of The Believer's Comfort

1. Clark H. Pinnock, ed. *The Grace Of God And The Will Of Man* (Minneapolis, Minnesota; Bethany House Publishers, 1995), 25. Pinnock ends this paragraph with, "Can this conjecture be scriptural?" and then answers it affirmatively in the following paragraph. However, his answer is based on a severe misunderstanding of anthropomorphisms. He assumes God asks a question because He does not know the answer.
2. Job 42:2
3. Job 19:25
4. Psalm 139:6



The Discerner reflects the heart desire of this pastor for God's people to know and understand God as He has revealed Himself through the Scripture.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

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