

The Sovereignty of God – 1

The Sovereignty of God in Our Daily Affairs

Ephesians 1:1–14 (NIV84)

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ.

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms
with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the
world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

⁵he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through
Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and
will—

⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has
freely given us in the One he loves.

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the
forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of
God's grace

⁸that he lavished on us with all wisdom and
understanding.

⁹And he made known to us the mystery of his will
according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in
Christ,

¹⁰to be put into effect when the times will have
reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in
heaven and on earth together under one head, even
Christ.

¹¹In him we were also chosen, having been
predestined according to the plan of him who works
out everything in conformity with the purpose of his
will,

¹²in order that we, who were the first to hope in
Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

¹³And you also were included in Christ when you
heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.
Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal,
the promised Holy Spirit,

¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until
the redemption of those who are God's
possession—to the praise of his glory.

- Ephesians 1:3–14 is actually a single sentence that
embraces most of the essential doctrines of
Christianity.

It deals with the doctrines of God, the Trinity,
election, the work of Christ, forgiveness, the
gospel, grace, creation, the consummation of
world history when all things are brought together

in subjection to Christ—and others besides.

What we have in verses 11–14 is a rich statement
of the chief doctrines of the Holy Spirit and his
work.¹

- V. 11, The Greek word (*eklērothēmen, chosen*)
indicates that “we are apportioned as an inheritance.”
“We” are those who are made to be the inheritance
rather than those who have obtained an
inheritance.
- God's love is based on something in his heart rather
than on anything that we would achieve or claim for
ourselves.²
- V. 11, Neither fate nor human merit determines our
destiny. The benevolent purpose—that we should be
holy and faultless, sons of God, destined to glorify him
forever—is fixed, being part of a larger,
universe-embracing plan. Not only did God *make* this
plan that includes absolutely all things that ever take
place in heaven, on earth, and in hell; past, present,
and even the future, pertaining to both believers and
unbelievers, to angels and devils, to physical as well as
spiritual energies and units of existence both large and
small; he also *wholly carries it out*. His providence in
time is as comprehensive as is his decree from eternity.
- God is not like the heathen deities who are moved by
changing circumstances, by whim and caprice, so that
one never knows how long their favor is going to last.
He who in his love has foreordained his people to
adoption as sons will never forsake them, but will
finish that which he began in them (Phil. 1:6). He will
carry out his plan to the very finish. Nothing will ever
be able to frustrate his design. “Nor sin, nor death, nor
hell can move his firm predestinating love.”³
- *F.F. Bruce*: When once his will has decreed that
something shall be so, his wisdom and power and love
combine to order and overrule the course of events so
that all things are made to work together for the
accomplishment of what he has planned.

Even sin and other evils, however contrary to his
will, can be turned by him to serve his purposes of
glory and blessing.⁴

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 28.

² Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 46.

³ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Ephesians*, vol. 7, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 88–89.

⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Verse-by-Verse Exposition*, An Open Your Bible Project (Bath, UK: Creative Communications, 2012), 29.

Proverbs 21:1 (NIV84)

¹The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.

- The Lord is the dominant actor in all that happens, and specifically is the one who weighs the hearts of all, commoner and king.⁵
- *Directs* is in the *imperfect tense*. This imperfective aspect can speak of (depending on context) habitual actions, actions in progress, or even completed actions that have unfolding, ongoing results.⁶
- When God *directs* the heart of a leader, it is not a one time act. All the while, God is *continually directing every leader's heart*. The actions of the leader have unfolding, ongoing outcomes that result in giving God glory.

While it is happening, we may not understand nor believe that God is getting any glory. But it will work out in the end giving God all the glory that is due Him.

- At no time is God not in control.
- Is this true even when a ruler makes bad decisions?

Acts 2:22–24 (NIV84)

²²“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

²³This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

²⁴But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Acts 4:27–28 (NIV84)

²⁷Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.

²⁸They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

- Even evil rulers are under the sovereign control of God Almighty.

Hebrews 1:1–3 (NIV84)

⁵ Rowland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, vol. 22, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 158.

⁶ Michael S. Heiser and Vincent M. Setterholm, *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology* (Lexham Press, 2013; 2013).

¹In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,

²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

³The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, **sustaining all things by his powerful word**. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

- God has been and still is active in the affairs of the world He created. He created and sustains the heavens and earth through Jesus.⁷
- *Sustaining* = φέρω *pherō* = *to uphold, maintain, conserve*; to cause to follow a certain course in direction or conduct.⁸

Every molecule in creation is continually upheld, maintained, conserved, sustained by God's Word.

Colossians 1:15–17 (NIV84)

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

¹⁶For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

¹⁷He is before all things, and **in him all things hold together**.

- “*Hold together*” is *sunistēmi* (συνιστημι), Lightfoot translates; “hold together, cohere.” He says: “He is the principle of cohesion in the universe. He impresses upon creation that unity and solidarity which makes it a *cosmos* (χρσμος) (an ordered system) instead of a *chaos* (χαος) (an unformed mass).⁹

Kenneth Wuest goes on to use gravity as an example. Gravity keeps things in their places and regulates the motions of things moving. He call this *an expression of His mind*.

Ephesians 3:10–11 (NIV84)

¹⁰His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

¹¹**according to his eternal purpose** which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

⁷ Trent C. Butler, ed., *Disciple's Study Bible: New International Version* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988), Heb 1:1–3.

⁸ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1051.

⁹ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 185.

- We must always remember that God has an eternal purpose.
- There was a mystery kept hidden in God for ages past (v. 9). That mystery was that “**through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel**”, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (v. 6).
- God’s intent was that *now, through the church*, this mystery (the manifold wisdom of God) should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (v. 10).
- The church (universal) displays or makes plain to everyone the administration of this mystery (v. 9), because in the church both Jews and Gentiles worship Jesus Christ as one body together.

Ephesians 3:12–13 (NIV84)

¹²In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

¹³I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

- In and through every circumstance of His children, God works His goodness, blessing, and **glory**.¹⁰
- Many believers were grieved over the suffering that Paul was enduring. Paul’s suffering brought honor to God.

Philippians 1:12-14 (NIV84)

¹²Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

¹³As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

¹⁴Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

- Only those whose confidence is in the sovereignty of God in the redemption of the elect could be admonished not to lose heart or grow discouraged at the thought of the Apostle Paul imprisoned for the faith.

This was all part of God’s eternal plan and purpose.

Discouragement with the outworkings of the plan of God is simply inconsistent with a bold confession of God as sovereign and Christ as reigning Lord.¹¹

¹⁰ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 98.

¹¹ R. C. Sproul, *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 79.

Psalm 115:1–8 (NIV84)

¹Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.

²Why do the nations say, “Where is their God?”

³**Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.**

⁴But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men.

⁵They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see;

⁶they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell;

⁷they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats.

⁸Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.

- The true **God** is transcendent—“**Our God is in heaven**” and He is sovereign—“**He does whatever He pleases.**”

The *transcendence* of God means that He is exalted above the universe and has His being apart from it.

The *sovereignty* of God means that He is free to do **whatever He pleases**, and what He pleases is always good, just and wise.¹²

- His divine sovereign will knows no restrictions or restraints.¹³

Isaiah 46:5–11 (NIV84)

⁵“To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?”

⁶Some pour out gold from their bags and weigh out silver on the scales; they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it.

⁷They lift it to their shoulders and carry it; they set it up in its place, and there it stands. From that spot it cannot move. Though one cries out to it, it does not answer; it cannot save him from his troubles.

⁸“**Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart**, you rebels.

⁹**Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.**

¹⁰I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: **My purpose**

¹² William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 730.

¹³ Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1906–1907), 394.

will stand, and I will do all that I please.

¹¹From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.

- *A man to fulfill my purpose.* God raised up Cyrus, king of Persia, to defeat Babylon.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was raised up as an agent of punishment to the Israelites for their sinful and idolatrous ways.

- God raises up both good and evil rulers to fulfill His purposes.

Our limited view of what's happening around us often obscures our view to God's ways and purposes.

There are no unanswered prayers. They are all answered: some prayers are answered in a way that we did not hope for.

Romans 8:26–39 (NIV84)

²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

- What we need in prayer is help—the practical, down-to-earth, everyday kind of help that Martha needed in the kitchen.
- The kind of help the Holy Spirit gives *is* the help a doctor gives when he is called alongside the sick bed; the kind of help a fireman gives when he is called alongside a burning building; the kind of help a lawyer gives when he is called alongside to undertake our case. What a Helper!¹⁴

²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

- Everything that happens to us in this life is directed toward the goal of fulfilling God's purpose.
What happens may not itself be "good," but God will make it work to our ultimate good, to meet his ultimate goal for our life.
- "God works all things for good," not "all things work out for our good."
Suffering will still bring pain, loss, and sorrow, and sin will bring shame.

But under God's control, the eventual outcome will be for our good.

- God works behind the scenes, ensuring that even in the middle of mistakes and tragedies, good will result for *those who love him*.

At times this will happen quickly, often enough to help us trust the principle.

But there will also be events whose results for good we will not know until eternity.¹⁵

²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

³¹What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

³⁴Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

³⁶As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- God is sovereign; He does what He wants. Sometimes God's actions align with what we want, and sometimes they don't.

- Scripture is clear that no matter the outcome (good or bad *in our eyes*), whatever God does is *always* good and good for *those who love Him* and *who have been called according to His purpose*.

Who are those people? God's elect.

¹⁴ John Phillips, *Exploring Romans: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ro 8:14–27.

¹⁵ Bruce B. Barton, David Veerman, and Neil S. Wilson, *Romans*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 165.

Romans 9:10–21 (NIV84)

¹⁰Not only that, but Rebekah’s children had one and the same father, our father Isaac.

¹¹Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand:

¹²not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”

¹³Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

¹⁴What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!

¹⁵For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

¹⁶It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.

¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

¹⁸Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

¹⁹One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?”

²⁰But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?

“Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’ ”

²¹Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?

- We may not know why things didn’t go the way we planned or wanted. Therefore, we must be careful not to talk back to God (v. 20).
- Let’s go back in time to the book of Daniel.
- Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that none of his magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and diviners could interpret.
- Daniel came and interpreted the dream for him and pleaded with him to change his ways to avoid the judgment of God.
- Nebuchadnezzar did not change and twelve months later, took the glory for all his accomplishments upon himself and not towards God.
- He was driven into the wild like a wild animal for seven years until *he acknowledged that the Most high is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone He wishes.*
- When he came to his senses, his sanity was restored and this is what he proclaimed:

Daniel 4:34–35 (NIV84)

³⁴At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

³⁵All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. **No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?”**

- Let’s close with some Scriptures that point to God’s sovereignty over *everything*.

Proverbs 16:4, 9 (NIV84)

⁴The LORD works out everything for his own ends—even the wicked for a day of disaster.

⁹In his heart a man plans his course, but **the LORD determines his steps.**

Psalm 135:6–7 (NIV84)

⁶The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.

⁷He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth; he sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

Proverbs 16:33 (NIV84)

³³The lot is cast into the lap, but **its every decision is from the LORD.**

Psalm 33:10–12 (NIV84)

¹⁰The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.

¹¹But **the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.**

¹²Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.

1 Peter 1:3–9 (NIV84)

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you,

⁵who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

⁷These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

⁹for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

- We pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and they still pass away. We sometimes miss the big picture.
- Our goal in life, our goal for believing, is *the salvation of our souls*.
- Our dearly beloved JJ went home; he reached the goal: the salvation of his soul!