



### God's Sovereignty

The smaller square within the bigger one represents strength and power. It also resembles steps, which allude to governance.

Paul David Tripp  
*Do You Believe?*

## What We Believe: Solid Doctrine for Everyday Life

### The Doctrine of God's Sovereignty

“From all eternity God, by the wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeable ordained all that comes to pass. Yet God is neither the author of sin, nor does he violate the will of his creatures, nor is the liberty of second causes removed, but rather established. Although God knows whatever may or can come to pass, he has

not decreed anything because he foresaw it as that which would come to pass.

“God, the Creator of all things, upholds, directs, and governs all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest to the least, by his wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and unchangeable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy. In his ordinary providence, God makes use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure.”<sup>1 2</sup>

Like a Tapestry

Two aspects of God's sovereignty: his Decrees (his eternal plan) and his Providence (his active, ongoing control over everything). These two aspects correspond with God's Transcendence and his Immanence.

### **Some Biblical Windows on God's Sovereignty**

- Control over seemingly random events (Proverbs 16:33)
- Control over rulers' decisions (Proverbs 21:1)
- Control over politics and nations (Psalm 22:28)
- Control over nature (Jonah)
- Control over the smallest things (Matthew 10:29-30)

### **Does the Bible teach Divine Sovereignty or Human Responsibility? Yes!**

Or, we can rest in the hammock hanging between two trees.

There is *mystery* here, but not logical contradiction.

*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (Genesis 50:20)*

*...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (Acts 2:23)*

*And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)*

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)*

### **The Comfort of God's Sovereignty**

- + Larger outer "Circle of Concern" around smaller "Circle of Responsibility."
- + Childlike trust
- + "The reliability of God's promises is only as good as the extent of his rule."

### **The Problem of Pain & Evil**

St. Bernards and No-seeums

*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33–36)*

### **Discuss and Share:**

- 1) Would you be willing to share an instance of suffering or hardship or brokenness that you are you currently experiencing? Can you name specifically how "this situation is not the way it's supposed to be"?
- 2) How does the truth of God's sovereignty bring you comfort in this situation?
- 3) What can you do with the questions you still have? Who can you talk to?
- 4) Close in prayer for one another.

**Sing:** *God Moves in a Mysterious Way*

### Recommended Resources

- The artwork comes from, *Do You Believe?: 12 Historic Doctrines to Change Your Everyday Life*, by Paul Tripp (Crossway, 2021), on which this class is loosely based.
- "Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility," online essay by John Frame, [thegospelcoalition.org/essay/divine-sovereignty-human-freedom](http://thegospelcoalition.org/essay/divine-sovereignty-human-freedom).
- "The Problem of Evil, " online essay by Greg Welty, [thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-problem-of-evil](http://thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-problem-of-evil).
- *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*, by Timothy Keller (Penguin, 2015)

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Paul Tripp's paraphrase of the doctrines of God's sovereignty and providence as found in parts of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chaps. 3 and 5.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 8:22; Num. 23:19; Job 38:11; Ps. 135:6; Prov. 16:33; Isa. 46:10-11; 55:10-11; Dan. 3:27; 4:34-35; Hos. 1:7; Matt. 10:29-31; John 19:11; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; 13:48; 15:18; 27:31, 44; Rom. 4:19-21; 9:11-18; Eph. 1:3-14; Heb. 1:3; 6:17; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5.