



SOVEREIGNTY

LIVING IN SIGHT OF THE THRONE

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His Kingdom endures from generation to generation. And 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 [lit. strike against] His hand or say to Him, "What Hast Thou Done?" -- Dan. 4:34,35

Study 12a: IS ELECTION FAIR? (GRACE or JUSTICE?) (9:14-24)

9:14-18 *What cannot Paul forget is the quality of God that dominates His dealings with men?* (1 Tim. 1:13-16)

Hence God's mercy (ver.16) is not merely a response to human resolve ("him that willeth"), or to human effort ("him that runneth"). His own Divine will is the one and only source of His mercy. All men are sinners, and as God pardoned Israel when they were rebels, why may He not pardon the Gentiles also? -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *Romans*, p. 140

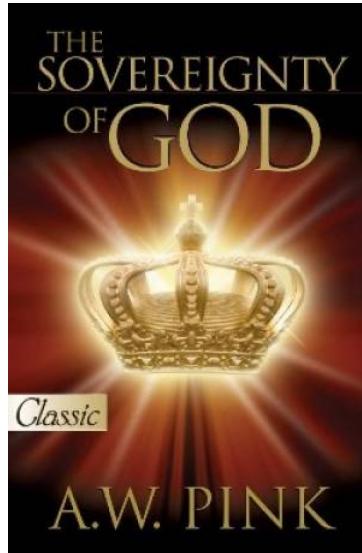
In order to avoid the force of this passage, many deny that it expresses the sentiment of apostle. They consider this and the following verses as the objections of a Jewish fatalist, a mode of interpretation so obviously inconsistent with the context, and even the proper force of the words, that it is mentioned only to show how hard it is to close the eyes against the doctrine which the apostle so clearly teaches. **Charles Hodge**, *Romans* p.313

The reconciliation of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility is beyond our power. The Bible states and emphasises both, and then leaves them. We shall be wise if we do the same. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op.cit.*, p.143

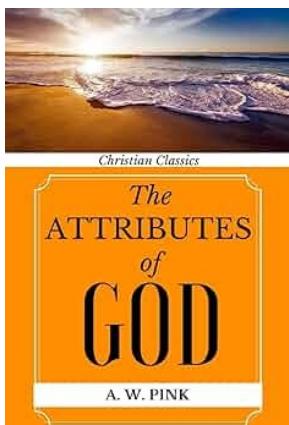
9:19-24 *For what destiny were God's "honorable vessels" created?* (cf. v.26; Heb. 2:10-15)

Grace is the antithesis of justice. Justice demands the impartial enforcement of law. Justice requires that each shall receive his legitimate due, neither more nor less. Justice bestows no favours and is no respecter of persons. Justice, as such, shows no pity and knows no mercy. Divine grace is not exercised at the expense of justice, but "grace reigns through righteousness" (Rom. 5:21), and if grace "reigns," then is grace sovereign. -- **A.W. Pink**, *The Sovereignty of God*, p. 25

Whatever God does is necessarily just, since God is God; and for man to judge God is foolish and wicked. The Apostle thus answers by pointing to God's sovereignty. God does not give His reasons, and it is blasphemous to judge Him by weak, puny, limited self. It is noteworthy how St Paul meets his objection, not by reasoning, but by rebuke, not by exposing the fallacy, but by denouncing the spirit of the question. He repels rather than refutes; he silences the opponent by saying that he has no right to put this objection. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op.cit.*, p. 147



SOVEREIGNTY -- not just another attribute



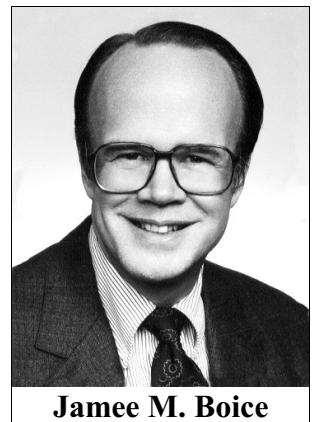
The sovereignty of God! What do we mean by this expression? We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the Godhood of God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare God is God.

A.W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, p. 20

In order to be sovereign God must also be all-knowing, all-powerful and absolutely free. If he were limited in any one of these areas, he would not be entirely sovereign. Yet the sovereignty of God is greater than any one of the attributes which it contains. Others may seem more important to us -- love, for instance. But a little thought will show that the exercise of any of these attributes is made possible only by the sovereignty of God.

God might love, for example, but if he were not sovereign, circumstances could thwart his love, making it useless to us.

James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: The Sovereign God* pp. 149-50



9:25-26 Is Paul's "progressive revelation" regarding election "new truth"? (v.6; John 6:37-40; 15:16)

Why should it be thought strange if some are qualified by nature to lead and rule, while others are only fitted to follow and serve? Heredity and environment cannot account for all these variations and inequalities. No; it is God who maketh one to differ from another. Why should He? "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. 11:26) must be our reply. 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).

-- A.W. Pink, *op.cit.*, p. 30

9:27-29 How could God know that only a remnant of Israel would be saved? (cf. 11:4-6; 3:9-12; 8:29-30)

If the idea of a **theodicy** means that God is pulled down to man's level and has to be defended before the bar of human reason, such a changed and distorted concept of predestination means that man thinks himself able to ascend to God's own level and examine his thoughts and purposes. -- A. Nygren, *Romans*, p. 369 (emphasis added)

These two truths, God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility, are to be believed firmly, held tenaciously, proclaimed fully, and our life is to be lived in the light thereof. -- W.H. Griffith Thomas, *op.cit.*, p. 155

Review: The GENESIS of IRREVERENCE, the BIRTH of BLASPHEMY

Paul, by his own admission, had been a blasphemer (1 Tim. 1:13). However, what attitude towards God's sovereignty would Paul view as outright blasphemy? (9:14; 3:3-6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 11:1,11 -- what other heresies did Paul consider God-forbidden "new light"?). Those who would scrutinize God's every judgment have lost sight of what reality? (11:33; cf. Isaiah 40:13,14; 55:8,9)

Ours is peculiarly an age of irreverence, and as a consequence, the spirit of lawlessness, which brooks no restraint and which is desirous of casting off everything which interferes with the free course of self-will, is rapidly engulfing the earth like some gigantic tidal wave. The members of the rising generation are most flagrant offenders, and in the decay and disappearance of parental authority we have the certain precursor of the break up civil authority. Therefore, in view of the growing disrespect for human law and the refusal to "render honour to who honour is due," we need not be surprised that the recognition of the majesty, the authority, the sovereignty of the Almighty Law-giver should recede more and more into the background, and that the masses have less and less patience with those who insist upon them. Present-day conditions call loudly for a new examination and new presentation of God's omnipotency, God's sufficiency, God's sovereignty. From every pulpit in the land it needs to be thundered forth that God still lives, that God still observes, that God still reigns. Faith is now in the crucible, it is being tested by fire, and there is no fixed and sufficient resting-place for the heart and mind but in the *Throne of God*. What is needed now, as never before, is a full, positive, constructive setting forth of the Godhood of God. Drastic diseases call for drastic remedies. People are weary of platitudes and mere generalizations -- the call is for something definite and specific. Soothing-syrup may serve for peevish children, but an iron tonic is better suited for adults, and we know of nothing which is more calculated to infuse spiritual



vigour into our frames than a Scriptural apprehension of the **full character of God**. It is written, "The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits" (Dan. 11:32). ... But let it be said very emphatically that the heart can only rest upon and enjoy the blessed truth of the absolute sovereignty of God as *faith is in exercise*. Faith is ever occupied with God. That is the character of it; that is what differentiates it from intellectual theology. Faith endures "as seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27); endures the disappointments, the hardships, and the heart-aches of life, by recognizing that all comes from the hand of Him who is too wise to err and too loving to be unkind. But so long as we are occupied with any other object than God Himself, there will be neither rest for the heart nor peace for the mind. But when we receive all that enters our lives as from His hand, then, no matter what may be our circumstances or surroundings -- whether in a hovel or prison-dungeon, or at a martyr's stake -- we shall be enabled to say, "The lines are fallen unto me in *pleasant places*" (Ps. 16:6). But *that* is the language of *faith*, not of sight nor of sense.

But if instead of bowing to the testimony of Holy Writ, if instead of walking by faith, we follow the evidence of our eyes, and reason therefrom, we shall fall into a quagmire of virtual atheism. Or, if we are regulated by the opinions and views of others, peace will be at an end. -- A.W. Pink, *op.cit.*, p. 14-18

"The more Thy glories strike mine eyes

The humbler I shall lie;

Thus, while I sink, my joys shall rise

Unmeasurably high."

-- Isaac Watts