

The Sovereignty of God

The God Who Rules Over All Things for His Glory and Our Good

A Teaching Lesson · Seminary-level content, high-school-level clarity

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Big Idea: God is the King over all things. He freely rules everything He has made — from stars to nations to the smallest details of your life — according to His wise and holy plan. Nothing happens outside His control, and He works all of it together for His glory and the good of His people.

Memory Verse: *“Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.” — Psalm 115:3 (ESV)*

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PART ONE

Teaching Outline (Leader Notes)

The sovereignty of God is one of the most comforting — and most challenging — truths in all of Scripture. It means that God is truly King: He is in complete control of everything He has made, and He governs it all according to His perfect plan. This is not a cold or distant kind of control. It is the loving rule of a wise Father who never loses His grip on the world or on your life. This lesson builds on the earlier attributes: because God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and unchanging, His rule cannot fail. Part One is your full teaching material; Part Two is a handout to copy for students.

I. Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Define God's sovereignty in their own words.
2. Give at least three Bible passages that teach it.
3. Explain how God's control and human responsibility fit together.
4. Answer the hardest question: how a sovereign God relates to evil.
5. Describe why God's sovereignty is a source of comfort, not fear.

II. What Do We Mean by "Sovereignty"?

Sovereignty means supreme rule and authority. To say God is sovereign is to say that He is the absolute King over the whole universe — He owns it, rules it, and directs it all toward the ends He has chosen. Nothing is outside His authority, and nothing can overrule Him.

It helps students to see that God's sovereignty stretches over three areas:

Over creation	God sustains and directs the whole natural world — sun, rain, seas, and the life of every creature (Psalm 104; Matthew 5:45).
Over nations & history	God raises up and brings down kings and kingdoms; He sets the times and places of peoples (Daniel 2:21; Acts 17:26).
Over individual lives	God governs the details of each life — our days, our steps, even what looks like random chance (Proverbs 16:9, 33; James 4:15).

A key distinction for older students: Theologians distinguish God's *sovereign will* (His hidden plan, which always comes to pass) from His *revealed will* (His commands, which show us how we should live). We are responsible to obey what God has revealed, while trusting that His hidden plan is always good.

III. What the Bible Says

"I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning... saying, 'My counsel

shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.”

— Isaiah 46:9–10 (ESV)

- **Psalm 115:3** — “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.”
- **Daniel 4:35** — God “does according to his will... none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’”
- **Ephesians 1:11** — God “works all things according to the counsel of his will.”
- **Proverbs 16:9** — “The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.”
- **Romans 8:28** — God works “all things together for good” for those who love Him.

IV. The Key Nuance: Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

This is the most important teaching point in the lesson, because it answers most of the hard questions. Two truths run all through the Bible, and we must hold both:

1. **God is completely sovereign.** He truly rules and ordains all that happens.
2. **People make real choices and are truly responsible for them.** We are not puppets; our decisions matter and count.

The clearest example is the cross (Acts 2:23). Peter says Jesus was handed over “according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” — AND that lawless men were guilty of crucifying Him. Both are true in the same sentence: God sovereignly planned it, and the people who did it were fully responsible. We do not have to fully explain how these fit; we affirm both because Scripture does.

The crucial point: God’s sovereignty does not cancel our choices — it stands underneath them and works through them. His control is total, and our responsibility is real.

V. The Hardest Question: God and Evil

If God controls all things, what about evil? Handle this with care and honesty. The Bible teaches several things at once:

- **God is never the author of sin.** He “cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one” (James 1:13). God is perfectly holy.
- **Yet nothing, not even evil, is outside His control.** God permits evil and even overrules it for good, without ever doing wrong Himself.
- **The clearest picture is Joseph (Genesis 50:20).** “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.” The same event was truly evil in the brothers’ hands and truly good in God’s plan.

The teaching summary: God does not do evil, and He does not merely stand by helplessly either. In perfect wisdom He rules over evil and bends it to serve His good purposes — supremely at the cross, where the worst act in history became our salvation.

VI. What the Church Has Taught

- **Augustine** taught that God’s providence governs all things, great and small, and that God is so good and powerful that He can bring good even out of evil.
- **The Reformers** recovered the full biblical emphasis on God’s sovereign grace — that salvation from first to last depends on God’s free and mighty rule.
- **The Reformed and Baptist confessions** confess that God “from all eternity... freely and unchangeably ordain[ed] whatsoever comes to pass,” yet in a way that God is not the author of sin nor is human freedom taken away (Westminster and Second London Baptist Confessions, ch. 3 & 5).

The phrase to memorize: **God works all things according to the counsel of His will — and none can stay His hand.**

VII. The One-Sentence Guardrail

God rules over all things, including evil, without ever doing evil, and without ever cancelling our real responsibility. His control is total, His character is holy, and His purpose is good.

VIII. Why This Matters for Us

- **We can have deep peace.** Nothing can touch you that has not first passed through the wise and loving hand of your Father. There are no true accidents in a Christian's life.
- **We can trust in suffering.** Even painful things are not outside God's control; He is working them for good (Romans 8:28), even when we cannot see how.
- **We are humbled.** We are not in charge of the universe — and that is very good news. We can lay down the crushing weight of trying to control everything.
- **We are moved to worship and obey.** A God this great deserves our trust and our obedience. His sovereignty does not make us lazy — it makes us bold to obey and to pray.

PART TWO

Student Handout

The Sovereignty of God. Fill in the blanks and follow along as we work through the lesson together.

The Big Idea

God is the King over all things. He rules everything He has made — from stars to nations to the details of your life — by His wise and holy plan, and He works it all together for His glory and the good of His people.

A Word to Know

- **Sovereignty** — supreme rule and authority. God is the absolute King over the whole universe; nothing is outside His control.

God Rules Over Three Things

Creation	Sun, rain, seas, and every creature (Psalm 104).
Nations & history	He raises up and brings down kings (Daniel 2:21).
Your life	Your days, your steps, even “chance” (Proverbs 16:9, 33).

Key Verses

- **Psalm 115:3** — “He does all that he pleases.”
- **Ephesians 1:11** — God “works all things according to the counsel of his will.”
- **Romans 8:28** — God works “all things together for good.”

Two Truths to Hold Together

God is completely sovereign	We make real, responsible choices
He truly rules and ordains all things.	We are not puppets; our choices matter (Acts 2:23).

Fill in the Blanks

1. “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he _____.” (Psalm 115:3)
2. God works all things according to the _____ of his will. (Ephesians 1:11)
3. “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for _____.” (Genesis 50:20)
4. God’s control is total, and our _____ is real.

Discussion Questions

1. If nothing can touch you outside God's hand, how should that change how you face fear or worry?
2. How does the story of Joseph help us think about hard things that happen to us?
3. Why is it good news that YOU are not in charge of the universe?
4. Does believing God is in control make you lazy, or bold? Why?

One Sentence to Remember

Nothing can touch you that has not first passed through the loving hand of your Father.

This Week

Memorize Psalm 115:3. When something feels out of control this week, pause and pray: "Lord, You are King over even this. I don't have to carry it. I trust Your wise and loving rule."

Sources & Further Study

Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV). Key passages and classic sources referenced in this lesson:

- Scripture: Genesis 50:20; Psalm 104; Psalm 115:3; Proverbs 16:9, 33; Isaiah 46:9–10; Daniel 2:21; Daniel 4:35; Matthew 5:45; Acts 2:23; Acts 17:26; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11; James 1:13; James 4:15.
- Augustine, *The City of God and Enchiridion* (God's providence and bringing good out of evil).
- Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), ch. 3 & 5; Second London Baptist Confession (1689), ch. 3 & 5 — God ordains “whatsoever comes to pass,” yet is not the author of sin.
- For modern treatment: Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* vol. 2; A. W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*; R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*.