

Some Comments about God's Sovereignty and Human Events

God is not just a "super being," functioning like us, except on a higher, more powerful level. He is *uncreated* and we are *created*. He is so much *unlike* us, that we can comprehend him only to the extent that he chooses to reveal himself to us. Even then, our understanding will be limited.

God interacts with us in two ways: 1) on our level, in ways we can understand, and 2) on his level, in ways we can neither understand, nor experience, nor know (except for what he reveals to us).

We are responsible for our actions, and will be judged *only* for the way we interact with others (and with God) on *our* level. In this matter, what happens on God's level isn't the issue, for it will *never* go against the choices we make on our level. We cannot blame God for what we do.

In prophecy, God says he will do certain things, or that certain things will happen. These are often expressed from the viewpoint of God's sovereignty, and their fulfillment is *always* guaranteed, simply because *God* says (or decrees) it will happen. From the human responsibility viewpoint, people will make choices that are truly theirs, and events will happen in nature that are really explainable by natural causes. *All* of these things will *always* occur in a way that coincides with what God says will happen.

In salvation, God "elects" or chooses certain individuals. This is from the sovereignty perspective, and from this perspective, only those people will be saved. Yet from the human responsibility perspective, our salvation will be based on *our* choice to follow (or not follow) Jesus, and on *our* willingness to humble ourselves and admit our helplessness (or to remain prideful and self-sufficient). These two - God's sovereignty and human responsibility - will *always* go together; so we need to concern ourselves with *our* responsibility, and let God "worry" about his sovereignty.

When God saves a person, he guarantees that spiritual growth will occur. From the human responsibility perspective, the person will *choose* to follow Jesus. Sin will not be his lifestyle - indeed, it *cannot* be his lifestyle, because God has changed his nature. It is the *liar* who says, "I'm saved; I just don't live like it."

Unsaved people, those who are influenced by the world's viewpoints, and those who do not understand Scripture, may attack the fact that these two concepts coexist peacefully. They will act as though the two concepts were mutually incompatible and will insist that only one can exist at a time. They may attempt to "reconcile" the two perspectives - something which only needs done if a person *denies* Scripture's affirmation that both coexist. They may excuse their sinful choices, perhaps blaming "sovereignty" for them. They may claim that God is weak or limited in power, thinking that human responsibility is meaningless otherwise.

The follower of Jesus will accept what Scripture says about these two concepts, and will let Scripture influence the way he responds to them. He will affirm the *importance* of his choices, and will take seriously his need to *obey* Jesus. He will give praise to God for what God has done

in the past, and will trust him for what he will do in the future. He will give God credit for his salvation, though (at the same time) admitting his own need to *choose* to follow Jesus.

When God sovereignly accomplishes his purposes, he doesn't normally go *against* the laws of nature (which he *created*) - though if he wants, he can. More often, he *uses* the laws of nature, often in very unexpected ways. Unsaved people may choose to call it "coincidence" or "luck," when things work out in some specific way. However, followers of Jesus can thankfully praise God for what happens, and can describe it as God *providentially* working in creation. (This word "providence" used to be a common term, before the world started denying that God had an influence in what happens in life. It would be good for each follower of Jesus to reflect on what that word means.)

Human sin has affected all of creation, either directly or indirectly. This is the cause of all the pain, suffering and injustice in the world - and if we *really* understand the seriousness of our sin, we will be grateful that our circumstances in life are not *worse*. From the sovereignty perspective, we could say that God has providentially brought these things to pass; but if we stopped with that statement, we could easily reach false conclusions. Any mention of sovereignty or providence within the context of evil and injustice must *always* be connected with the final Day of Judgment, where justice will prevail and righteousness will rule forever. We need to remember that all injustice is *temporary* - as are *all* situations in this present world.

There is a way in which God's sovereignty *does* influence human responsibility: God's sovereignty *guarantees* that human responsibility will continue to exist. *Nobody - not even the devil - can take our responsibility away!* We can't blame other people for our choices. Nor can we blame the devil for our choices. (When we choose to follow him, that's *our* choice.) God's sovereignty also guarantees that there will be consequences for what we do. We may be able to choose our *actions* (even disobedience, if we wish), but we won't be able to control the *consequences* of those actions, especially at the Day of Justice.