

Sovereign Grace

Sovereign - *n.* 1. One who has supremacy or rank above, or authority over, others; a superior; a ruler, governor, lord, or master (of persons, etc.). Freq. applied to the Deity in relation to created things.

adj. 1. Of persons: Standing out above others or excelling in some respect.
2. Of things, qualities, etc.: Supreme, paramount; principal, greatest, or most notable.

Grace - *n.* Favour, favourable or benignant regard or its manifestation (now only on the part of a superior); favour or goodwill, in contradistinction to right or obligation, as the ground of a concession.

I. What is meant by "Sovereign Grace"?

1. God's sovereignty.

- A. God is a sovereign: He is a great, powerful, glorious, victorious, majestic, king which reigns over all (**1Ch 29:11-12**).
 - i. God is sovereign over his natural creation (**Pro 8:29; Job 38:4-11; Psa 104:5-9; Jer 5:22**).
 - ii. In the same way, God is also sovereign over the hearts of men (**Pro 21:1 c/w 2Ch 10:15; Pro 16:9**).
 - iii. He is also sovereign over the hearts and the works of the wicked (**Psa 76:10; Rev 17:17**).
- B. God does whatever He wants, whenever He wants to, for whatsoever reason He wants (**Dan 4:35**).
 - i. God does what He wants for His own pleasure (**Isa 46:9-10; Psa 115:3; Psa 135:6**).
 - ii. No man has any right to question God (**Dan 4:35; Job 9:12**).
 - iii. God has no counselors, none to instruct Him (**Rom 11:33-36 c/w Isa 40:12-14**).
 - iv. Therefore God answers, nor explains Himself, to no man (**Job 33:12-14**).
- C. Jesus Christ is this sovereign God of the universe (**1Ti 6:15-16**).
- D. Potentate - 1. A person endowed with independent power; a prince, monarch, ruler.

2. God's grace.

- A. Grace is the act of God whereby he saves men who are dead in sins (**Eph 2:4-5**).
- B. It is by the grace of God that He justifies men and makes them heirs of eternal life (**Tit 3:7**).
- C. Grace is a free act of God: like the old hymn says, "Grace is free" (**Rom 3:24**).

3. God's sovereignty in grace.

- A. God's sovereignty is not limited to controlling the motions of the seas and the machinations of men; He is also sovereign in the salvation of men's souls.
- B. He is also sovereign when it comes to:

- i. Whom He chooses to love and hate (**Rom 9:11-13**).
- ii. Whom He chooses to have mercy and compassion upon (**Rom 9:15**).
- iii. Whom He chooses to harden (**Rom 9:17-18**).
- C. It is according to His will, not ours, that He chose to predestinate some men to be his children by adoption (**Eph 1:5,11**).
- D. It is according to His sovereign mercy that He chose to elect men unto eternal salvation, not man's will or resolve (**Rom 9:16**).
- E. Just as the potter has power over the clay to make with it what he wants, so God has power over fallen man to form them into what He wants, and we have no right to question Him (**Rom 9:19-23**).

II. The necessity of sovereign grace.

1. If men in their natural state were not dead in trespasses and in sins, could hear and understand the gospel, seek God, fear God, and please God, then it could be conceivable that God could have somehow made eternal salvation *possible* and left it up to men to choose to accept it by believing the gospel.
2. The problem with this hypothetical scenario is that none these conditions are true of the natural man.
3. The Bible teaches that mankind is dead (not sick, or weak) in sins (**Eph 2:1**).
4. Dead - 1. That has ceased to live; deprived of life; in that state in which the vital functions and powers have come to an end, and are incapable of being restored:
5. This spiritual death was the result of Adam's sin (**Gen 2:17 c/w Gen 3:6 c/w Rom 5:12**).
6. The result of this spiritual death is that man in his natural state is incapable of:
 - A. Being righteous (**Rom 3:9-10**); in fact they are free from it (**Rom 6:20**).
 - B. Hearing God's words (**Joh 8:43,47**).
 - C. Understanding the gospel / spiritual things (**Rom 3:11 c/w 1Co 1:18; 1Co 2:14**)
 - D. Believing in Jesus (**Joh 10:26 c/w John 10:28**).
 - E. Seeking God (**Rom 3:11**).
 - F. Doing good (**Rom 3:12**).
 - G. Fearing God (**Rom 3:18**).
 - H. Being subject to the law of God (**Rom 8:7**).
 - I. Pleasing God (**Rom 8:8**), which includes believing in Jesus (**1Jo 3:22-23**).
7. How many men in their natural state of spiritual death in sins who cannot hear, understand, or believe the gospel, nor seek, fear, or please God, would choose to accept a conditional eternal salvation from God by hearing, understanding, and believing the gospel? Answer: None (**Rom 3:9-12**).
8. It should be obvious that if any man in his natural state of death in sins was going to be saved from it unto eternal life, it would have to be by a free act of grace from God whereby He gave, not offered, him eternal life; hence the necessity of sovereign grace.

III. The means of sovereign grace.

1. Since the entire human race is totally depraved and incapable of seeking, believing in, or obeying God; if any of them are going to be saved from their sins, it has to be by God saving them by His own will and power.
2. God, in His omniscience, knew that Adam would sin and plunge all of his posterity into sin and death (**Rom 5:12**).
 - A. When Adam sinned, he fitted us to destruction (**Rom 9:22**).
 - B. He passed down his sinful nature to all of his descendants which is why we are "by nature the children of wrath" (**Eph 2:3**) and "vessels of wrath" (**Rom 9:22**).
3. God, knowing that men would fall into sin through Adam, made a choice before the world was even created that he would choose out a portion of the human race to make them holy and without blame before Him in love (**Eph 1:4**).
 - A. God predestinated some of those children of wrath to be His own children by adopting them by Jesus Christ (**Eph 1:5**).
 - B. Predestinate - 1. Theol. Of God: To foreordain by a divine decree or purpose: a. to salvation or eternal life; to elect.
 - C. Adoption - 1. The action of voluntarily taking into any relation; esp. of taking into sonship.
 - D. Those who were predestinated were those whom God foreknew (**Rom 8:29; 1Pe 1:2**).
 - i. Foreknow - a. trans. To know beforehand, have previous knowledge of.
 - ii. This foreknowledge was knowledge of the identity of the people (**2Ti 2:19; Joh 10:14**).
 - iii. God doesn't know all men in this way (**Mat 7:23**).
 - iv. It was not knowledge of their good works or of the fact that they would seek Him in time if they had the chance, and therefore He elected them for that reason (**Psa 14:2-3 c/w Rom 3:9-12**).
 - E. God's predestination and election of some men was not based one wit on their will or works (**Rom 9:11-13**), but rather on God's mercy (**Rom 9:15-16**).
 - F. Electing men out of the lump of mankind to show mercy to them in saving them from their sins when they deserved eternal hell is called grace; hence election is called "the election of grace" (**Rom 11:5**).
4. Those whom God chose before the foundation of the world were chosen in Christ (**Eph 1:4**) and were given to Christ to give eternal life to (**Joh 6:37-39; Joh 10:27-29; Joh 17:2**).
 - A. God did not give all of mankind to Jesus, but only a limited number of them and Jesus did not give His life for all mankind, but only His sheep (**Joh 10:11,15 c/w Joh 10:26**).
 - B. No man can come unto Jesus unless the Father draws him to Him (**Joh 6:44**).
 - C. Draw - 1. a. trans. To cause (anything) to move toward oneself by the application of force; to pull.
 - D. Jesus gave eternal life to every last one that the Father gave Him without losing even one (**Joh 17:2-4 c/w Joh 10:28**).

- E. Jesus did this by offering Himself to God for His elect once (**Heb 10:14** c/w **Heb 9:12,14**).
- F. Jesus did it "by himself" (**Heb 1:3**), by His obedience alone (**Rom 5:19**).
- 5. Once God's elects' sins were paid for on the cross and they were made legally righteous and holy, Jesus then at some point in each of their lives regenerates their souls, making them born again with a new heart and a new spiritual nature (**Eze 36:24-29**).
 - A. This is referred to in scripture as:
 - i. Regeneration (**Tit 3:5**).
 - a. Regeneration - 1. a. The action of regenerating; the process or fact of being regenerated; re-creation, re-formation, etc.
2. a. In religious use: The process or fact of being born again in a spiritual sense; the state resulting from this.
 - b. Regenerate v. - 1. a. trans. In religious use: To cause to be born again in a spiritual sense; to invest with a new and higher spiritual nature.
 - ii. Being born again (**Joh 3:3,7; 1Pe 1:23**).
 - a. Born-again - a. Of, pertaining to, or characterized by (an experience of) new birth in Christ or spiritual renewal; of a Christian: placing special emphasis on this experience as a basis for all one's actions, evangelical.
 - b. fig. Regenerate, revitalized; characterized by the extreme enthusiasm of the newly converted or re-converted.
 - iii. Being born of the spirit (**Joh 3:5-6,8; Gal 4:29**)
 - iv. Being born of God (**Joh 1:13**).
 - v. Quickening (**Eph 2:1; Col 2:13**).
 - a. Quicken v. - 1. a. To give or restore life to; to make alive; to vivify or revive; to animate (as the soul the body).
 - vi. Being begotten again (**1Pe 1:3**).
 - B. God is sovereign in the new birth.
 - i. Just as the wind blows where it wishes and no man can control it, so does the Spirit make men born-again (**Joh 3:8; Joh 6:63**).
 - ii. Jesus quickens *whom He will* (**Joh 5:21**).
 - iii. Men are *dead* when Jesus quickens them, thus they have nothing to do with it (**Eph 2:1**).
 - iv. Jesus quickens men by the sovereign call of His voice (**Joh 5:25**) and dead sinners have no choice but to come to life.
 - v. A sinner is passive when he is called to new spiritual life, just as a dead man is passive when God calls him to physical life (resurrection) (**Joh 11:43 c/w Joh 12:17; Joh 5:28-29; Job 14:15**).

- vi. All that were foreknown and predestinated are called, and *only* those who were foreknown and predestinated are called (**Rom 8:29-30**).
- vii. This effectual call of regeneration is not to be confused with the gospel call to obedience.
 - a. The effectual call of regeneration to eternal life *precedes* the gospel call to faith and obedience (**Joh 5:24**).
 - b. *Heareth, believeth, and hath* are present tense verbs meaning the person who presently hears and believes *has* eternal life.
 - c. *Is passed* is a present perfect tense verb phrase which denotes an event that happened in the past, the effects of which continue into the future, meaning that the passing from death unto life occurred in the past before the person presently hears and believes.
 - d. It is the effectual call of regeneration by the voice of the Jesus Christ which causes a man to pass from death unto life (**Joh 5:25**).
 - e. To those who have only received the gospel call, it is foolishness to them (**1Co 1:23**), but to those who have been effectually called by the voice of Christ, the gospel call is the power and wisdom of God to them (**1Co 1:24**).
- viii. Men are regenerated not because God is rewarding them for their works, but because of His mercy (**Tit 3:5**).

- 6. God is sovereign in preserving one's eternal life.
 - A. God's saints are preserved *forever* (**Psa 37:28**).
 - B. Preserved - *ppl. a. 1. gen.* Kept safe, protected; kept in existence, maintained, retained, etc.
 - C. Jesus will not lose even one of those whom the Father gave Him (**Joh 6:37-39**).
 - D. No man, including himself, can pluck one of them out of God's hand (**Joh 10:28-29**).
 - E. Jesus gave *eternal* life to all his elect (**Joh 10:28; Joh 17:2-4; Heb 9:12**).
 - F. Eternal - 3. a. Infinite in future duration; that always will exist; everlasting, endless. The New Testament expressions eternal life, death, punishment, etc. are here referred to sense 3, this being the sense in which the adj. in such contexts is ordinarily taken.
 - G. Temporary eternal life is an oxymoron.

IV. The fairness of sovereign grace.

- 1. Does this mean that people who really want to go to heaven won't be saved if they are not God's elect?
 - A. No, those who hunger after righteousness are blessed and shall be filled (**Mat 5:6**).

- B. Those who seek for glory, honour, and immortality will have eternal life (**Rom 2:7**).
 - C. Those who cry unto God are His elect (**Luk 18:7**).
 - D. If a person desires to be saved from his sins, it is evidence that he is one of God's elect.
2. If election is true, does that mean that heaven will be a relatively empty place?
- A. It is true that God's elect are described as a remnant (**Rom 11:5; Rom 9:27**).
 - B. Remnant - 1. a. With the. That which remains or is left of a thing or things after the removal of a portion; the remainder, rest, residue.
Now applied only to a small remaining part.
 - C. But consider, even if God's elect only comprise 10% (**Isa 6:13**) of the human race, that is still 700 million people (7 billion * 0.10) only counting the population today. It has been estimated that 90 billion people have lived since creation, so that would be 9 billion (90 billion * 0.10) in heaven.
 - D. That is:
 - i. 28.8 times the entire population of the USA (9,000,000,000 / 312,000,000).
 - ii. 2,372 people per sq. mile of the entire USA (9,000,000,000 / 3,794,000 sq. miles)
 - iii. 3.7 people per acre of the entire USA (9,000,000,000 / 2,428,160,000 acres)
 - iv. 103,520 people per sq. mile of MN (9,000,000,000 / 86,940 sq. miles)
 - v. 162 people per acre of MN (9,000,000,000 / 55,641,600 acres)
 - vi. If lying in a line head to toe, they would wrap around the earth 411 times (9,000,000,000 x 6Ft / 131,477,280 Ft)
 - E. Put another way, if each of them would contribute \$1, it would run the US federal government for 20.8 hours (\$9,000,000,000 / (\$3,796,000,000,000 / 365 days * 24 hours))
3. If the doctrine of God's sovereign election of grace is true, won't it result in less people in heaven than the free-will gospel will?
- A. Arminianism teaches that only those who hear and believe the gospel will be saved eternally.
 - B. According to Arminianism, a tribe out in the deepest jungles of Africa who hasn't heard the gospel will be sent to hell.
 - C. The Bible teaches that all those who hear and believe have eternal life, but it also says that God's redeemed comprise men from *every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation* (**Rev 5:9**).
 - D. The Bible even teaches that some people who are enemies of the gospel are God's elect and will be saved (**Rom 11:28-29**).
 - E. So it is the doctrine of sovereign grace, not Arminianism that will have more folks in heaven.