

THE TOP TEN GRACE KILLERS¹

Grace Killer #8 Misunderstanding the Sovereignty of God

A. Definition of “Sovereign”

Usually, when defining a word for a study, we use the Greek definition. Oddly enough, the word “sovereign” and “sovereignty” in most translations do not appear in the Bible in English when referring to God. This is stunning when considering how commonly the term “God is sovereign,” is used in the church today. What most people mean when they say, “God is sovereign,” is that God can do whatever He wants, but that’s not what “sovereign” means. What it really means is that no one can tell God what to do.

B. A few translations use the word “Sovereign” in 1 Timothy 6:15, but the word isn’t actually “sovereign” when translated in the Greek.

1 Timothy 6:15 NASB

Which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

- “Sovereign” Greek *dunastēs* (*doo-nas'-tace*)
From G1410; a ruler or officer: - of great authority, mighty, potentate.
- G1410 *dunamai* (*doo'-nam-ahee*)
Of uncertain affinity; to be able or possible: - be able, can (do, + -not), could, may, might, be possible, be of power.
- Thayer Definition of *dunastēs*
 - 1) a prince, a potentate
 - 2) a courtier, high officer, royal minister of great authority
- **Thus, the more accurate translation of this verse is:²**
“He who is the blessed and only Ruler-High Officer-Royal Minister of Great Authority-Prince-Potentate”

Since we can find no definition for the word “sovereign” in the Greek, let us consult the Webster’s dictionary in English.

1. *obsolete (no longer used in this sense)*: supreme excellence or an example of it
2. a : supreme power especially over a body politic
b : freedom from external control : autonomy
c : controlling influence
3. d: one that is sovereign; *especially* : an autonomous state

So to be sovereign means to have supreme power over something, to be free from external control, to be a controlling influence.

Notice again, the definition does not say that a “sovereign” controls everything. It means nothing controls Him.

For example, a country might be sovereign, meaning it is free from external control from other countries. However, being sovereign does NOT mean that it has control over other countries.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all scripture is taken from the NKJV.

² Out of 47 English versions of the Bible only 15 chose the word “Sovereign”. FYI

TRUTH: God is sovereign in the sense that no one controls Him or has authority above His.
ERROR: Since God is “sovereign” everything that happens to us in this life has a DIVINE purpose and is either caused or allowed by God. EVERYTHING that happens is God’s will.

How is misunderstanding the sovereignty of God a **GRACE KILLER**?

- “Sovereignty” is used to say that even though salvation is offered to “whoever” only those God chooses will be saved and that He also chooses who will not be saved.
 - “Sovereignty” is used to say that God’s gifts can be taken away if He so wills.
 - “Sovereignty” is used to say that God allows evil to come into our lives.
 - “Sovereignty” causes us to accept evil instead of fighting against it.
 - “Sovereignty” is an insult to His grace and loving nature. It says that our loving God sends evil on or withholds good that He has promised from His beloved children to “teach them” or “help them mature” or “so that good can come out of evil”.
- I If we believe that “everything that happens to us is ordained of God”:
- A We will have an uncertain and fearful relationship with our Father because we’ll never know what He’s going to do even though He’s promised to do certain things.
 - B We will end up accepting things that are not from God, making us punching bags for the enemy.
 - C We will have trouble receiving His grace (His unmerited favor).
- II From where does this lie originate?
- A The enemy lies to us. He wants to be God, so he lies to us in such a way that we start to believe that evil is from God and good is from Satan, when it is the complete opposite.
Matthew 5:43-45
“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.³
 - B Speculation/Inventions/Traditions Of Man
 1. People try to make sense out of a painful situation and simply make things up to explain what they don’t understand.
 - a. A baby passes away, and someone says, “God needed the baby in heaven to be a little cherubim for him.”⁴
 2. Since God causes all things to work together for good, people falsely conclude that since something good came out of a bad situation, then the bad situation must have been from God.
 - a. Someone dies, for example, and a few people get saved as a result of hearing a sermon at the funeral. So, it is concluded that God “took” the person so that those people would get saved. No. Jesus died so that we could be saved. The

³ Both rain and sun are considered to be blessings. Rain is not a punishment as some imply.

⁴ Yes, we actually heard a Christian minister say this publicly at a funeral for a baby. There is ZERO evidence that humans become angels when they die. The minister was trying to comfort the family, but he was not speaking honestly.

people got saved because they heard the gospel. God took the awful situation and worked it for good.

III Misused Pre-New Covenant Scripture

A God, in His sovereignty, determines His dealings with different groups of people over the course of history according to His wisdom and overall plan. He had a covenant with Abraham, for example that was different that He had with the Children of Israel under the Old Covenant. God didn't punish or rebuke Abraham for his faults, but the people under the Old Covenant were cursed for not obeying the law (Deut. 28:15-68). Under the New, we are blessed and cannot be cursed. We also read that Satan will be bound for a thousand year during the millennial reign, but we also read that he will be "released for a season" (Rev. 20:1-3, 7-10). We are left to speculate as to "why", but we can trust that God knows what He's doing and it is in His plan. Ultimately, all evil will be cast into the lake of fire, and there will be a new heaven and a new earth. We might not understand completely why God doesn't throw them into the Lake of fire right now and be done with it or why He had grace toward Abraham and established the Law, or why the New Covenant was established when it was, but this is a proper use of the word sovereign: We don't get to tell God what to do. He has a plan for all that He has made, and even though we don't understand everything, we can trust that He knows what He's doing.

B JOB vs. Believers in Jesus

Although we can greatly learn from his story and be inspired by his patience, Job was not a New Covenant believer. He wasn't even an Old Covenant believer. As far as we know he had no covenant with God at all.

1 Job lived when Satan had dominion.

→ We are free from Satan's power because Jesus defeated Satan.

Hebrews 2:14-15

*Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, **that through death He might destroy him who HAD the power of death, that is, the devil,** ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

2 Job did not have a covenant with God.

→ We have a covenant with God based on superior promises even to the Old Covenant.

Hebrews 8:6

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

3 Job could not call upon the provision of divine healing from Jesus' wounds.

→ We can declare, "By His wounds I WAS healed."

1 Peter 2:24

*He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—**by whose stripes you were healed.***

4 Job said, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away,"

→ We say, "My God gives and does not take away."

James 1:17

*Every **good gift** and every **perfect gift** is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

Romans 11:29

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Romans 8:31-32

"If God is for us, who can be against us?³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely GIVE us all things?"

- 5 **Job's friends said that the reason Job was suffering was because he had some hidden sin in his life.**

→ We say, "I am forgiven. God is not holding my sins against me."

Hebrews 8:12

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Romans 4:8

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.

- 6 **Job was ignorant of what Satan was doing. He didn't know who was waging war against him, so he accused God.**

→ We know that when evil comes, it isn't from God. We know how the enemy operates. We don't accuse God of evil.

2 Corinthians 2:11

Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

John 10:10

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

- 7 **Job had no way to resist Satan's attacks against him.**

→ However, because Jesus disarmed Satan, we believers can and should resist the devil.

1 Peter 5:8-9

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 **Resist him, steadfast in the faith**, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*

C Misuse of Romans 8:28.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

→ This verse does NOT say that all things are God's will nor that all things are from God, rather that no matter what happens (His will or not) He will work it out for our good.

D Misunderstanding of 1 Thessalonians 5:18

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

This is NOT saying that we thank God for evil. We thank Him in everything not for everything. We praise Him even when everything seems to be going wrong because He is God and we love Him and we know that He will work all things together for our good.

THE TRUTH SETS FREE

IV Not everything that happens is God's will.

A It is not God's will that anyone perish, yet people do.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

B We are instructed to know what God's will is. There would be no need to seek to know God's will if it automatically happen.

Ephesians 5:17

Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

C Even while still under the Old Covenant, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." If His will were automatic, there would be no need for them to pray this.

D Christians are instructed to pray according to His will. There would be no need to pray according to His will if everything happening in our lives is from God.

1 John 5:14-15

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

E We are told to resist the enemy's work. There would be no need to resist the devil if God automatically "allowed" or "disallowed" evil to come into our life.

1 Peter 5:8-9

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

F Jesus encourages us to ask, to speak to mountains, to have faith. If everything automatically happens that is God's will and if everything that happens is His will, there IS ABOSLUTELY NO REASON TO ASK FOR ANYTHING.

Matthew 7:8-11

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give GOOD things to those who ask Him!

John 16:24

Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Mark 11:20-24

Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. ²¹ And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." ²² So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. ²³ For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. ²⁴ Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

V Why do bad things happen to good people?

A Everything is not yet under His feet.

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. ²⁸ Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Hebrews 2:8

You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

- B The devil was thoroughly defeated at the cross. Even though the devil was defeated, he is still the god of this world. The devil’s goal is to continually distort the image of God, and when this is done, the light (grace) of God is prevented from shining/enlightening them.**

Colossians 2:15

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

2 Corinthians 4:4

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

- C This world promotes and glorifies evil.**

2 Timothy 3:1-5

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

- D God has given mankind a free will.**

- E Mankind, especially non-redeemed man, often does NOT do God’s will.**

- F The devil and his angels still seek to steal, kill, and destroy (which is not God’s will).**

- G Non-believers are under the power of the evil one (John 8:44).**

- H Many Christians do not know what the will of God is and accept enemy attacks.**

- If someone does not know that God wants to meet their needs, they might accept poverty.
- If someone doesn’t know he is forgiven of all sin, he’ll go on feeling he needs to “get right with God”.
- If someone does not understand that Jesus provided for his healing and even believes that being sick is a blessing from God, he might remain sick instead of resisting the enemy.

VI THE TRUTH THAT SETS FREE

- A God IS sovereign. Sovereign means “to rule over”. He rules over His kingdom.**

- B God’s kingdom is established on principles that HE sets.**

- C We need to know these principles.**

- D We are members of and participators in His kingdom.**

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

VII KINGDOM PRINCIPLES⁵

A God is love.

1 John 4:16

And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

B He loves all of mankind.

John 3:16a

For God so (in this way-by giving His life) loved the world that He gave (in death) His only begotten Son.

Ephesians 2:4-5

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

C He came to give us everlasting life, not everlasting death.

John 3:16b

Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

1 John 5:11

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

D He wants all men to be saved.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

E He is no longer holding men's sins against them, but they must still receive His Son to be saved.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

1 John 2:2

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

F Faith is what pleases God. He calls us to believe, ask and receive. His grace is extended. We believe it and receive it by faith. This is a principle of God's sovereignty. It is the system He has set up. He forces no one to believe anything.

G It is impossible for God to lie.

Hebrews 6:18b

It is impossible for God to lie.

H He keeps His promises by grace through faith.

2 Corinthians 1:20

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

I He leads us by His Spirit NOT circumstances.

Romans 8:14

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

J God is FOR us NOT against us.

Romans 8:31

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

⁵ This list is by no means exhaustive.

K We are to understand what His will is.

Ephesians 5:17

Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

L When it is not clear from Scripture what His will is, we can ask Him directly for wisdom.

James 1:5-8

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

M God is not to be blamed for evil wrought by man to whom He's given a free will.

For example, God did not "cause" or "allow" 9-11. Evil men motivated by deep hatred plotted and carried out an attack. God can't be blamed for what Hitler and those who willfully followed him did against the Jews.

N We cannot blame God for the consequences of our unwise decisions. If you build your house on an earthquake fault, and there is an earthquake, and your house is swallowed up in the fault, don't blame God.

O God has told us much about His plan for mankind, but we simply don't know and understand everything yet. This is part of living by faith. If we knew everything, we wouldn't need to have faith. One day, we will know and understand perfectly. Right now, we are on a "need to know basis". God tells us what we need to know and conceals what He chooses.

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

P As members of His kingdom, we are invited to participate in His kingdom through:

1 Having a relationship with Him

2 Loving one another

3 Prayer & Supplication

4 Evangelism

5 Ministry to the body

6 Resisting the enemy

A misunderstanding of God's sovereignty is a grace killer is because it distorts the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4). It presents a false view of who He is and how He works in this world and in His people. If we believe that everything that happens is either done or allowed by God and that everything, even evil wrought by the devil, has a divine purpose, then we must conclude that even evil is allowed by Him. We are left to believe that God randomly helps one and not another. We end up never able to trust Him or to resist the devil. We end up thinking the devil's work is God's will, and we can't fully fight a spiritual battle. We end up thinking that if God really cared about me He wouldn't let anything bad happen to me. Paul did not struggle with these kind of thoughts. When he was unjustly beaten or arrested, he never blamed God or asked why. Paul chose to worship (Acts 16).

If our image of God is distorted, our relationship and intimacy with Him is damaged.

Luke 15:11-33

And He said, "A man had two sons. ¹² The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. ¹³ And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his

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estate with loose living. ¹⁴ Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. ¹⁷ But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" ²⁰ So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; ²³ and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. ²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' ²⁸ But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. ²⁹ But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; ³⁰ but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' ³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'"

- The younger son chose to leave. He chose to spend His inheritance unwisely. He ended up feeding pigs. This was not his father's will for his son, and it certainly wasn't his fault. It was the son's choice.
- The younger son wrongly concluded that the father didn't care about him because of the wrong choices he made. He assumed that if he went back, it would have to be as a servant and not as a son.
- Yet, the father showed him compassion and love and received him back as a full son.
- The older son did not chose to waste his father's money. He stayed home and religiously did everything he thought he was supposed to do. Even so, he did not know the heart of his father. He thought the father would have rejected and punished his brother and that he should have rewarded him for his good behavior. He was angry that he received him with open arms. He thought the father was keeping things from him, and did not know the father's heart and desire for him.
- Yet the father pleaded with him (as God is pleading with the church now) and the father said he was always with him, and that all he had was already his son's.

IN CONCLUSION

1. A false view of the sovereignty of God gives a false view of God Himself.
2. It introduces uncertainty and fear into our relationship with God.
3. It causes us to lie docile while the enemy wages war against us.

When we have a proper perspective of God we have faith to receive His grace (unmerited favor) and believe in the promises He has made. We are bold to fight against enemy attacks. We are confident to ask, believe, and receive because we know that His promises are Yes and Amen. Most importantly, we live free from fear and uncertainty in our relationship with God.