

# The Control of God

## God is sovereign

---

- Dan 4:34-35
- Job 42:2
- Isa 43:13
- Isa 46:10
- Eph 1:11
- God is completely in control
- He is perfectly free – He answers to no-one; there is no external restraint on Him
- There is no power that can thwart Him; if He purposes to do something, nobody can stop Him
- But how does He exercise His sovereignty?

## Examples

---

Sometimes God's sovereignty is viewed as if He were a divine puppet master – pulling all the strings to make everyone do exactly what He wants in order to achieve His ends. But God's sovereignty is infinitely more profound and glorious than that.

These are examples where men (often unbelievers) or even the devil were allowed to freely exercise their will, typically for evil, and yet we see that, in the end, the Lord's will was accomplished, rather than man's or Satan's.

1. **Job 1:8 – Sifting Job:** The devil wanted to ruin him; the Lord wanted to refine him. The result? Job was purified (23:10) and his fortunes were restored (42:10).
2. **Genesis 50:20 – Joseph:** Betrayed and enslaved. God used him to save the world and, in particular, the very people who betrayed him. See Psalm 105:17 – “He sent a man before them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave.”
3. **Daniel 3 – Nebuchadnezzar:** Tries to exalt himself as God. Ends with everyone (including him) realizing that God is infinitely above him and Nebuchadnezzar freely publishing this truth to his whole empire.
4. **Daniel 6:4 – The plot to destroy Daniel:** In the end, was Daniel destroyed? He was even further exalted, the Lord was glorified, and Daniel's enemies, who had sought to exalt themselves, were destroyed.
5. **Esther – Haman's attempt to destroy the Jews:** Did everything in his power to destroy the Jews. What was the result? The Jews are exalted, the people of the land are becoming Jews, and Haman and his ilk are utterly destroyed. None of this would have happened if Haman had left well enough alone.
6. **Luke 2:1 – Caesar's census:** The most powerful man on earth chose to have a census. He had his own reasons for it. But, completely unbeknownst to him, there was another hand at work. Matthew 2:6 quotes Micah to say that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. And Luke 2:4 shows that this is how God brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.
7. **Matthew 2:16ff – Herod murdering the male children of Israel:** He did this to kill the Messiah. Did he kill the Messiah? No, rather he fulfilled the prophecy of “Out of Egypt, I called My Son.”
8. **Matthew 4 – The temptation of Christ:** Satan called His Sonship into question but only ended up validating His Sonship.

9. **Luke 13:32 – “My goal”:** Wait! Whose goal?
10. **Matthew 26:5 – “Not during the feast”:** But the Lord had decided in eternity that it would be during the feast. In fact, the whole reason the feast existed at all was for this feast (Lk 22:15). They all thought it was the first Passover that was the important one, but it was this one.
11. **John 13:1ff (esp. 3) – “His hour”:** Whose hour? Isn't this the devil's hour? Judas's hour?
12. **Luke 22:31 – Sifting Peter:** The devil wanted to sift out the wheat; the Lord wanted to sift out the chaff. And the Lord's will was accomplished.
13. **Matthew 27:39f – “Destroy this temple”:** Of all the claims they could have thrown into His face at this moment, they chose this one? They chose the one that was actually being fulfilled right in front of their eyes?
14. **Acts 8:1 – Persecuting the church:** The enemy sought to wipe out the church but what they accomplished instead was to get the church to fulfill a command that even the church was ignoring (Acts 1:8).
15. **Acts 9 – Saul of Tarsus:** Saul was eagerly persecuting Christians, hoping to wipe out the Way. We might have just wished him dead. But God had an infinitely better idea: He saved Saul. His untouchable knowledge of the Old Testament made him the ideal person to show that Christ is the Messiah and that Christianity is completely consistent with the Word of God. He is also critical evidence. Also, he learned the truth of the church as the body of Christ on the Damascus road when Christ asked him, “Why are you persecuting Me?” So he was ideally suited to reveal that truth, which was the Lord's plan for him (Eph 3:3-10).
16. **1 Corinthians 3 – The church:** We all stumble constantly in our service. We're weak and foolish and disobedient. And yet, in the end, the church is glorious and we've all had a part in it such that every one of us gets praise from God and eternal reward.
17. **Revelation:** We see man and the devil and his angels doing everything they can to overcome the Lord. But after man and Satan have done their worst, what is the book called? “The revelation of Jesus Christ”. And by the end of it, all the devil's plans are obliterated and all God's plans are fulfilled.
18. **The five martyrs of Ecuador:** Seemed a senseless waste. What had they accomplished? And yet, in the end, countless Aucas were saved and spread the gospel.
19. **Gladys Staines:** She and her husband, Graham, had been missionaries serving lepers in India for 15 years. One night in January 1999, her husband and sons, Philip (9) and Timothy (7), were burned to death by radical Hindus while sleeping in their station wagon. Gladys went on national TV and forgave the men who did it and stayed on as a missionary. Once they were captured and tried, she appealed for clemency for this. An act of vicious, monstrous hate was turned into an opportunity to share the gospel with a billion people.
20. **The cross:** This is, of course, the best and ultimate example. Satan's will was done (Jn 13:2). Judas's will was done. The Pharisees' will was done. Pilate's will was done. The crowd's will was done. The Romans' will was done. Not only that, but Christ gave every one of them the opportunity to get out of it – the bread to Judas, knocking the soldiers over in the garden, the dream to Pilate's wife, etc. But in the end – when the dust had settled and the smoke had cleared – whose will was done? Acts 2:23.

*“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” – Romans 11:33-36*