

## God's Sovereignty: Implication to the Church

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### Abstract

The paper starts by making it clear that despite what people think; God is absolutely in control of history. The paper continues by stating that it aims at making the church to look inward for the solution of the numerous problems of this nation. The working definitions of the terms "church" and "sovereignty" are given. Church as used here is a collective name of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sovereignty of God on the other hand, simply means that God is infinitely supreme over all. It goes ahead to show that the sovereign God, can use anything and any circumstances - good or bad - to accomplish his purpose. It goes on to enumerate some calamities in this nation maintaining that God has allowed it to come to us for a purpose. It reminds Christians that they are both salt and light of this nation. If the nation is decaying and all groping in darkness, it could be because the church has failed in her God-given responsibilities. It therefore calls on the church to consider her ways and go back to God so that the sovereign God can heal our nation.

### Introduction

A lot of events are going on in the world today, which makes some people to blasphemously think that the God of creation is beginning to loose control of His creation. This type of thinking is only borne out of stack ignorance of what the Bible teaches about God.

The truth remains that there are many events in human history that defy both human and scientific explanations. This may explain why different people look at the happenings in the world and come out with different explanations using various world views. For instance, deism does not relate events of history to God. It assumes that after creation, God abandoned the world. Pantheism on the other hand, assumes that creation does not have a distinct existence by itself as it is only a part of God (Berkhof, 1994). Naturalistic determinism explains events of history in terms of chain reactions. That is, one event leading to another. Yet to many, events of this life just came by chance. However, this paper aligns itself with the Bible which teaches that all events of creation from

what we consider major events to minor events are determined by God. This sovereign God controls history.

Some Christians who have been told something about God and His attributes often assert that God controls history but at times, it is doubtful what that assertion means to them. This is because these same individuals often fail to relate this assertion to certain events of this life especially those that appear inconsequential and/or the evil acts of history.

The purpose of this paper is to show that God (and not our circumstances) is in control of human history even in Nigeria. This paper will, however, restrict itself to God's sovereignty and the calamities in our nation with the aim of making the church to look inwards for the solution of our numerous problems as a nation.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### ***The Church***

The word 'church' remains a little bit difficult to define. This is because the word means different things to different people at different situations and circumstances.

Chaffer (1974: 236) simply defines it as "a living union of all true believers in Christ". To Clowney (1998), it refers to the people of God, the community and body of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It has also been defined elsewhere as the "fellowship of saints or people of God (1 Pt 2:9). Or the bride of Christ saved and sanctified by Him for union with Himself (Eph. 5: 25ff). Indeed it is the body of Jesus Christ, He being the head, or whole body and the Christians the members (Rom 12: 5; 1 Cor. 12: 12ff)" (Zondervan, 2002: 11). It is, therefore the view of this paper that the church is a collective name for all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. So every fellowship group, local assembly, denomination and/or group of Christians are all inclusive in the term church.

#### **Sovereignty (of God)**

The only way to describe God is by what He does. He is therefore best described by His character or attributes. One of the main attributes of God is His sovereignty. By this we mean that God is supreme over all. He yields to no other power, authority or glory and is not subject to any absolute greater than Himself (Chaffer, 1974). He represents perfection to an infinite degree in every aspect of His being (Onwuka, 2011; Macleod, 1998).

Freeman (2001: 172) is of the view that sovereignty means "the exercise of supreme authority within a limited sphere". This implies that God is free from external control, He is the supreme authority over all creations. God has the authority to establish His own plan, His own laws and His own judgments. The implication of this is that God the Creator has absolute, supreme, airtight control of all things as He directs and superintends all events in accordance with the counsel of His will as can be seen in Ephesians 1:11. He can therefore do anything He wants to do anywhere, anytime. He remains answerable to no one and does what pleases Him; He executes His plans without recourse to any man (Onwubiko, 2009; Thieme, 2009; Thieme, 1998).

When we therefore talk of the sovereignty of God, it means that as a supreme Being, of the universe (Deut 4: 39), the King of heaven and earth (Ps 47: 2, 93: 2), He has absolute prerogative and volition. He is eternal, He is infinite and self determining and no one has any right whatsoever to question Him (Onwuka, 2011).

### **God's Sovereignty and Man**

It is important to know that God in heaven has full control of **ALL** the affairs of man here on earth. The characters of God which include His sovereignty, His omniscience, His omnipotence and all other attributes of His, guarantee that He is in total control of all that happens here on earth and at the same time, nothing can take Him by surprise. He therefore has a very firm grip on all that is happening here on earth (Onwuka, 2011 & Thieme, 1998).

In controlling the affairs of man here on earth, God uses both direct and indirect means. By indirect means, He allows certain things to happen which He eventually turns to His own glory. A good example is in the case of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. He allowed Satan to get our Lord Jesus Christ crucified which turned out to be for the salvation of mankind (Acts 2: 22-36). Another example is in the case of Joseph. God allowed his jealous brothers to sell him into slavery in Egypt. Though God has in His plan that Joseph would go to Egypt, he used the dirty works of Joseph's siblings to accomplish this (Gen 50: 19, 20).

God in His character cannot be involved in any type of evil and cannot collaborate with Satan in anything. However, as a sovereign God, he uses the evil men/means to accomplish His own good plans. This Biblical principle is clearly stated thus: "For the wrath of man shall praise you" (Ps. 76:10). In another case,

the Bible states that "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8: 28).

In some other cases, God in His infinite wisdom directly uses His sovereignty to direct the affairs of men on earth (Isa 48: 8-11). From the book of Genesis, we can see where God in his wisdom, displays this sovereignty in the destruction of men. In Gen 6: 5-7 and 7: 10-21, we see how God destroyed the wicked generation of Noah. In Gen 11: 1-8, we see God scattering and destroying the inhabitants of the earth, for planning to frustrate His plan of "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" of Gen 1: 28 and Gen 9:1. Lastly, in Genesis 18:20 and 19:24-25, we read how sinful and wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were directly destroyed by God.

It remains a fact that God in His sovereignty can take any measure and use any means to deter anyone, any group of people or nation that is working contrary to His will. Everything is at God's disposal and He uses them for His own pleasure. Some of the things He can use if and when He chooses include floods, storms, tornadoes, scorching heats, hurricanes, burning flames or flames of fire-just to mention a few. He can use (and does use) anything and/or person to achieve His aim. In fact He uses them at will since none of His plans can fail. In some cases, He uses some of these calamities to draw the attention of His people to Himself as can be seen in the prophesies of Haggai (Hag 1 & 2).

In Ps 104: 4, we see that God makes "the winds His messengers" and "flaming fires His ministers". This simply means that the sovereign God uses them at will. From Lev. 26: 14-17, we can conclude that the sovereign God can even use terrorist and terrorism as His agents to punish His people if they deviate from the truth with the sole aim of bringing them back to Himself. In some cases, He uses economic disasters to bring or call the attention of believers to Himself as seen in Ezekiel 14: 13-14. Re-emphasizing all these, prophet Isaiah insists that it is God who forms light and darkness and one who causes well being and creates calamities (Isa 45: 7).

### **God's Sovereignty and Nigeria**

Things are not really moving on well in Nigeria today. As a nation, we are having serious security challenges that are even threatening our corporate existence. Terrorism, armed robbery, kidnapping and a lot of evil are the order of the day now. Last year, we had floods affecting many states in this nation. Analysts are predicting that this year may be worse. Apart from these, so many farmers have suffered crop failure and it appears that inflation is still going up.

The public sector does not fare better. Most of our infrastructures are broken down. Despite all the money pumped into the power sector; nothing appears to be improving in that direction. The educational sector is not faring better either. Today, we have lots of graduates who find it difficult (if not impossible) to express themselves in English. Examination malpractices and certificate forgeries/racketeering have made nonsense of our paper qualifications. In spite of all our resources, our hospitals are worse than mere consulting clinics. They are all in terrible shapes and no one goes there and gets adequate treatment even for a common ailment like malaria.

Tribalism, ethnicity and nepotism remain the bane of our society. Even in the church, these ugly trends are noticeable. It appears our nation is not moving forward. Both the leaders and the led lack strong sense of patriotism. The civil servants are not dedicated to their duties. We have been known as a nation of bribery and corruption. It is like we are cursed as a nation.

### **God's Sovereignty and its Implication to the Church**

The church in Nigeria needs to understand that whatever is happening to us as a nation must have come directly or indirectly from God. The unfortunate thing is that we have not taken time as a church to look inward. We are busy blaming our leaders, politicians, our enemies, non-Christians and many others for the woes of this country. It is high time we looked inward and see how we can be a solution to the problems of this nation.

The happenings in this nation call for serious self-examination on the part of the church. The Bible encourages us to do just that when it says "in the days of prosperity be happy, but in the days of adversity consider. God has made one as well as the other" (Eccl 7: 14). Based on this, it is high time the church asked questions concerning the happenings in this country. As Christians we are called and meant to be the salt and the light of this world. (Matt 5:13, 14). Salt is known as a preservative agent while light is to help people find their way out of darkness. Today, the church needs to ask herself these questions:

- i. Why is our nation in a very serious state of decadence?
- ii. Why is everybody in this nation groping in the dark?
- iii. Could it be that as a church we have failed in our responsibilities of preserving and guiding this nation?

### **Conclusion**

Using the Bible, this paper demonstrates that God alone directly or indirectly causes all that happens to us either as an individual or as a nation. It is therefore, clear that God is in heaven controlling the affairs of men here on earth (Dan 4: 17, 25). There is, therefore, the need for the church to look inward and see how she can be part of the solution to our national crises by taking up our position both as the salt and the light of this world.

### **Recommendations**

It is high time the church looked inside for the solution of our problems in this country. There is the need for us to return to our sovereign Lord for Him to heal our nation. He has allowed these crises to be going on in this nation because of our failure as a church let us go back to Him as per 2 Chron 7: 14.

The church must recognize that history is not a series of chance happenings but the unfolding of a well-thought out plan by a sovereign God who controls history. The understanding of the sovereignty of God will help us not to yield the control of our life to any human being or circumstance. We need to understand that the God who controls history is the architect of all that happens in and around us. The church will by understanding the sovereignty of God, stop giving too much attention to Satan. We must stop the idea of crediting anything that happens good or bad to Satan. God has never and will never loose control of the events of this world.

As a church, we must stop living our lives in fear knowing that our great and sovereign God is in control of all things. We must not be too anxious of our safety because that has been assured us by the sovereign God in His plans for us. This is clearly stated when the Psalmist says "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safely (Ps 4: 8).

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