

What Does It Mean That God Is Sovereign?

Crucial Questions

R. C. SPROUL

What Does It Mean
That God Is Sovereign?

Crucial Questions booklets provide a quick introduction to definitive Christian truths. This expanding collection includes titles such as:

Who Is Jesus?

Can I Trust the Bible?

Does Prayer Change Things?

Can I Know God's Will?

How Should I Live in This World?

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

Can I Be Sure I'm Saved?

What Is Faith?

What Can I Do with My Guilt?

What Is the Trinity?

TO BROWSE THE REST OF THE SERIES,
PLEASE VISIT: LIGONIER.ORG/CQ

CQ

What Does It Mean That God Is Sovereign?

R. C. SPROUL



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

What Does It Mean That God Is Sovereign?

© 2021 by the R.C. Sproul Trust

Published by Ligonier Ministries
421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771
Ligonier.org

Printed in China

RR Donnelley

0000122

First printing

ISBN 978-1-64289-335-9 (Paperback)

ISBN 978-1-64289-336-6 (ePub)

ISBN 978-1-64289-337-3 (Kindle)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher, Ligonier Ministries. The only exception is brief quotations in published reviews.

Cover design: Ligonier Creative

Interior typeset: Katherine Lloyd, The DESK

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021931235

Contents

One	God's Sovereignty over Nothing	1
Two	God's Sovereignty over Creation	13
Three	God's Sovereignty over Salvation.	27
Four	God's Sovereignty over Human Actions.	45
Five	God's Sovereignty over Evangelism	61

Chapter One

God's Sovereignty over Nothing

The title of this opening chapter might cause confusion. God's sovereignty over nothing? Doesn't that suggest that there is nothing over which God is sovereign? But surely God's sovereignty extends over everything. To find out what we mean by "God's sovereignty over nothing," we must go back to the beginning, to Genesis 1:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and

What Does It Mean That God Is Sovereign?

darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. (Gen. 1:1–7)

And so the text of Genesis continues, day by day, segment by segment, expressing the transcendent mystery of all mysteries: the creation of all things by a sovereign God. Augustine of Hippo described this as a work accomplished *ex nihilo*, out of nothing.

It might be easy for us to say that God creates *ex nihilo*, but to conceive of this work of creation is beyond our

intellectual capacity. The first element, the idea of nothing, is beyond our ability to comprehend. What is nothing?

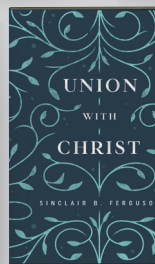
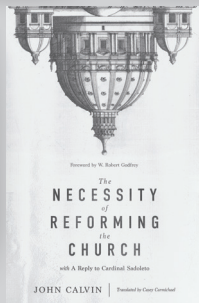
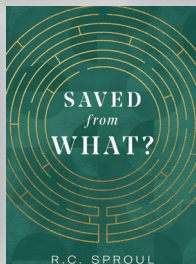
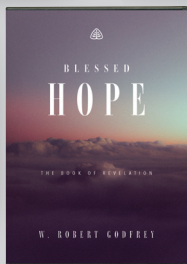
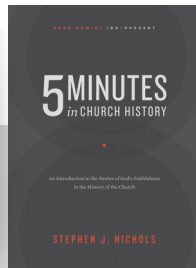
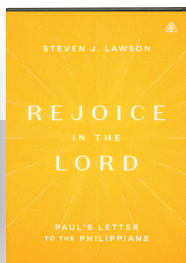
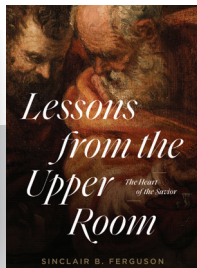
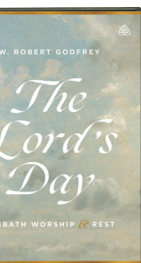
It's nothing. The problem with nothing is that when we say, "There is nothing," we are speaking nonsense because the verb *is* is a form of the verb *to be*, and the one thing that nothingness lacks is "*be*-ness." So, we can't speak of nothingness, and we can't say, "There is nothing" or "There was nothing," because to say that there *is* such a thing as nothing would be to attribute something to it, when *nothing is not*.

When we speak of *nothing*, we are using a word that functions as a type of definition that has a rich history in theological and philosophical investigation: the way of negation. The way of negation is a method of definition by which we define something not by stating positively what it *is* but rather by using negative language to say what it is *not*.

In theology, we use the way of negation all the time. When we say, for example, that God is infinite, what are we saying? He's not finite. When we say that God is immutable, we are saying that He is not given to change and mutation.

When we talk about *nothing*, we are using the way of negation and making a distinction between *something* and

We want to see men and women
around the world connect the deep truths
of the Christian faith to everyday life.



Order your copy of this title, download the digital version,
or browse thousands of resources at **Ligonier.org**.



LIGONIER MINISTRIES