



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Presenting **every man** perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 42  
Issue 1038

# How a Deadly Tornado Revealed God's Perfect Hand in All Things

by — Mike Owens

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### Key Points:

Understanding and accepting God's sovereignty can radically change the way Christians comprehend life events and how they respond to suffering.....8723  
God is all-powerful and all-knowing, and His sovereignty extends to everything, including disasters, personal decisions, and even life and death.....8725

God determines every detail of life and death, including the death of Christ and of every individual, as part of His perfect and sovereign plan.....8726  
Accepting God's sovereignty, even in tragedy, allows believers to find peace and give God glory, recognizing that everything is part of His perfect plan.....8729

When asked if we believe in the sovereignty of God, most of us will declare, "Yes." However, upon a closer inspection, we might be surprised at what we truly believe. Where we find ourselves on this crucial issue will determine almost every position we hold.



tions of that acknowledgment.

What is the sovereignty of God? It is His absolute power and dominion over His creatures and all of His creation – including every molecule, thought and decision.

Many Christians have stated that the greatest and most important change in their lives was seeing the sovereignty of God – seeing and understanding that God is sovereign in *everything*. Coming to terms with this truth is radical, and it will change the way you comprehend events in your life and the way you respond.

Those Christians who take that statement lightly might consider that they have not really come to terms with this truth. That's the way I was for most of my Christian life: acknowledging the sovereignty of God, but not really thinking through the implica-

On the night of May 9, 2006, a tornado destroyed our home in Texas. Our youngest son, Colson, died in our home that night at the age of fourteen.

God gave his mother and I an amazing comfort, a "peace that passes all understanding" (cf. Philippians 4:7).

The grief is real, and it will always be there as a sign of the love we have for our son, whom we miss every day.

One of the things I learned was that God doesn't *allow* tornadoes – He *plans* them. In fact, He controls them better than a surgeon with a scalpel. How-

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### Bible Student's Notebook™

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

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*Scripture education in a weekly format!*

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unpropheesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

*We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar*

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ever, that was not my view until a few years after the storm.

## SOVEREIGN OVER ALL

Most Christians profess to believe in God's omnipotence and omniscience – that He is *all-powerful* and *all-knowing*. However, a closer look will reveal that most people, including most Christians, don't really adhere to the "all" part. In reality, most of us think that God is not sovereign over cancer cells, car wrecks, or our personal decisions.

This is a crucial issue. Most of us never come face-to-face with this topic beyond a shallow discussion. Many just never make the effort to think through this key belief. Yet this crucial matter of God's sovereignty is much more pivotal than we might realize.

The following eight questions will help reveal whether you believe in a "limited omnipotence" of God or in His complete power and sovereignty.

- 1) Does God cause deadly car wrecks?
- 2) Does He plan and cause the death of hundreds or thousands of children in a tsunami?
- 3) Has God foreordained everything that happens?
- 4) If God is omnipotent, then He has the power to stop a cancer cell, a fire, a tornado, or even a divorce. If He holds the authority to stop a disastrous event, then is He responsible for it if He does not stop it?

- 5) Is there one event that will take place today outside of God's decree?
- 6) Can our "free will" change or defy God's sovereign will?
- 7) Is there one dust particle or molecule in the universe outside of God's direction?
- 8) Does anything ever happen outside of God's sovereign will?

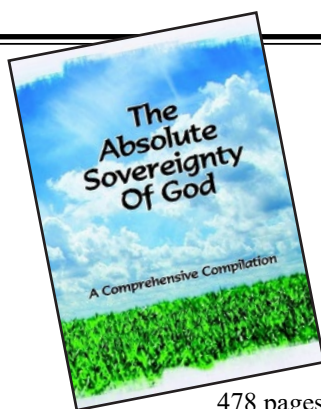
If your answers to these eight questions were not a "yes" for 1 through 4 and a "no" for 5 through 8, then you might need to evaluate whether you really believe in the biblical teaching of the sovereignty of God.

## MY JOURNEY TO GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

My son's death was a turning point in my understanding of God's sovereignty. I've come to realize that God must be in complete control of everything or nothing. That conclusion is twofold:

First, the Bible declares that God is sovereign over everything, omnipotent and omniscient – and that declaration is stated *several hundred times in Scripture*. God's Word plainly declares His total sovereignty.

Second, it makes no sense that God would be sovereign over some things but not others. Sovereign on Tuesdays, but not Thursdays. The idea that He intervenes in our lives for some things, and sits back watching as other things simply "occur," is illogical and does not fit what we know of God from the



478 pages

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## *The Absolute Sovereignty of God* (A Comprehensive Compilation)

This quintessential book victoriously celebrates and convincingly proclaims the absolute sovereignty of God. Sadly, religion has veiled the truth of the God of the Bible, making Him either an aloof deity, indifferent to the condition of the creation, or one who is at the worst cruel or at the least unloving and uncaring. Yet the loving Deity of Sacred Scripture always has had and will have sole and complete control over His entire creation. This ultimate collection of 100 works by 34 authors spans nearly 175 years. It is an extensive reference work that is essential for every library.

## Scriptures.

I had to face the implications of this. The very fact that God sees everything and knows everything, coupled with His omnipotence, means that He has to be sovereignly in control of *all*.

If He knew that a tornado was coming toward our home and, being *all*-powerful, He did not stop it, then the tornado was His doing. In fact, if I really wanted to come to terms with God's sovereignty, I needed to go a step further and ask, "Did God kill my son?"

Before I give my answer to this important question, let me tell you about a radio broadcast I heard while God was helping me to understand this subject. The radio host had a pastor from Canada on his show by telephone. They were discussing the murder of the pastor's teenage daughter, who was killed in a park behind their home just a few days prior to the interview. After talking about the details of her death, they discussed God's place in the situation. Acknowledging that God is sovereign and in control of all things, the pastor revealed that God gives us every breath we have. He sustains us, and He plans our birth as well as our death.

When I heard this grieving father admit that God had killed his daughter, I was shocked.

Many will deny that God kills anyone, much less a pastor's daughter walking through a park behind her home. This is hard. It's hard for us to admit. We want to acknowledge God's hand in the good things, but not the bad.

Yet, a truly biblical perspective will not allow us to take such a half-and-half approach.

Who killed Jesus? We can blame it on the first-century Jews, the Romans, or even ourselves. The fact is, God planned and determined every detail of His Son's death. If you don't believe that, then you should do a serious study of God's Word on this all-important question.

In fact, it even pleased God to kill His Son.

*Yet it was the LORD's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the LORD makes His life an offering for sin, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in His hand (Isaiah 53:10, EHV).*

If it was God's plan to send His own precious Son to die for our sins, how can I think that my child's life and death are beyond His sovereign and perfect plan? It gives God the glory He deserves when we agree with this truth in light of the horrors of disaster and death that each of us encounter. It is in such personal, life-and-death issues that the question of whether we really believe in God's sovereignty becomes apparent. If your response is, "No, God didn't kill your son," then you don't really believe in God's omnipotence, omniscience and sovereignty. The fact is, God *did* kill my son that night. Without exception, He kills everyone. Everyone's birth and death line up with His sovereign plan. To deny this fact is to camouflage or disguise the truth.

Some Christians pick and choose the parts of Scripture truth that suit their fancy, just like walking



68 pp, PB.

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## ***The Names and Order of the Books of the Old Testament*** by — E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

To get back to the "original" is ever the endeavor of the careful Bible student. To find that he has followed in the study of the Holy Scriptures some man-devised classification of the Sacred Writings is disheartening, yet such is the condition of all who have based spiritual thought and exegesis on the names and order of the books of the Old Testament as they appear in our Bibles. The "authority" for them is a human one dating back to about 300 B.C. How seriously the original order and the original names were tampered with in this change is shown in this book, and the true names and order of all of the books are clearly set forth as they appear in the original Hebrew, and in harmony with the Divine imprimatur of Luke 24:44. It will be seen at once that the information contained between the covers of this book is of vital importance as fundamental knowledge for the Bible student.





through a buffet line, choosing to believe what appeals to them and rejecting what is unappealing or difficult. However, the truths of the Bible are interconnected. We should think of the various doctrines presented to us in Scripture as the components in a well-tuned car engine rather than a selection of food on a cafeteria tray. The things we learn about God's character and the ways He works to redeem and bring glory to Himself are finely tuned, and they all work in harmony. Taking the biblical truth of God's sovereign and controlling hand out of our theology is like removing the crankshaft from a car engine.

It is by our Father's desire and design that everyone who lives today is alive, and it is by His will that everyone who dies today will die. We can say that He "lets" them die, and that's certainly a more bearable way of expressing ourselves. But in our minds and deep in our hearts, it should be understood that God is in control of life and death.

Believe me, it was difficult the first time I admitted with my own lips that God had killed my son. However, I discovered that doing so enabled me to give God the glory for anything – and everything – that happens. When we finally admit that He is sovereign over every molecule and event, good or bad, then we can relax and not worry. More importantly, we can recognize that He is worthy of our adoration and worship.

### A DEEP IMPACT

The ramifications of whether we really believe that God is 100 percent omnipotent – sovereign in everything – are far-reaching. Understanding this foundational precept will have an influence on every facet of

our belief system.

Maintaining faith in a "god" who is not sovereignly in control of every detail of this Universe is actually a form of idolatry. Why? A simple, abbreviated examination of Scripture makes it very clear that God is in control of all things. If we hold to the idea that God is not *all-knowing and all-powerful and therefore entirely sovereign over all things*, then we are designing our own god. Designing a god to suit our own ideas is idolatry.

Many Christians are inadvertently guilty of practicing a form of idolatry. They are worshipping a god of their own imaginations, or a god who has been presented to them by culture and traditionalism. Despite the fact that they might be surrounded by Bibles and good teachers, the god they are clinging to is not the God presented in the pages of Genesis through Revelation. God's sovereignty over every aspect and detail of our lives is a truth that radiates from virtually every page.

### HOW CAN WE KNOW GOD'S ATTRIBUTES?

The foundation of our understanding of Scripture is knowing the nature of God, and the only dependable source for knowing about Him is His complete and sufficient Word – the Bible. All other sources are risky. A desire for truth, while admirable, is not the key to success. We can desire truth while being sincere – and at the same time we can find ourselves sincerely wrong.

Outside of God's general revelation in nature, which Paul speaks about in Romans 1:18, the sixty-six books of the Bible are the *only* revelation that God



## *Death, Resurrection, Immortality*

by — Joseph E. Kirk

This work deals with the problem of death and God's solution of resurrection and immortality through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The widely accepted teaching of the immortality of the soul, which makes resurrection unnecessary and detracts from the value of our Lord's sacrifice, is shown to be unscriptural.

111 pages

See [order form](#) under "Kirk."



has given for a reliable understanding of Who He is.

The endeavor to comprehend God and His various attributes should be paramount in our exploration of the Bible. Most of us are inclined to read the Bible with an attitude of “what’s in it for me?” Instead, we should consider studying His Word with a desire to see God and His attributes – a God-centered approach.

### MAN-CENTERED OR GOD-CENTERED?

When faced with difficulties, we might ask,

“Why is this happening to me?”

“God, don’t You care how I feel?”

“What have I done to deserve this?”

“If God really cared, would He allow this?”

Feeling this way, as an *initial* reaction, is quite normal. However, to ask these questions *after* an evaluation of our situation is a denial of God’s concern and control. When we relax in His sovereignty, knowing that He knows exactly what He’s doing, and trusting in His hand, *then* He receives the glory. It is impossible to give God exaltation when we worry or fret.

### IS THE CREATOR INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO HIS CREATURES?

God cannot be thoroughly understood. A god who is easily and completely known would be a figment of our imagination. Isaiah 55:7-8 says,

*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*

Finite creatures can have only a limited understanding of an infinite God. He would certainly remain mysterious to us had He not revealed Himself in the unique words of the Bible.

In searching His Word with a desire to see His attributes, you will find your life on a quest filled with golden nuggets scattered along the path – and the excitement of each revelation enabling us to see Him more will highlight this truth more and more. God’s mysterious attributes, which are definitely present in the Bible, cannot be understood apart from faith, and some aspects of His character remain a quandary even then. Nevertheless, our admiration and love for His unfathomable traits should not make us anxious. Whether we will ever understand our infinite God is unlikely. Nevertheless, we should treasure what He has revealed about Himself, including His sovereignty in *all things* and *all events*. To those who acknowledge this truth, it is certainly more precious and valuable than anything else.



## Biblical Resources

### Our YouTube Video Channel

This is a YouTube channel where you can enjoy select videos containing wonderful truths from Scripture, some of which are single topics, while others are part of a series. The videos are great to watch alone or with family and friends. Among the teachers is your editor Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. Check out these topics/titles (at [youtube.com/user/1424241](https://youtube.com/user/1424241)):

- *Bible Basics*
- *The Scripture Minute*
- *Things I Misunderstood*
- *The Divine Lockup*
- *The Undoing of Adam*
- *The Pentecost & Secret Administrations*
- *Male & Female*
- *The Greatest Truth I Know*

## A NEW DIMENSION: TRUSTING GOD IN EVERYTHING

When we are brought by God to see His sovereignty in everything, and we finally begin to relax in this incredible truth, God is glorified, and we are changed. Our outlook is revamped, and our insight gains ground as theological questions begin to fit together harmoniously.

### OPRAH'S GREATEST "AHA" MOMENT

Oprah Winfrey has interviewed thousands of people and had many guests who made her feel like she was seeing something for the first time – something that would change her life and her entire perspective. Such moments are referred to as her “aha” moments.

One of those guests, on January 4, 1990, helped Oprah see something that she declared to be the greatest aha moment of her career. Her guest explained to her that “Forgiveness is giving up the hope that the past could be any different.”

Oprah explained that forgiveness is not just accepting that it's okay that something has happened, but to “give up the hope that things could have been different. Wishing that things would have been different is futile. Don't hold on, wishing that things in our past would have been different.”

She explained that this took her to the next level toward being a better person. She now sees the fallacy of holding grudges for anything. Oprah phrased it like this: “Let go of the past so that it does not hold us hostage.” Undoubtedly, she is right.

What's interesting is that she came to the top of the mountain and didn't quite look over.

In other words, she acknowledged the attitude we should have when we have a correct perspective of God's sovereignty, yet she did not recognize that God deserves the glory – for the good *and* the bad things that happen.

As believers, we can see that the past is not something we should ever regret, no matter how bad it has been. However, going a step further and giving up the

hope that things could have been different is actually our opportunity to say, “Praise God. He is sovereign.”

What has happened is because God is in control. Not only do I give up on the hope that it could have been different, but I give God the glory because He is in control. So many horrible things happen in this world. This idea of giving God the glory in all things is entirely foreign to most of us; but if we're going to claim that we believe in an omnipotent, omniscient and sovereign God, then this must be our attitude.

Oprah Winfrey saw the truth about the past and has evidently adopted it into her beliefs.

We should all adjust our thinking similarly. Seeing God's hand in this great truth brings Him the glory and honor He deserves.

### WHEN CHILDREN DIE

Explaining God's controlling hand to grieving parents has been a very humbling experience. To have the opportunity to declare God's sovereignty in my child's death or another child's death is still difficult. Yet, there is healing and maturity in this perspective. One mother told me, after the shock of hearing that God had planned her child's death, “You know, I'd rather know that my daughter died as a part of God's sovereign plan than by some accident beyond His control.”

As Job said,

*The LORD gave, and LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD (Job 1:21, ACV).*

Most Christians have not truly evaluated this important issue. While most would agree that God is omnipotent – or sovereign – they really have not taken the time to think through all of the implications of what that entails. The tendency is to think of God as an “allowing God,” not a “controlling God.” That is the god of Deism, not the true Sovereign God of Scripture. **BSN**

(edited)

#### TOPICS:

**Major:** My Story; Sovereignty

**Minor:** Faith; Free Will; God, Attributes of; Study; Suffering



## Joseph W. Williams (1874-1963)<sup>1</sup>

[Note from John Williams:] Joseph W. Williams was my grandfather and was a traveling pastor who wrote at least several books. He was born in 1874 and was with his family as a young boy in the Oklahoma land rush of 1889 in a covered wagon. He traveled extensively before finally marrying my grandmother, Sarah. He was mostly self-educated and a voracious reader.

Joseph and Sarah eventually settled in Iowa where their children were born. Joseph presided at a church in Marion, Iowa for many years until the family all moved out to the Seattle area.

My grandfather's ministerial career in Iowa was cut short due the onset of glaucoma and he was nearly blind by age 60. He lived his final years on Day Island, Tacoma, Washington and passed away in 1963. His house on Day Island is still there and is the first house on the right when you cross over the bridge

1. [Editor:] Joseph W. Williams wrote numerous books, including [The Mystery of Evil](#), published by Bible Student's Press, on the [order form](#) under "Other Authors."

onto the island. – CA

## J.C. O'Hair's Previous Position on Death

[Note from Hal Bekemeyer:] Many years ago when visiting my friend Ken Winright, he made available for my perusal several works by J.C. O'Hair (1876-1958). One in particular caught my attention. It was on the subject of "soul sleep." It was written in a totally different vein than the one now being circulated. It was "pro" rather than "anti," and was the first work that I read that persuaded me to think in this direction. – FL

I want to thank you all for sending me these encouraging words of the *Daily Email Goodies*. Very encouraging! – NM

Am being blessed by the book *Nothing Will Be Lost*.<sup>2</sup> It is an answer to prayer. – Canada BSN

2. [Editor:] [Nothing Will Be Lost! The Truth About God's Good News](#), Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Bible Student's Press (on the [order form](#) under "Pilkington").

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CREATURE CAN ALTER  
OR DISARRANGE THE  
PLANS OF THE CREATOR.

ARTHUR P. ADAMS (1847-1920)



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## Daily Goodies, & More Daily Goodies – 365 Thoughts on Scriptural Truths

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

This is a great resource for personal and family study, as well as a valuable reference volume covering many varied biblical themes. This is a collection of choice selections from the author's *Daily Email Goodies*. These free daily e-mails began being issued in 2003 and contain studies on scriptural themes. In addition to personal use, it is great for teaching material, or family reading times.

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