

FUTURE PLANS

How can I learn to trust that God is in control?

Question: "How can I learn to trust that God is in control?"

Answer: Before we can learn to trust that God is in control of all of life's circumstances, we have to answer four questions: Is God really in control? How much control does He have? If He is not in complete control, then who/what is? How can I learn to trust that He is in control and rest in that?

Is God really in control? The concept of the control of God over everything is called the "sovereignty" of God. Nothing gives us strength and confidence like an understanding of the sovereignty of God in our lives. God's sovereignty is defined as His complete and total independent control over every creature, event, and circumstance at every moment in history. Subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent, God does what He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. God is in complete control of every molecule in the universe at every moment, and everything that happens is either caused or allowed by Him for His own perfect purposes.

"The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying, 'Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, And as I have purposed, so it shall stand'" ([Isaiah 14:24](#)). Nothing is random or comes by chance, especially not in the lives of believers. He "purposed" it. That means to deliberately resolve to do something. God has resolved to do what He will do, and nothing and no one stands in His way. "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please" ([Isaiah 46:10](#)). This is our powerful, purposeful God who is in control of everything. That should bring us great comfort and help to alleviate our fears.

But exactly how much control does God have? God's total sovereignty over all

creation directly contradicts the philosophy of [open theism](#), which states that God doesn't know what's going to happen in the future any more than we do, so He has to constantly be changing His plans and reacting to what the sinful creatures do as they exercise their free will. God isn't finding out what's going to happen as events unfold. He is continuously, actively running things—ALL things—here and now. But to think He needs our cooperation, our help, or the exercise of our free will to bring His plans to pass puts us in control over Him, which makes us God. Where have we heard that lie before? It's a rehash of Satan's same old lie from the Garden—you shall be like God ([Genesis 3:5](#)). Our wills are only free to the extent that God allows us that freedom and no farther. "All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'" ([Daniel 4:35](#)). No one's free will trumps the sovereignty of God.

Some people find it appealing to think that Satan has control over a certain amount of life, that God is constantly revising His plans to accommodate Satan's tricks. The book of Job is a clear illustration of just who has the sovereign power and who doesn't. Satan came to God and, in effect, said, "Job only serves you because you protect him." So God gave Satan permission to do certain things to Job but no more ([Job 1:6–22](#)). Could Satan do more than that? No. God is in control over Satan and his demons who try to thwart God's plans at every step.

Satan knew from the Old Testament that God's plan was for Jesus to come to the earth, be betrayed, crucified and resurrected, and provide salvation for millions, and if there was any way to keep that from happening, Satan would have done it. If just one of the hundreds of prophecies about the Messiah could have been caused by Satan to fail to come to pass, the whole thing would have collapsed. But the numbers of independent, "free will" decisions made by thousands of people were designed by God to bring His plan to pass in exactly the way He had planned it from the beginning, and Satan couldn't do a thing about it.

Jesus was "delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God" ([Acts 2:23](#)). No action by the Romans, the Pharisees, Judas, or anyone else kept

God's plan from unfolding exactly the way He purposed it from before the foundation of the world. [Ephesians 1](#) says we were chosen in Him before the world was even created. We were in the mind of God to be saved by faith in Christ. That means God knit together Satan's rebellion, Adam and Eve's sin, the fall of the human race, and the death and crucifixion of Christ—all seemingly terrible events—to save us before He created us. Here is a perfect example of God working all things together for good ([Romans 8:28](#)).

Unlimited in power, unrivalled in majesty, and not thwarted by anything outside Himself, our God is in complete control of all circumstances, causing or allowing them for His own good purposes and plans to be fulfilled exactly as He has foreordained.

Finally, the only way to trust in God's sovereign control and rest in it is to know God. Know His attributes, know what He has done in the past, and this builds confidence in Him. [Daniel 11:32b](#) says, "The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits." Imagine that kind of power in the hands of an evil, unjust god. Or a god that really doesn't care about us. But we can rejoice in our God's sovereignty, because it is overshadowed by His goodness, His love, His mercy, His compassion, His faithfulness, and His holiness.

But we can't trust someone we don't know, and there is only one way to know God—through His Word. There is no magic formula to make us spiritual giants overnight, no mystical prayer to pray three times a day to mature us, build our faith, and make us towers of strength and confidence. There is only the Bible, the single source of power that will change our lives from the inside out. But it takes effort, diligent, everyday effort, to know the God who controls everything. If we drink deeply of His Word and let it fill our minds and hearts, the sovereignty of God will become clear to us, and we will rejoice in it because we will know intimately and trust completely the God who controls all things for His perfect purpose.

