



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume 39  
Issue 969

# The Mystery Hid from Ages and Generations

## A Study of Colossians 1:25-27

Part 2<sup>1</sup>

(Originally Published in 1939)

by — J. Eustace Mills

*According to the Good Pleasure of His Will.*

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the Dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God; even the Mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this Mystery (Colossians 1:25-27).

According as He hath chosen us in Him before the overthrow of the world ... according to the good pleasure of His will (Ephesians 1:4-5).

The choice and blessing of Ephesians 1:4, of a specific company of the redeemed, “before the overthrow of the world,” who are destined to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, is only because of one reason:

... according to the good pleasure of His will [thelēma]<sup>2</sup> (Ephesians 1:5).

It is God’s “will” (thelēma) that summarizes this purpose rather than His “counsel” (boulē).<sup>3</sup> God’s “will” (thelēma) is placed first as the motive of this purpose; it is not until :7-11, which deal with the work of the Son, whereby that “will” (thelēma) is to be realized, that there is any suggestion of “the Mystery of His will

[thelēma]” (1:9) and “the counsel [boulē] of His will” (1:11).

If we would but transport ourselves back into the times of the Ephesians, to whom this epistle was addressed, and endeavor to visualize their outlook upon Paul’s ministry at the time it was taking place, we should not be of two minds as to whether this epistle contain a distinctive revelation.

(continued on page 8171)

1. See [BSN 965](#) for part 1.  
2. [Editor:] SEC G2307.  
3. [Editor:] SEC G1012.

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## Bible Student's Notebook™

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume 39, No. 969 – May 8, 2023

*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 unprophesied, 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 (Romans 6; 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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Clyde L. Pilkington, III, Nathan H. Pilkington, Stephen Hill

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When Paul was last with the Ephesians, he called on them to acknowledge that his testimony had been complete and unreserved. Looked at from this standpoint, Paul's request for the Ephesians becomes deeply significant.

*Wherefore I take you to record this day, that ... I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel [boulē] of God (Acts 20:26-27).*

What, then, would be the effect upon them of the opening prayer of this epistle?

*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling ... (Ephesians 1:18)*

If they had already heard "all the **counsel** [boulē] of God," what calling and what hope was it that they did not know? "All the **counsel** [boulē] of God" was a testimony restricted to the things foreseen by Moses and the prophets,

*Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, **saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:** that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles (Acts 26:22-23).*

Consequently, this could not have included that revelation that had been,

*... hid from ages and from generations (Colossians 1:26).*

Therefore, it was not until the Mystery was given that the full purpose of God's "will" (*thelēma*) was known.

*That ye may know what is the hope of His calling (Ephesians 1:18).*

As it is God's desire to make known this fuller unfolding of His "will" (*thelēma*) to His saints, and if it is our desire to know it, what more is necessary? Just this, the *enlightenment* (*phōtizō*)<sup>4</sup> given of God. It is for this enlightenment that Paul was praying on behalf of the saints:

*The eyes of your understanding being **enlightened** [phōtizō]; that ye may **know** [eidō]<sup>5</sup> what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (Ephesians 1:18).*

The word rendered "know" (*eidō*) here implies knowledge that comes from without, that which we come to know as absolute knowledge in contrast to getting to know by learning. It is really a *perfect* of "to see" – namely, "I have seen!"

With the reference to "eyes" (*ophthalmos*)<sup>6</sup> in the context it is permissible to make a provisional change by substituting "see" for "know" in the same way as when we say, "I see!" after that a fact we have sought to know unsuccessfully suddenly dawns upon us.

*The eyes of your understanding having been enlightened; that ye may **see** what is the hope of His calling (Ephesians 1:18).*

4. [Editor:] SEC G5461.

5. [Editor:] SEC G1492.

6. [Editor:] SEC G3788.



80 pages

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This same word “know” (*eidō*) is used in connection with the Mysteries of the Kingdom.

*Know [eido] ye not this parable? And how then will ye [get to] know [ginōskō]<sup>7</sup> all parables? (Mark 4:13).*

This stands in direct contrast to the blindness of the people referred to in the context. While it is for us to search to understand God’s mysteries, yet the entry into them depends on God causing us to “see” or “know.”

It is after we receive that initial insight, the enlightenment (*phōtizō*) given of God, that we may explore and get to know something of the fulness of the revelation.

The use of this word “enlightened” (*phōtizō*) is in keeping with “Mystery” which God makes known, not to the world at large, but to His Own redeemed ones whom He *initiates*. The contrast with the word which implies “getting to know” (*ginōskō*) by research is evident in the following passage:

*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God ... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he [get to] know [ginōskō] them, because they are spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:12, 14).*

The knowledge of the things that God has revealed is therefore retained in His Own power. A truth made

7. [Editor:] SEC G1097.

known in Scripture does not necessarily become public property to be seen by all who may read, for He both veils, or unveils the eyes, according to His wise plan.

*... to His saints: to whom God would make known what is ... this Mystery.*

This being so, why is it that all believers do not, as a matter of course, come to know this Mystery?

Unless God graciously grants His own to enter into His truth, any attempt on their part to force an entry would be futile; even as Israel was unable to enter their land when they were presumptuous and went up without God’s commission (Deuteronomy 1:43). It is not for us to decide that we will look into the matter of this Mystery.

*(abridged & edited)*

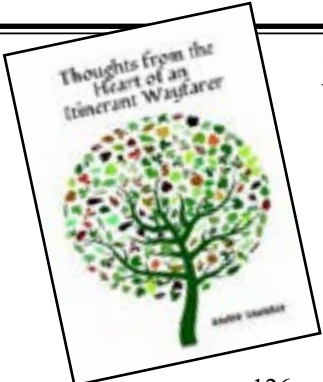
*(to be continued)*

[Editor:] See Mills’ other material in the *Bible Student’s Notebook*:

- “The Mystery of this Dispensation,” BSN 62;
- “The New Covenant,” part 1: [BSN 701](#); part 2: [BSN 725](#); part 3: [BSN 726](#);
- “Acts 28:28, Before and After,” [BSN 916](#);
- “The Only Source of Truth,” (Excerpt) Tidbits of Truth #43, [BSN 931](#).

**TOPICS:**

**Major:** Calling; Counsel, God’s; Ephesians (1:4-5); Ephesians (1:18); Mystery; Realization; Will of God  
**Minor:** Blindness; Knowledge; Sovereignty



***Thoughts from the Heart of an Itinerant Wayfarer***

by — André Sneidar

This is a unique collection of 33 articles and a selection of quotes from André Sneidar, Executive Editor of *Bible Student’s Press* and *Bible Student’s Notebook*. Since 1988 he has closely co-labored with Clyde Pilkington in a multifaceted ministry.

126 pages

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# What Does the Sovereignty of God Mean?

## Bible Student's Courses

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Lesson 1 - What Does the Sovereignty of God Mean?

by — Mark D. Vogt

### Key Points:

People have a will, but it is certainly not "free." ..... 8175  
All the factors that influence a "decision" are God's factors.... 8176

There is only one qualified to make those decisions and He has it all under control..... 8176

The subject of the sovereignty of God can and does cause quite a bit of confusion in the hearts and minds of believers. Therefore, one needs first to define the term in order to have an understanding as to what is being discussed.



Some, when confronted with this reality, cannot grasp the fact that God has *absolute* and total control over events in their lives; and not only that, but that He, God Himself, planned and purposed in His heart that which was going to happen to every individual on the face of the Earth – past, present and future.

Noah Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines sovereignty as:

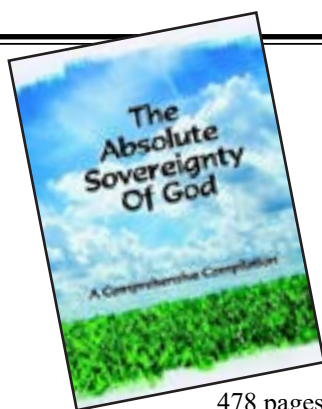
Supreme power; possession of the highest power, or of uncontrollable power. Absolute sovereignty belongs to God only.

So, while kings and presidents and such can exercise some limited sovereignty but only within certain confines, "*absolute sovereignty belongs to God only.*" This definition will cause consternation among some and denial among others. Why is this so?

The Psalmist says that all of his days were written on God's scroll (Psalm 139:16). This certainly doesn't mean that only David's days were written down before he was born, and that everyone else was consigned to floundering around in this life and being left to their own means and devices. No, God has His hand on everyone and everything. Job 23:14 says,

*For He shall accomplish what is marked out for me (CV).*

One could object that this most certainly could not  
(see **SOVEREIGNTY**, page 8175)



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.



# Does God's Sovereignty Have Any Limits?

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Lesson 2 - Does God's Sovereignty Have Any Limits?

by — Mark D. Vogt

### Key Points:

It is either all or nothing when talking about the sovereignty of God. He is either in control of ALL or He is not really in control of much of anything.....8175

God controls everything that will happen and will bring all of it to a glorious conclusion.....8175

In asking the question which is the title of this lesson, one could look at it almost as if it were an oxymoron. An oxymoron is something that has two or more words that mean the opposite thing. Just about everyone is familiar with the phrase “jumbo shrimp” or the always favorite “military intelligence.” How can God be God and be limited in any fashion?

to represent the concepts and beliefs of mankind's imagination. That is the god of religion. Their god is the god that they let out of the “box” Sunday morning and a few other days of the year as they desire.

There is no oxymoron that can describe God in any way. God has no limits. In describing God, it would be beneficial to put the word ALL before describing His attributes and His essence. He is *all* powerful, *all* knowing, *all* loving, *all* merciful and *all* gracious. These are just a few of the *all*-inclusive traits, attributes and essences of God. It is *all* or nothing with God. He is either *all* of these things (and so much more), or He is not. If He is *not* ALL, then He is not God.

This is not the God of Scripture, the God Who reveals Himself to humanity through His Word (Isaiah 44:6) and His creation (Psalms 19:1-6). Romans 11:36, that all-encompassing verse, in the simplest of ways gives us the answer to the question, *Is God limited in His sovereignty?* It is an emphatic NO.

*For out of Him, and through Him, and to Him is ALL: to Whom be majesty for the ages. Amen (Romans 11:36, BSV).*

If there is any question, then let Psalm 136:6 be read with a trusting heart.

*All that Yahweh delights He does, in the Heav-*

Religion has a very poor concept of God and hence disrespects Him, and in the process denigrates God

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83 pages



Why do some refuse to believe these simple and straightforward verses? The answer is found in many places in Scripture, but a couple of verses in Ephesians will clear up any misconceptions quickly.

In Ephesians 4:13-14 Paul tells us that we shouldn't be minors in knowledge and doctrine and in the knowledge of the Son of God, surging about, back and forth with every wind of teaching by those who would by craftiness deceive people to buy into the systematizing of the deception.

Religious deception is the main process by which the god of this world (the Adversary) wonders about and with false doctrine tries to take away from believers the glorious truth of the sovereignty of God and all that it entails.

It is either all or nothing when talking about the sovereignty of God. He is either in control of ALL (Romans 8:28) or He is not really in control of much of anything. He either has a plan (Ephesians 1:11) or He is playing catch up with His creation. He either declares "the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:10) or He is left wondering what His creation is going to do next, and that in itself is a scary thought (looked

Nothing escapes God's attention; nothing gets by Him, for He planned all before the disruption of the world, and all of His plans will be carried out (cf. Acts 2:23). Isaiah 46:10 tells us that,

*All My counsel, it shall be confirmed, and all My desire shall I do*

This is the sovereign God of the universe, whether or not anyone realizes it, and this is the sovereign God of everyone's life, whether or not they believe or acknowledge it. This is the reality. So, as you read this, rest in Psalm 46:10.

*Relax and know that I am Elohim (CV).*

Relax, God is sovereign, He knows what is going on, knows what will happen, controls what will happen and will bring all of this to a glorious conclusion so that God will be glorified (I Corinthians 15:28), Christ will be exalted, and we will benefit so well that we cannot even imagine how wonderful it will be in glory. So, relax and know that He is God. **BSN**

**TOPICS:**

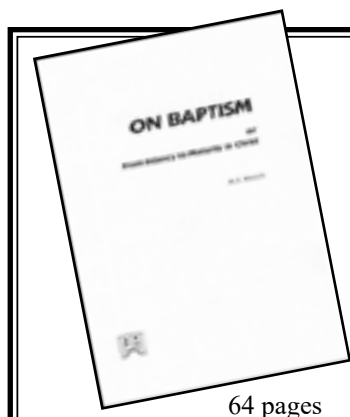
**Major:** God; Sovereignty

**Minor:** Religion

**SOVEREIGNTY** (continued from page 8173)

be true since we all have "free will." Once again, a definition is in order. "Free will" is the ability to make a decision without being influenced by any external or internal force or persuasion. **People have a will, but it is certainly not "free."**

Every decision that people "make" is influenced by an almost infinite number of factors that are external (family, friends, location, work, physical, mental fatigue, etc.) and internal (temperament, past experiences, grudges, hurts, rejections, disappointments, frustrations, mental fatigue, etc.). ▶



64 pages

## ***On Baptism, or From Infancy to Maturity in Christ***

— A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

One of Knoch's earliest works, this is a detailed study of baptism throughout the Scriptures. It discusses the meaning of baptism as it is associated with Israel and its rituals, the Kingdom and its prerequisites, and the Body of Christ with its baptism. This had a profound effect on E.W. Bullinger, and he ran this in his periodical *Things to Come*.

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In fact, if one went back in time and had the opportunity to make that decision again, under the same circumstances, the same decision would be made, even if that decision was good, bad or indifferent. That this is so is because God has planned out our lives in every detail and no aspect of it is left to chance or to our so-called “free will.”

How could God be sovereign if all people had a “free will”? He couldn't be, because then His rule would be subject to our whims and desires, thus making us all little gods.

God brings things into our lives to bring us to a point that, while we think that we make our own decisions, it is entirely God's doing by His design, all of which was laid out in His *logos* or plan before the disruption of the world (Genesis 1:1-2). Those “decisions” that are made are all the result of the overriding influence of the sovereign God of the universe. **All of those factors that influence a “decision” are His factors, His nudging, and His persuasion.**

If one thinks about it, would we really want to be responsible for those decisions that we make, understanding how little we really know about those factors in making that decision and how little we know about the ramifications of those decisions? One wouldn't think so.

**There is only one qualified to make those decisions and He has it all under control.** Those decisions that He makes, while burdensome for us at times, provides for us a backdrop in which God will ultimately reveal to us a much greater glory in us in the ages to come.

*For us, who love God, who are the called according to His purpose, there is an awareness that He is working all together for good (Romans 8:28, BSV).*

BSN

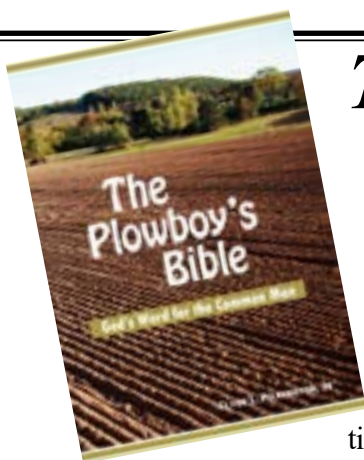
**TOPICS:**

**Major:** God; Sovereignty

**Minor:** Calling; Free Will

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by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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