

Some Comments about the Interaction Between "Sovereignty" and "Responsibility"

When we examine the issue of sovereignty and responsibility, we must remember that, regardless of *our* understanding of it, we can trust God to deal with it rightly, and to work them together in a way that does justice to both. Like a coin, which always has two sides, they always go together. They complement each other, always without contradiction or conflict.

Perhaps we can get a partial idea of how sovereignty and responsibility work together by using an illustration. In this illustration, sovereignty would be like two parallel fences on either side of a pathway - two boundaries which define the direction we will go (from God's perspective). We willingly choose to walk down that path (from our perspective, the human responsibility aspect), without any awareness that the fences are present. Because the two aspects (sovereignty and responsibility) always work together in harmony, we *never* decide to make a choice that causes us to crash into the fences. We *never* try to go a direction which is different than the way the fences go. If we do choose to go in a different direction, the fences (which we cannot see) also go in that direction.

Remember that God is not a human! It is not like two people competing over who will be in control. God is *uncreated* and exists in a realm that we (*created* beings) cannot comprehend or experience. (Compare with Isaiah 55:8-9.) Sovereignty belongs to that realm, and we are incapable of knowing anything about it, other than what God tells us about it. We cannot experience it with any of our senses, and from the human responsibility perspective, we are not compelled by it (like robots) to make our choices.

There is another important thing we must understand about the two aspects of this issue: Both of them must be seen not only in the context of what is happening at the *present* moment, but also in the context of what will happen in the *future*. Both of them effect where we are now, as well as what our final outcome will be. Looking at the sovereignty aspect, we must realize that all that happens will ultimately end in a way that brings honor and glory to God - even things that presently dishonor him. Looking at the responsibility aspect, we must realize that the *future* consequences or results we experience will give the final significance to our *present* actions. Specifically, we live within the context of our choices (totally unaware of the sovereignty aspect, other than what Scripture reveals about it), and those choices - willingly made by us - will influence the outcome we experience at the Day of Justice.