

God is Sovereign

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[0 : 00] One of the things that we've been aiming through as I put this sermon series together is that through a deeper knowledge of God would flow a deeper worship of God, that you would come to know him personally and see these attributes as they are acted out in your own life.

Today we're looking at the sovereignty of God, the sovereignty of God. On the subject, the great Christian British preacher C.H. Spurgeon wrote, there is no attribute more comforting to his children than that of God's sovereignty.

Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that sovereignty has ordained afflictions, that sovereignty overrules them, and that sovereignty will sanctify them.

On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by the world and sadly so misaligned and detested by Christians, wrote Spurgeon.

He continued, he said, men will allow God to be in his workshop, creating the world and making the stars. They will allow him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean.

[1 : 39] But when God ascends his throne, his creatures then gnash their teeth. The subject I speak of today is the foundational truth to all Christian doctrine.

It is the basis of all theology. The reality is when you really understand the sovereignty of God, and trust me when I say this, some of you know what that word means.

Some of you really know what that word means. There will come a time in your life at a moment when all of a sudden, like a lightning bolt that strikes you in the middle of a storm or during a nice cloudy day, that ray of sunlight shines through the clouds, and it will make everything around you so much more clear.

This is it. Once you understand this sovereignty, that God is God, and it's in that moment when you realize that God is God, it's that moment when you realize that God has every right to rule, every right to govern, and every right to preside over you as he does all over things, it is a tremendous moment.

I can actually tell you the day when it hit me. I was at a Bible study while I was at university one afternoon, and later that night with a couple of friends, we were helping a friend move, and it felt as if a thunderbolt went through me, and I started to realize that all the things that I was learning about the Bible pertain precisely about me, and that when I studied that word, all things, I figured into that equation.

[3 : 46] I have always grown up with the truths of the Christian faith, and if you would have asked me about God's sovereignty, I would have said, of course I believe it. Of course I understand it.

Of course I know it. But it wasn't until that faithful evening when the truth sank deeply into my heart that I truly accepted God's ultimate sovereignty.

By definition, God's sovereignty is God's right to rule, govern, and preside over all things. He is not just creator of all things, but he rules over all things.

The theologian A.W. Pink simply defined it as this, the exercise of God's supremacy. The exercise of God's supremacy.

And what that means is, it is God's undisputed right to govern over all that he has created. Think about that for a second.

[4 : 53] It is God's undisputed right to govern over all things that he created. And guess what? That includes me, and that includes you.

Simply put, the God who is, is the God who reigns. A God who does not reign is no God.

In fact, can a God who is not sovereign be truly worthy of worship?

To understand every other teaching in the Bible begins with understanding this. God is sovereign. He is the one who reigns.

He is the one who must be supreme in rank. He is the one who must be supreme in power. He is the one who must be supreme in authority.

[5 : 52] There is nothing higher. There is no other measure in which to measure him against. In fact, this is a truth that the Bible makes no attempt to hide.

One of my professors used to tell us that the only way to go to church and not hear about the sovereignty of God is to go to a church that does not open its Bible.

The truth, he states, is like a light shining from 10,000 suns in our sky. He says, in order to not to understand it, you'd have to read your Bible upside down in a room with no light, with your eyes closed, and not see this truth.

The reality is, the truth of God's sovereignty is not hard to understand. It is hard to accept. If God is sovereign, it means I am not.

The writer of Psalm 103, 19 says, the Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

[7 : 09] I want you to pay attention to those last two words, over all. What he's saying is, there is no place that is hidden from his rule.

There is nobody that is excluded from this kingdom. It's not a kingdom that is eventually coming. It is a kingdom that eventually will be realized.

No. It is a kingdom that exists here. It exists now. And God rules over it right here, right now. Psalm 93, 1 writes, the Lord reigns.

He is robed in majesty. The Lord is robed. He has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established.

It shall never be moved. Your throne is established from of old. You are from everlasting. Just this last past, this half year when we were studying Satan and just spiritual warfare, and a lot of people think that there's different kingdoms.

[8 : 17] There's Satan's kingdoms and God's kingdom. And we learned that God is kingdom over all, including hell. Not only did he create it, he is sovereign, and he rules over it.

That it's not as if Satan has a hidden kingdom which he has authority and power over. No, this says everything is under God's authority.

Psalm 97, 1, the Lord reigns. Let the earth rejoice. Let the many coastlands be glad. Clouds and thick darkness are all around him.

righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. The world is not run by luck.

The run is not run by karma. The world is not run by man. It is run by God alone.

[9 : 26] Not God and man. Not God and luck. But God alone. And I want you to pay attention to those words righteousness and justice.

We're going to get back to that. Psalm 99, 1. It said, The Lord reigns. Let the peoples tremble.

The Lord reigns is present tense. It means now. Although we do not perceive the full manifestation of the kingdom to come, make no mistake, God reigns.

He reigned yesterday. He reigns today. He will reign tomorrow. At this very moment, the throne of heaven has a king.

And this king sits upon it. And this king rules. He just didn't rule when Moses was on earth and miracles happened.

[10 : 29] He just didn't rule when good things went his way. The fact of the matter is, God just doesn't reign during revivals. He doesn't reign during good days, sunshine days, times of prosperity.

He also rules in dark days, bad days, silent days, even days of death. The fact of the matter is, God doesn't sit passively on his throne, idly waiting for us to call out his name or waiting for a time to occur when he will reengage.

Paul tells us in Colossians 1.17 that God holds up the universe. And if he pulled his hand away, everything would fall apart.

The Bible clearly teaches that God is active in all creation at all times.

He did not create the world like it was some kind of clock where he wound up the clock and he set it there. I know for some of you who are millennials, you're going to get no concept what I mean by wind up the clock.

[11 : 42] But we used to have these clocks and you'd wind it up and they'd wind down and that'd be the end and we'd have to start it again. He doesn't do that. Nor does it have some lithium-ion battery that's going to last for 10 years and then he's going to come back.

That is not the world or the God that is taught to us in God's Word. That his hand is forever there.

He is not an absent landlord. Now, I know it's easy for us to look at what God is doing elsewhere, whether it be plagues or wars or horrible evils and we get to a point of thinking, maybe God left us.

Now, the problem with some of that is we start judging using our own standard of measurement for God's justice. But if you are paying attention in Psalm 97.1, the measure or the foundation of God's throne is God's righteousness and justice.

God will bring an account. God will bring justice. God will bring but get this, he's not just going to bring his righteousness and justice against those things that we hate.

[13 : 16] He's going to bring his righteousness and justice against those things that he hates. And some of those things that he hates reside in our hearts in our lives.

our anger, our venom, our hatred, our lust for things that are not our own. God hates them as equal with a passion as he hates war and killings and murders.

So we cry for him to come out but it's only in this is God's hand of mercy holding back his wrath so that we would finally come to a realization that we desperately need a savior.

And it's only because his wrath hasn't come it's because of his love and great mercy and everyone that he intends to save has not been saved.

You see, God is sovereign over all the nations. Not some nations that claim he is God but all the nations. He is sovereign over all nature.

[14 : 32] He's sovereign over all events. Even this COVID-19 disaster that has hit the world, God is sovereign over it. The good circumstances, the bad circumstances.

Psalm 115:3 says, our God is in the heaven. He does all that he pleases. You see, God is infinitely elevated above the highest creature.

He is the most high. He is the Lord of heaven. There is nobody that he is subject to. He is absolutely independent. God does what he pleases, only as he pleases and always as he pleases.

No one can thwart him. No one can hinder him. Job 12:23 says, he makes nations great and he destroys them.

He enlarges nations and leads them away. He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth and he makes them wander in a trackless waste.

[15:43] There is no king who can thwart God. There is no government that can thwart God. God. There is no one rule order government that can thwart God.

Jeremiah 10:23 says, I know O Lord that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.

Throughout the pages of scripture we meet a God who is sovereign over all. Our future does not rest in human hands. Our future is not decided by luck.

We have a God who is actively involved in our lives, directs all things for his holy purposes. It is a rule that exists right here, right now.

I want to answer the question for you. How far back does God's eternal and holy purposes go?

[16:52] How far back does God's eternal and holy purposes go? Please open your Bible to today's text of Ephesians. I want you to look at specifically verse 11 of Ephesians chapter 1.

There's going to be four words. I'm going to read the verse for you. It says, in him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

I want you to pay attention to four words. I'm going to talk about these four words here. The first word is counsel. The second word is will.

The third word is purpose. And the fourth word we're going to look at is predestined. Is predestined. You see, there is a sequence of events that have occurred that it's important for us to see.

So let's begin at the end of the verse. Notice it says, according to the counsel. According to the counsel. Notice it says all things.

[18:06] Now when he's talking about all things in this verse who works all things according to the counsel of his will, it's not as if God showed up in Genesis, created the world, took off.

Wait a second, you guys really messed it up. He jumps back in. I'm going to give you guys my son Jesus Christ. So if you believe on him because you be saved because you really messed up this law thing, pulls back and we now live in this generation where he's going to finally show up at Revelation and he's going to really fix things.

All right, you guys really messed it up. That's not what he says. Notice it says all things, not the beginning or ending.

You see, it all began with a counsel. That word counsel means a thought-out plan. It's a thought-out plan.

It is the result of reflection. It is the result of deliberation. It is a counsel that refers to what God's ultimate purpose will be.

[19:17] Before the very world began, before it was even created, before Adam and Eve walked in the Garden of Eve, before a bird ever flew in the sky, or a star shined in the air, before even angels came to be, there was a time of counsel.

A time where God, as the Trinity, planned, deliberated, and considered those two words, all things.

And when he counseled, deliberated, and considered, a decision was made about all things. Not some things, not a few things, not most things, but all things.

It was during this time that God decided who would be saved. It was during this time that God decided who would be passed over.

It was a time when God decided what the color of our skin would be, who our parents would be, what street would we live on, what school we would attend.

[20 : 36] It's a place where God decided or a time when God decided that the sky would be blue, grass would be green, and snow would be white.

Notice it says the words, all things. We love exceptions.

We love to feel special. That is what pride does. Right now we start to argue with some of these things. We are arguing Paul's words when he said that according to all things.

During this time God decided on the place of Adam and Eve, the timing of the fall, of Abraham, of David, of Jesus. God planned out both the life and death of Jesus.

It was here that God's saving plan began. Now notice it says this counsel led to a will.

[21 : 48] So a decision was made for these things to happen and it's now followed with the will. The will of God reveres to his divine decisions and his desires which encompass and establish each aspect of our lives.

Notice it says, who works all things according to the counsel of his will. This will, this is divine determination. This is divine resolution.

This is divine purpose. Notice I want you to understand that it is singular in nature. Alright? It's not plan B or C was willed.

There was just one plan and it was plan A. It is a plan that cannot be changed. It is a plan that cannot be ignored and it's a plan that cannot be altered.

It is a will that is all inclusive. It is a divine will. It is an eternal will. It is a singular will. It is an all inclusive will.

[22 : 53] What that means is the divine will, it was God's will. Because it's eternal, this will began before time began.

Because it is a singular will, it is one plan that has one purpose. And because it is an all inclusive plan, it means again, all things.

And the last two things, it is a revocable will, which means it will never be altered and never be changed. And it is ultimately this will of God.

God. Some things God causes to happen, some things God allows to happen, but all things are under God's control.

I believe there is no better example in all the pages of Scripture than Judas. It's written that before time that Judas would betray Jesus, but even in that night, Jesus Christ still placed him at the seat of honor, offered him the first token of the dinner as he dipped the bread and offered it.

[24 : 13] He was offering Judas an opportunity to repent, and in that moment, Judas still made that choice. And the reality is God's purpose is always God glorifying.

God's purpose is always to bring him the ultimate glory. It is the highest end.

We are not. God is the highest end. the purpose of God refers to his divine determination to carry out his righteous will.

The last word I want us to pay attention to here is the word predestination. That God's act of predestination guarantees that his sovereign will is brought about in totality.

It's not part, it's not he missed, he didn't get 97.9% of it. No, God predestined for 100%. You see, the idea of predestination, I'm not going to go into all of it here, but it means that the destination has been predecided.

[25 : 37] Where it will end has already been predecided. It is not God looking through a time with his all-knowing and knowing what people or what acts will happen on earth and then him adjusting his will to fit what other people are doing.

That would give us an unsovereign God. You see, it's a decision that was made at the beginning and it was carried through to the end.

It's not a decision that is based on the knowledge of the ending and then now changed at the beginning. the destination decided upon begins before the journey began.

Luke writes in Acts 2 23, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God that you crucified and killed by the hands of the lawless one.

That was God's plan all along. God didn't look into the future and see, oh, I gave them a perfect man, my son, who would heal perfect, he would feed the poor, he would give sight to the blind, he would give hearing to the deaf.

[27 : 05] They're going to love this guy. They're going to love him. They're going to raise him up. They're going to make him king and everything is going to be okay. wait a second.

What am I going to do now? They rejected him. It's not how it works with God. He knew that's what would happen. What happened was the darkest day in human history.

The creation revolted against the creator. They did not want this man, Jesus, to reign over them.

Yet, these events were predetermined and done according to the foreknowledge of God. God, being sovereign, is the architect of all human history.

Not just the big events, but the small events. Not just world wars, but sometimes the life and death of our children, the success of our marriages, whether or not when I went to university, the purpose of what did I graduate with, all those things are held under his sovereignty.

[28 : 22] The questions get asked is how far does God's sovereignty stretch and where does it extend to? So I want to talk about three areas to conclude my sermon where we see God's sovereignty actively displayed.

Three areas where we see God's sovereignty actively displayed. The first display of God's sovereignty is that he governs creation.

God governs creation. Everything that exists finds its source in God. Right? Nothing can come from nothing.

Something has to come from something. And all this comes from God. God was the beginning who created all. And God does what pleases God.

Psalm 33 6 writes, By the word of the Lord the heavens were made. And by the breath of his mouth all their host.

[29 : 33] He gathers the water of the sea as a heap. He puts the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

For he spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm. You see all things belong to God and exist for his glory.

We get this part. We accept that God is creator of all things. The second thing is that God's sovereignty governs history and providence.

God's sovereignty governs history and providence. The prophet Isaiah in chapter 46 verse 8 wrote, Remember this and stand firm.

Recall it to mind. You transgressors, remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is no other.

[30 : 39] I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purposes.

Exactly what Paul wrote in Ephesians 1.11 was pre-written in Isaiah 46.8. God said, My counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purposes.

Now notice it begins with the word remember. Isaiah starts with remember. Why does he tell us? Because we are so prone to forget.

We do. We are. Whatever is in front of us takes our attention. But God is telling us here remember. And then he says something else.

Stand firm. Be assured of this truth. Now if we look at verse 11 it says My counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purposes.

[32 : 00] And it says calling a bird of prey from the east the man of the council from a far country. I have spoken.

I will bring it to pass. I have purposed. I will do it. There are no accidents.

There is no such thing as blind fate. There are no such things as luck, karma, chance, or even random occurrences.

Rather than simply create things and set them in motion, God actually orders and directs all human affairs.

Psalm 33 10. The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing. He frustrates the plans of the peoples.

[33 : 05] The counsel of the Lord stands forever. The plans of his heart to all generations. the reality is God uses pagan and foreign kings to do his will.

His purposes have been established and he decides how they are accomplished. Isaiah 10 says, my counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purpose.

Again, Daniel 4:35 says, all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing. And he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

And none can stay his hand or say to him, what have you done? Proverbs 21.1 The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord.

He turns it wherever he will. My professor calls this the argument from the greater to the lesser.

[34 : 20] And what that means is if God can move a king's heart, how much more can he move the carts of those who are not kings?

Let me ask you a question. How many plans have you made in your life that have been overruled? Perhaps it was to marry to perhaps it was to have ten kids, no kids, that I'd be working this career rather than this career, that I'd have that employment rather than this employment, I'd have this education over this education.

God overrules our plans all the time. Proverbs 19 21, many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.

You see, ultimately God is concerned for his glory and how he determines our plans, our lives. are meant in the end to be the means by which he is glorified.

In all circumstances, God is at work for the glory of his name and the good of his people. Proverbs 16, 9, the heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

[35 : 58] And we know this one very well in Romans 8, 28, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose.

Yes, we are responsible for our decisions. We are commanded to make plans. We are called to prepare and at the same time, we still exist under God's sovereignty.

sovereignty. And the third area is that God's sovereignty governs salvation. God's sovereignty governs salvation.

We read it quite clearly, God predestines his people for salvation based on eternal purposes, not his simple foreknowledge of human actions and decisions.

Ephesians 1, 3, 10, we read this this morning. Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

[37 : 12] There's a tension here, and I'm not here to persuade you one way or the other, but I want to implore upon you the truth about God.

And this is where we have to begin. We see things through our eyes, our position. But we really need to get outside of ourselves and look at this from God's point of view.

The reality is we are held responsible for every decision we make. Yet we do so under the very sovereignty of God.

A lot of people will try to make arguments that we have free will. I would argue that we have a will and we are held responsible for the choices that we make, but the choices that we make can only be the choices that are before us.

Let me use a quick example. As a Canadian citizen, I can decide to become the Prime Minister of Canada. It doesn't mean I will, but there's a possibility.

[38 : 20] If I grow up and I pursue certain actives and I take place in certain activities and I build up a reputation and become very political, there might be a shot of that.

However, if I decide to become the President of the United States, it can never happen. Because there's a law that binds throughout the world that you actually have to be an American citizen to become President of the United States.

No matter how much in my freedom I want to make that choice, I can't. I will always be prevented from doing this.

You see, the reality is all my choices are at the core guided by God's sovereignty. Who my mother and my father are.

Where I was born. The type of church I grew up. The type of friends we had. Those are all the influences that I've had in my life that make me me.

[39 : 29] And not a single one was an accident. My choices have always been guided by God's sovereignty. And the reality is there is a tension in this point.

freedom. But if we are to allow ourselves complete freedom in all our decision making, then we need to allow for a God that is not sovereign.

Do you understand the point I'm making? For you to say that you have complete freedom of will is to say that God is not sovereign.

This is why we come to understanding man, understanding our sin, understanding our salvation, we must begin with God.

God. And if we understand or begin to understand God as he reveals himself to be, it changes everything of how we think.

[40 : 50] Now I'm not just talking about our salvation. I'm talking about how we live our lives, how we think about, what are the things that we pursue as education, careers.

When we understand God for who he is, all those things melt away. And our ultimate pursuit is to pursue God's glory by pursuing his will and pursuing his purposes that have been revealed to us in scripture.

The truth of the matter is the Bible does teach that it is God's will that we be saved. that it is God's will that we be sanctified.

That it's God's will that we be spirit filled. Those are all truths that work together under God's sovereignty.

We need to make a decision. Are we going to purpose ourselves after God's sovereignty? Are we going to purpose ourselves under man's sovereignty?

[42:02] my hope, my prayer for you is that you would see yourself clearly under the sovereignty of this righteous and just God who holds up all of creation.

Pray with me. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we are learning from you, your words, what you have displayed to us.

Not only in creation, we know there is someone greater than us who does things that we cannot do. We cannot lift the mountains.

We cannot fill the oceans with water or fish. We cannot make cancer disappear. conquer death.

But you can and you do all these things. Father, it is so easy to have a paradigm of looking at this world through our eyes rather than looking through this world through your eyes.

[43:13] Father, there is a level of submission that has to happen when we declare that God is sovereign. We have to give up control of our life.

We have to give up say, the say of our life. We may have to give up the schooling of our life, the careers that we aspire to.

But we do so understanding that you are good. You are just. You are righteous.

But more importantly, you are God. Father, I pray if there's anyone here and they wonder how is it that I can be reconciled, that I can be made right with you, God.

That it begins with the simple understanding that God said that I am a sinner. I know that I'm a sinner. I sin. I live for myself.

[44:23] Whether I lie, cheat, murder, commit adultery, lust after things I do not have, I am a sinner. And because I am a sinner, you cannot look upon me with your righteous, holy, and just eyes.

You would have to in your righteousness condemn me to death. But you knowing that there was no law by which I could perfectly abide to, provided your son Jesus Christ, who was born perfect, lived perfect, who became a perfect sacrifice because he fulfilled your righteousness and your law by dying on the cross.

life and death and the second life. And he was able and is able to bear all the sins of the world before then and after then.

And that satisfied your wrath. And if we who understand that we are sinful and you are perfect, can place our faith and hope on the life and death and the second life of Jesus Christ rising from the grave.

That we believe this is true and that Christ died for my sin. Because of this, I can be made right that when you look upon me, oh Father, I don't live a life that I'm trying to be perfect.

[46:00] perfect. I'm living a life that you bought for me. That you look upon me as your son, Jesus Christ, the inheritor which we also read today, which is sealed by the Holy Spirit.

That eternal life can be had right here, right now by accepting these truths. I am a sinner. Jesus lived and died a perfect life.

And if I believe in him and confess with my mouth that he is Lord, I will be saved. So Father, I pray that you would use this message of God's sovereignty to challenge most of us, our own sovereignty.

As stupid as we may think it is, there are areas of our lives where we still think we are supreme. I pray for your mercy and your gentleness.

We thank you for your righteousness and justice. I ask you these things in your most holy and perfect name. Amen. for your miracles and religious Cruz.

[47:18] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.