

The Sovereign Dominion of God (2LCF 2.2)

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[0:00] In our evening series, we've been looking at what God's Word says about God's essence, about His perfections, about His attributes, and now we're shifting to God's external relationships.

! Instead of who God is, His relationships to, or the relations of the divine essence, so everything we look at in, for example, how the essence of God is articulated, and the confession in paragraph 1 of chapter 2, all of that of the essence of God, the relations of the divine essence towards the created order.

So of God's external relations, we see the sovereign dominion of God. So we'll read in Daniel chapter 4, verses 34 and 35.

And at the end of the time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him who lives forever.

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.

[1:16] He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, What have you done?

Our great God, we thank you for your word, that we have divine testimony, as we consider what your word tells us about your essence and your external relations.

Pray, Lord, that you would grow us in our knowledge of you. We pray, Holy Spirit, that you would illuminate your word to us, and that you would not only grant us knowledge and understanding, but also confidence in your trustworthiness.

We praise you for your sovereign dominion over all that you have created, which demands of us our obedience and our worship. Pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now first, I want to draw your attention to God's sovereign dominion. God has sovereign dominion as creator. God has created all things that exist.

[2:16] All that is outside of God is creation. So God as creator has sovereign dominion over creation. And the Baptist Catechism tells us about the work of creation, that the work of creation is God's making all things of nothing by the word of His power and the space of six days and all very good.

All things are God's creation. God has created all things. So God created the world and all that is in the world. But some people would say, how dare God actually preside over the world that He has created?

So, I should ask the question then, who? Who exactly is regulating the affairs of all of God's creation? Is it God? Is it man?

Is it the devil? Is there this kind of tug of war between God and the devil over who gets to regulate the affairs of God's creation? Remember that the devil is a creature. Does the creation, does a creature have the upper hand over the creator?

So we should ask the question, should God be revered or should God be pitied? Does God rule or is God ruled? Psalm 115.3 says, But our God is in heaven.

[3:38] He does whatever He pleases. And Psalm 22.28 says, For the kingdom is the Lord's and He rules over the nations. So God has sovereign dominion as creator.

What about the things in creation that are calamities? Where is God then? We are definitely quick and happy to attribute prosperities or peace to God.

But what about the tragedies that occur in the world and in creation? What about the calamities? Where was God, if God created all things and sustains all things and presides over all things, where was God during these calamities?

Did He vacate? Or was He overpowered by something in that situation? Now imagine if overnight there was a building that burned to the ground and you found out that building that burned to the ground was the most nefarious meth lab, a drug lab, and it just burned to the ground overnight. And people would say, Oh wow, that must have been an act of God. Was God in that? And of course we would say, Yes, that was an act of God. But then let's say the next night, overnight another building burns to the ground.

[5:01] You find out that was the most faithful church. So then you can ask the same questions. Was that God? Was God sovereign over that?

And some might try to defend God and excuse Him from that altogether, that He wasn't there or something had overpowered Him. But this is not the God of the Bible. This is not how divine testimony tells us who God is.

Isaiah 45, 5-7 says, I am the Lord and there is no other. There is no God besides me. I am the Lord and there is no other.

I form the light and create darkness. Here it is. I make peace and create calamity. I, the Lord, do all these things.

God's sovereign dominion extends not only over peace and prosperities, but also over tragedies and calamities. And in this we can also include, in this, the existence of wickedness in the world.

[6:06] When wicked things occur in the world, was God not able to make things right? Or where was God? Does God's sovereign dominion extend over the wickedness that occurs in the world?

Or was God thwarted? Was God just uninterested in what was going on at the time? The fact that God permits something to happen doesn't mean that he approves of the sinner's immoral intention behind the action.

And what sinful man intends for evil, God intends for good. So the question of who, who reigns over the events of creation, comes down to the question of who exactly is omnipotent?

Who is almighty? Is it creation? Or is it creator? Revelation 19.6 says, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns.

The Lord God is almighty, and the almighty reigns. So his sovereign dominion is over all of creation, which includes calamity, and it also includes things of chance, or what we might call a coincidence.

[7:29] When you say, well, that's a coincidence. Or by chance, or contingency. In other words, it could be otherwise, but it happened this way. And you say, well, what are the odds? God is sovereign, even over these things.

God was not surprised that it happened this way, when it could be otherwise. So you might ask, What was God reigning, ruling, preserving, limiting, and governing, and controlling, and regulating all his creation, and all their actions?

Yes. In 1 Kings 22.20, we see a prophecy against Ahab. Before anything happens, it says, As the word of the Lord came through the prophet Micaiah, that Ahab would fall at Ramoth-Gilead.

It's prophesied beforehand that Ahab's death was at hand, that it would happen, that he would fall at Ramoth-Gilead, and even details about his blood was prophesied before it happened.

And then you read a little bit further in verse 29, and it says this, So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, went up to Ramoth-Gilead.

[8:43] And then five verses later, Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor.

You could say, What are the odds? What are the odds of that happening? And then in verse 38, It says, Then someone washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed, according to the word of the Lord which he had spoken.

In other words, what was prophesied earlier in 1 Kings 21.19. So what to the person was at random to draw his bow and just let it loose at random, when we think about that, there's the necessary cause of nature, of the laws of gravity, or of physics, join that with the secondary free cause of the archer, the individual, who freely drew back the bow, and to him, what was totally random and just let it loose, it just so happened to find its place between the joints of the armor of King Ahab, who was determined beforehand by the Lord that he would fall at Ramoth, Gilead.

The results were the achievement of divine intentions. God has sovereign dominion as creator over all creation, which includes calamity and events that seem to be a chance, as well as our salvation. Now we must affirm that God is sovereign, and that man is fallen. And man being fallen requires divine intervention to be saved by an almighty God, to be saved from the judgment of that same

almighty God who is most holy.

[10 : 32] So a series of questions I want to ask as we consider the sovereign dominion of God in salvation. First of all, does God, this is hypothetically speaking, does God have the power and sovereign dominion to save every fallen soul, if that be his holy will?

Yes, he does. Let's ask a different question. Does God have the sovereign prerogative to save no one, if that is his holy will?

Yes, he does. If he did that, what would that say about God? It would say that he's just, because everybody, everybody would receive justice.

So that, what that would say about God is that he's fair. Another question. Does God have the sovereign, underived prerogative to save some and pass over others?

And this is where people say, hold on, stop the bus, that's not fair. And they're right. It's not fair, because what would be fair is justice, for everybody to receive the punishment which they have earned, which they deserve.

[11 : 46] It's mercy. Mercy is the withholding of just, of what is deserved. In Romans 9, 14, it says, what shall we say then?

Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.

So then, it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the scripture says to the Pharaoh, for this very purpose, I have raised you up, that I may show my power in you, and that my name may be declared in all the earth.

Therefore, he has mercy on whom he wills, and whom he wills, he hardens. And here it is. Listen to this. You will say to me then, why does he still find fault?

For who has resisted his will? But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, why have you made me like this?

[12 : 52] Does not the potter have power over the clay? From the same lump to make one vessel for honor, and another for dishonor. What if God, wanting to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory, and the vessels of mercy, which he had prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom he called.

Now, in the Second London Confession of Faith, as it articulates the doctrine of God in chapter 2, paragraph 1 speaks of the essence of God, the attributes, or the perfections of God, and then in paragraph 2, as I mentioned, it focuses on his external relations, the relations of that divine essence towards the created order.

And there's really a summary of God's essence, which draws the importance of having a right understanding of God's essence first, to rightly understand God's relations towards the created order, as being independent of his aseity, of being self-sufficient, of the first cause, being eternal, being infinite, and immutable.

And then tying in a lot of those attributes of God, his essence, his perfections, it then goes on to describe that divine essence, his relations to the created order.

And it says it in this way, He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things, and he has most sovereign dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever he pleases.

[14 : 45] And that's what we've been looking at with all of, really, creation, providence, and salvation. That God has sovereign dominion over all of His creation, understanding who He is to understand His relations to the created order.

And then, it goes on to explain the relations of the created order toward that God. His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to be contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all His counsels, in all His works, and in all His commands. To Him is due from angels and men whatsoever worship, service, or obedience as creatures they owe unto the Creator, and whatever He is further pleased to require of them.

By virtue of being Creator, all worship and obedience and honor is due to Him by creatures. So that brings us to the next section I want to draw your attention to is the lordship and the worship that is due to God.

In other words, give honor where honor is due. God is creator. We are creature. We have a natural obligation to obey God and to worship God by virtue of God being creator alone.

[16:10] God's sovereignty, God's sovereign dominion over creation, providence, and redemption demands eschatology. And in Romans 11, 33 to 36, the apostle Paul just erupts with doxology of God.

Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out for who has known the mind of the Lord or who has become His counselor for who has first given to Him that it shall be repaid to Him.

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to whom be glory forever. The right response and recognition of who God is and His relations to the created order demands this doxological response for us to worship God for who He is.

not only as creature while it is due by virtue of God creating us but having been redeemed we have all the more reason to worship and obey God as both creator and redeemer.

In Revelation 5, 12, 14 we see worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing and every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea on all that are in them I heard saying blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.

[17:46] And the four living creatures said Amen and the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever. So a few a couple of concluding uses that we can take of God's sovereign dominion which demands lordship and worship.

To quote John Webster he said to embrace and trust ourselves to divine government is not resignation but hopeful action towards the end secured for us by a loving creator.

If God is not sovereign then God is not God. if He is not sovereign then we have no guarantee that He will fulfill His promises made to us.

So there's much comfort in God's sovereignty because not only has God promised the end according to His love and His infinite wisdom and His almighty power but He has sovereign dominion over all of His creation.

there's not a tug of war for control of who's regulating the affairs of the world. The devil at no point ever gets the upper hand over God.

[19:01] God alone is God and God alone has sovereign dominion. So this brings much comfort for us who trust in God and who trust in His promises and the fulfillment of His promises.

And to think that there is no comfort in God's promises is to fall prey to unbelief. Unbelief that God will fulfill His promises. Unbelief that God has the prerogative that God has the sovereign dominion over all of His creation all of His creatures and all of their actions to fulfill all of His promises.

So the argument might come up in response well if God is sovereign then why pray? If God has sovereign dominion anyways then why pray? But I would argue the exact opposite.

Because God is sovereign we must pray. If God did not regulate the affairs of the world then what would be the point of praying?

But because God regulates our circumstances we pray. And because God governs controls and limits all of His creatures and all of their actions that is exactly why we pray.

[20:17] Because He is not an impotent God but an omnipotent God. He reigns and divine sovereignty doesn't eliminate but it generates creaturely operation.

I want to reread Daniel 4 34-35 and at the end of the time I Nebuchadnezzar lifted my eyes to heaven and my understanding returned to me and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever.

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.

He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, What have you done?

Let's pray.