

God's Sovereignty

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Sermon Notes:

God's Sovereignty

Devotional - Day 1

Day 1 – Sovereignty of God – God's Perspective

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: Colossians 1:16-17 For in Him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Devotional:

Since eternity past and throughout history, God has ruled with supreme authority. (Romans 11:36) Nothing is hidden from His knowledge or from beyond the scope of His control.

God's sovereignty is, at times, beyond human understanding. You and I dwell in time. God dwells in eternity. The past, the present and the future are all alike to Him. It is not possible for a finite creature (man) to understand and grasp the intricacies of God's infinite will. It is good to think about it, read about and ask for wisdom in understanding it.

But the truth of God's sovereignty is:

“Were there even one datum of knowledge, however small, unknown to God, His rule would break down at that point. To be Lord over all the creation, He must possess all knowledge. And were God lacking one infinitesimal modicum of power, that lack would end His reign and undo His kingdom; that one stray atom of power would belong to someone else and God would be a limited ruler and hence not sovereign.” (A.W. Tozer “The Knowledge of the Holy” Page 95)

If you believe the Lord is all-powerful, is that idea simply “head knowledge,” or does it affect the way you think and respond to life's challenges? When you realize that nothing happens apart from God's awareness, direction, and loving purpose, it becomes possible to lay down worry and fear and truly experience His peace.

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Question to consider:

We can believe God is sovereign because it tells us in the Scriptures God is all powerful, all knowing and exists everywhere. But are we ready to trust God as a sovereign God and turn over our fears, frustrations, and cares to Him so He may complete His will in our lives?

Prayer:

Resting in the sovereignty of God will free us from anxiety, fear, doubt, and frustration. If you lack the assurance that God is sovereign, confess your unbelief to God. Ask God to forgive you for your unbelief in the sovereignty of God and commit to meditate on the sovereignty of God and His promises. This will help you strengthen your faith and assure you God is in control in your life.

Conclude with silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Questions to Consider:

Do you continue to remind yourself that God is sovereign? How long does it take you to realize you can turn your cares, sadness, confusion, doubt and troubles over to a sovereign God (immediately) and trust Him to help you through those hard times?

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Devotional - Day 2

Day 2 – Sovereignty of God- God's Purpose

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do.

Devotional:

Theologically we may accept the biblical doctrine that God is sovereign but when life seems derailed by the loss of a job, your home or a loved one, do we tend to question God's sovereignty?

Joseph had a lot of things going for him early in his life. He was the first son born to Jacob through his wife Rachel and therefore became his Father's favorite son. Joseph also had prophetic dreams that set him apart from his brothers. But then everything changed. Joseph was rejected by his brothers and they sold him out of their lives. Joseph trusted God even though he had been sold into slavery. Then, just as his life seemed to be turning around, he was falsely accused by his employer's wife. Through all these trials Joseph remained faithful and waited on the Lord to accomplish His purpose for his life. Joseph did not bow to bitterness or give up on his hopes and dreams. Joseph waited on the Lord to hear his prayers. God was always in control. Joseph kept his eyes on God, and God used Joseph greatly. (Genesis chapters 37-50)

“The One who knows the number of hairs on your head, who hears your cries during the night, who understands your confusion amid heartbreaking loss, is able to use your circumstances to accomplish His ultimate purpose.” (“Discover” David Jeremiah)

“Nothing is a surprise to God; nothing is a setback to His plans; nothing can thwart His purposes: and nothing is beyond His control.” (Joni Eareckson Tada)

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Questions to consider:

Have you been feeling God's plans for you have been abandoned because of heartbreaking loss, misfortune and sadness? Are you able to rejoice knowing that our loving God has us in His grip?

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the lessons you have taught us through Joseph's life. Encourage us to seek you and trust you in every circumstance that comes into our lives. Help us to remember that you are always in control. Remind us we can trust that You are a sovereign God.

Conclude with silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Question to Consider:

Are you ready to let God use you in the hard times as well as the good times? Read the story of Joseph. His faithfulness is a lesson we can all apply to all our circumstances in life.

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Devotional - Day 3

Day 3 – Sovereignty of God- In our lives

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: James 4:13-15 “Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this city or that city and spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why you don’t even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say ‘If this is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’”

Devotional:

“Man’s will is free because God is sovereign. A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures. He would be afraid to do so.” (A.W. Tozer *“The Knowledge of the Holy”* Page 97)

“Certain things have been decreed by the free determination of God, and one of these is the law of choice and consequences. God has decreed that all who willingly commit themselves to His son Jesus Christ, in obedience of faith, shall receive eternal life and become sons of God. He has also decreed that all who love darkness and continue in rebellion against the high authority of heaven shall remain in a state of spiritual alienation and suffer eternal death at last.” (A.W. Tozer *“The Knowledge of the Holy”* Page 98)

“We must all choose whether we will obey the gospel or turn away in unbelief and reject its authority. Our choice is our own, but the consequences of the choice have already been determined by the sovereign will of God, and from this there is no appeal.” (A.W. Tozer *“The Knowledge of the Holy”* Page 99)

God tells us that if we recognize His sovereignty and trust our plans and lives in His keeping, He will guide our steps and establish our plans to bring them about in accord with His purposes and His righteousness.

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That God is sovereign impacts our sense of identity. When we understand how powerful God is and how much He loves us, we can know we are secure in Him. As the objects of God's sovereign love, we allow God to define us and give us our worth rather than look to the changing ideals of the world to do so. When we understand that God is in complete control, we are freed to live our lives. We need not fear ultimate failure or final destruction. (Romans 8:1) We need not fear worthlessness. We can be confident that God will have His way and that it will be good. We can trust that the One who says He loves us is fully able to act on that love in all ways. We can trust that, even when the world seems completely out of control, God is in control. We know He has the big picture covered, so we can trust Him with our daily details.

Questions to consider:

It is hard to trust in the sovereignty of God when our lives spin out of control. When is the best time to turn over our hurts, sadness, disappointments, mistakes over to God? Why do we wait so long to trust in God's sovereignty?

Prayer:

Lord, as we look at our lives, help us to see where our focus is. Lead us to a place where we can take our eyes off our finite self and turn our eyes to a sovereign God who can do anything. Help us to understand that our responsibility is to trust and believe that God is sovereign and we can then obey His Word and rest in His peace.

Conclude with silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Questions to Consider:

Each day, are we aware we can start our day with reminding ourselves that God is sovereign and in control of our day? Are we able to turn that day over to God immediately and trust Him to guide us through that day?

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Devotional - Day 4

Day 4 – Sovereignty of God - Our Trust

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: Psalm 55:22a “Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken.”

Devotional:

A question we all need to answer, from time to time throughout our lives is, can I trust God with the overwhelming impossibilities of my situation? Will I trust Him to take me through the hard times? We look at ourselves and feel inadequate to handle life's challenges. We are exhausted, we don't have resources or it seems that no one cares we are going through a hard time.

We must learn to trust that God is able to do what man cannot do.

“Our primary purpose of prayer is not to advise God on how to run the universe but we (as believers) can find peace as we trust God to sustain us through our trials. We need to understand God is as near to us as the air we breathe. It is not that God stops or eliminates the frightening things in our lives. Yet knowing God is with us gives us peace in the midst of the storms. Psalm 55:22 does not say “Cast your burdens on the Lord and He will immediately fix everything that troubles you,” but it does say “God will sustain you.” (Dan Hamilton “*Why?*”)

In an editorial, A. W. Tozer wrote: “To the child of God, there is no such thing as an accident. He travels an appointed way. . . . Accidents may indeed appear to befall him and misfortunes stalk his way; but these evils will be so in appearance only and will seem evil only because we cannot read the secret script of God's hidden providence.”

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Question to consider: As we go through life and experience trials and even victories, how do we find the balance and wisdom to understand what God's sovereign plan is even when they look different from what we expected or are the opposite of our dreams or desires?

Prayer:

Lord, teach us to come to you with our plans and dreams. Show us your will for every aspect of our lives. Teach us to trust you with our plans and dreams no matter the end result. Teach us to be willing to move forward trusting you with every aspect of our life. Give us the faith to believe you are the sovereign ruler of our lives.

Conclude with silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Questions to Consider: Are we ready to give God full control over all decisions in our lives and leave the end result to His sovereign will? Can we put our trust in Him, because He already knows everything about us?

God's Sovereignty

Devotional - Day 5

Day 5 – Sovereignty of God - Why pray?

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes) – prepare your heart and mind to hear from God

Scripture: Romans 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Devotional:

“Though it seems counterintuitive, the sovereignty of God is actually the reason why we pray. Think of it this way: If God wasn’t sovereign why in the world would we pray? We pray because we know God is sovereign, and he has the power to work things according to His will and plan. Therefore, we pray with boldness, knowing that God is in control. Consider the prayer of the early disciples in Acts 4:24-28. They speak of the sovereignty of God in the world, especially in the crucifixion of Jesus. Rather than discouraging their prayers, this truth actually empowered them to pray for boldness in continued witness. Rather than being a hindrance to prayer, the sovereignty of God is actually the fuel for passionate praying.” (Mike Leake)

“One reason we are so prone to doubt is that we fail to see God at work in our circumstances. We asked, and nothing happened. But the Lord is not some cosmic bellhop who jumps in response to our requests. He sees past, present, and future and knows the right time for every answer. His invisible hand is already at work on our behalf—arranging situations to accomplish His will, opening hearts, and preparing us to receive what He wants to give. To overcome doubts, spend time in the Word to learn God’s principles and ways. Then you’ll begin to grasp what He wants to achieve in your life and how He goes about it. Examine your past from a biblical perspective—faith will grow as you see the unexpected ways He answered your prayers.” (Charles Stanley)

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Prayer is a human act that God has ordained and which he delights in because it reflects the dependence of his creatures upon him.

“Do you seek the Lord earnestly and often in secret for deeper knowledge of Christ, for greater earnestness in prayer, for more boldness in witness, for sweeter joy in the Holy Spirit, for deeper sorrow for sin, for warmer compassion for the lost, for more divine power to love? Or is the coolness and perfunctoriness of your prayer life that you are spiritually self-satisfied and feel God does not need our prayers, but we do. Romans 8:26 tells us that, “we do not know what to pray for as we ought.” Yet the Spirit intercedes for us as we pray. Often what happens is that our eyes are opened to the ways in which God is working in the world. The Psalmists consistently pray that God would open our eyes to see things rightly.”
(“*Desiring God*” John Piper)

Simply put, God commands us to pray. Jesus prayed. Prayer exposes our heart.

Questions to consider: As you think back on your prayers during the past week, are your prayers simply prayers of supplication? Are you praying for God’s will for your day? Do you seek fellowship with God in your daily prayer life?

Prayer: Lord, we exalt you and praise you for your loving kindness, grace, mercy and power. Remind us to spend our day in fellowship with you as we go about our daily routines. Impress upon us your desire to be included in every aspect of our day. We stand in awe of your sovereignty. Allow us to trust in, rest in and enjoy knowing you are in control of our world.

Conclude with silence (2 minutes)

Afternoon/Evening Questions to Consider:

What areas of your life do you need to allow God to have control? How will you pray for that transfer of control to God? Digging deeper to understand the Sovereignty of God will affect your prayer life in what way?



Week #4: The Sovereignty of God

GOAL: God is referred to many times in Scripture as “Sovereign Lord.” What does that really mean? The definition of sovereignty is the “supreme power or authority.” Because God has created “all things in heaven and on earth” (Colossians 1:16), He has supreme power and authority over ALL that He has made. He made it; He owns it; it is His to decide what to do with it.

In a small way we can understand this as a parent. We have a child, and we decide what we will teach him or her, how we will raise the child, and what we will and will not allow while they are young and under our umbrella of authority. In God’s sovereignty, He chose to give us the ability to make choices, just as we allow our own children to make choices when they are ready to do so. It can be difficult for us to reconcile God’s sovereignty with man’s freewill, yet God has the authority to grant that and still retain His sovereignty.

Everything God has made is under His rule and authority, including you and me. He has the ability and right to do whatever He wants, and because of His other attributes, such as His omniscience, goodness, justice, love, etc., we can know that whatever God chooses to do, it will be for the ultimate good of His people and for His glory. May we grow in our understanding of God’s sovereignty and learn to rest in knowing He is in control.

LOVING GOD:

- * Memory Verse: **Colossians 1:16** “For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him.”
- * 2 minutes of silence
- * Devotional: choose one of the 5 devotionals for this week on the Sovereignty of God to read aloud to the group.

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- * Question to Consider: this will come from the devotional as well
- * 2 minutes of silence

BUILDING COMMUNITY:

* Growing Connected Questions

- What is one area of your life you wish you could control more? What do you think having that control would do for you?
- What is the reality of how much we can truly control in life?
- What stood out to you from this past week's message?

MAKING DISCIPLES:

* Bible Study Scriptures:

Read the following Scriptures out loud in the group: **Deuteronomy 3:24; Job 1:20-22; 42:1-3; Psalm 103:19; Isaiah 40:10; Matthew 5:45; Romans 11:33-36; Colossians 1:15-20**

* Questions:

- If you are a parent, have you ever told your child to do something, and when they asked why, you responded with, "Because I said so!" How does that authority over your child help you understand God's authority and sovereignty over you?
- What do we learn about God in **Deuteronomy 3:24; Psalm 103:19, & Isaiah 40:10?**
- According to **Colossians 1:15-20**, what does God have authority over?
- Read **Matthew 5:45**. How can we respond to the question, "If God is sovereign, why does He allow bad things to happen to good people, or good things to happen to bad people?"
- Read **Romans 11:33-36**. People tend to fall into one of two extremes when trying to reconcile God's sovereignty with man's freewill. They will either focus on God's sovereignty and think God is controlling them like a puppeteer, or they will focus on man's freewill and believe God's power is limited. How can we reconcile God's sovereignty and man's freewill without falling into either of these extremes?
- A. W. Tozer in his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, uses the analogy of an ocean liner heading off on a voyage with its destination set by those in charge. He likens this in a small way to sovereignty. The passengers on board are a picture of freewill in that they are able

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to move about the ship and decide what activities they will do. The ship authorities do not mandate these things. "They are completely free to move about as they will. They eat, sleep, play, lounge about on the deck, read, talk, altogether as they please; but all the while the great liner is carrying them steadily onward toward a predetermined port" (p.111). How does this analogy help you reconcile God's sovereignty and our freewill?

- Since God is sovereign, and everything that happens has passed through His hands, what does it say when we grumble and complain about our circumstances? Read **Job 1:20-22; 42:1-3**. How can these verses help you deal with difficult circumstances?

* Application questions:

- How does my understanding of God being sovereign affect my relationship with Him?
- If I truly understand and believe this about God, how will it affect the way I live?
- What is God saying to me? What am I going to do about it?

* Daily Devotionals:

- Read the daily devotions for Week #4 "The Sovereignty of God."

*Going Deeper (The following are added optional resources for you to help you grow in your understanding of this week's attribute(s) of God):

- 1 - If you want to take the challenge, get a copy of A. W. Tozer's *The Knowledge of the Holy*, and read chapter 22.
- 2 - List the top two struggles/fears in your life and consider what your response should be to these if God is both good and sovereign. (*God: As He Longs for You To See Him*, Chip Ingram)
- 3 - Chip Ingram, in his study on God's Attributes (see title above), lists the following Scriptures as proof that the God of the Bible is above all. Take time to study these Scriptures and worship the Sovereign Lord.

The God I worship...

- . . . is before all things. Col. 1:17; Ps. 90:2; Rev. 1:8; 1 Tim. 6:16
- . . . created all things. Gen. 1:1; John 1:3; Col. 1:16
- . . . upholds all things. Heb.1:3; Col. 1:17

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- . . . is above all things. Eph. 4:6; Is 45:5-12
- . . . knows all things. Is. 46:10; Ps. 139:4, 6
- . . . can do all things. Jer. 32:27; Luke 1:37
- . . . accomplishes all things. Is. 14:24; 46:10; Eph. 1:11
- . . . rules over all things. Dan. 4:34-35; 1 Chron. 29:11-12
- . . . is in control of all things. Job 42:2; Rom. 8:28
 - earthly kings – Prov. 21:1; Rev. 19:16
 - human events – Ps. 33:9-11
 - good angels – Col. 1:15-16; Rev. 4:8
 - Satan & bad angels – Job 1:6; Eph. 1:21; Phil. 2:10
 - human decisions – Eph. 1:11; Rom. 8:29-30; Acts 2:23; 13:48

4 - Listen to this song and have a time of worship, reflecting on the sovereignty of God: Not For A Moment - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XD0cvWImVjA>

5 - Video excerpt from David Platt on the sovereignty of God - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0th5nVIKUBY>

6 - Article - <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/whats-so-great-about-sovereignty-god/>

7 - Article - <https://www.crossway.org/articles/dont-let-go-of-gods-sovereignty-over-your-worst/>

8 – Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQFihHHjIt4> John Piper

9 – Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGhFslv1HKo> John MacArthur

10 - Website - <https://www.gotquestions.org/free-will-sovereign.html>

11 - Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*: Chapter 16: God's Providence, "Can Choices Ordained By God Be Real Choices?" pgs. 343-346.

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12 - Excerpt From: Wayne A. Grudem. “*Systematic Theology.*” iBooks. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/systematic-theology/id398992021?mt=11>

“Thus, when we ask whether we have “free will,” it is important to be clear as to what is meant by the phrase. Scripture nowhere says that we are “free” in the sense of being outside of God’s control or of being able to make decisions that are not caused by anything. Nor does it say we are “free” in the sense of being able to do right on our own apart from God’s power. But we are nonetheless free in the greatest sense that any creature of God could be free — we make willing choices, choices that have real effects. We are aware of no restraints on our will from God when we make decisions. We must insist that we have the power of willing choice; otherwise we will fall into the error of fatalism or determinism and thus conclude that our choices do not matter, or that we cannot really make willing choices. On the other hand, the kind of freedom that is demanded by those who deny God’s providential control of all things, a freedom to be outside of God’s sustaining and controlling activity, would be impossible if Jesus Christ is indeed “continually carrying along things by his word of power” (Heb. 1:3, author’s translation). If this is true, then to be outside of that providential control would simply be not to exist! An absolute “freedom,” totally free of God’s control, is simply not possible in a world providentially sustained and directed by God himself.”

13 - Excerpt From: Paul P. Enns. “*The Moody Handbook of Theology.*” iBooks. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/the-moody-handbook-of-theology/id774305899?mt=11>

“The human dilemma is the inability to comprehend both truths (God’s sovereignty and human responsibility) existing side by side—and they do. God’s sovereignty and human responsibility are frequently seen together. At Pentecost Peter explained why Christ died—it was due to God’s sovereign hand, yet in the same comment Peter indicted the people for having crucified Jesus (Acts 2:23). God had ordained the death of Christ, but the people who crucified Him were responsible. Who can comprehend that?”

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14 - Excerpt From: Paul P. Enns. “*The Moody Handbook of Theology*.” iBooks. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/the-moody-handbook-of-theology/id774305899?mt=11>

“The tension between God’s sovereignty and human responsibility can be laid to rest in realizing the tension exists—and must remain. But the tension can be tolerated in recognizing that these two truths represent an *antinomy. The Scriptures frequently infer the inability of the human mind to comprehend the mind and magnitude of God (Deut. 29:29; Prov. 25:2; Isa. 55:8, 9; Rom. 11:33– 36).”

*Antinomy refers to a real or apparent mutual incompatibility of two laws.

15 – Quote to consider – “A life in Christ has hard edges and dark valleys, but it is purposeful even when painful.” – Rosaria Butterfield

Prayer Requests