

Behold Our God

Exploring His Divine Attributes

The Sovereignty of God

What comes to mind when you think about the idea of control?

When we think of control, often times we think of the following ideas...

1. I can control my future completely...I am the master of my destiny
2. Being in control equals strength...only the strong survive
3. Letting go of control is giving up...the LACK of control will lead to failure

ALL of these misconceptions regarding control have one thing in common...They ALL have me at the center...**MY will, MY wishes, MY way, MY comfort...**and ultimately...**MY kingdom.** Truth is, when we think about the life we live, there are many things that fall outside the realm of our control.

- Your physical characteristics...you are who you are
- Past events...while there is much to learn FROM the past, there is nothing you can do to change it
- The passage of time
- Other peoples actions and reactions
- Global events...No matter how hard you might try, there is NOTHING you can do to control the actions and reactions of our world leaders
- Illness and death
- Others' perception of you
- The future

We are a people who are indeed out of control...and yet...still we clamor for it...**Why? What do you think is the fundamental reason that we seek control?**

We struggle to accept the truth about the sovereignty of God

If we are honest about our feelings, we clamor for control as we fail to see God as trustworthy and capable. What's more, we fail to embrace His very character and nature.

The last time I spoke on holiness, we discussed an underlying idea that is CENTRAL to our thinking and pivotal to our willingness to surrender control...specifically what we believe to be true about God. The quote was from AW Tozier and I believe is critical to keep in front of us as we seek to grow into all that God has for us in our journey through life...

"What you think about(what you believe to be true about) God is the MOST important truth about you."

Many of us struggle to **THINK** righty about God. Truthfully, many of us wrestle with **EMBRACING** the truth about God and as a result, our lives are riddled with MANY negative emotions that come as a result of a wrong view of God...

- Fear as I struggle to see him as Glorious
- Insecure as I struggle to see him as Gracious
- Discontent as I struggle to see him as Good

And this is just to name a few...

So far, in our journey through the character and nature of God, we have looked at...

His Holiness...He is supremely set apart.

His Mercy...He freely lavishes on us undeserved and unmerited kindness.

His holy hatred...He calls us to love what He loves and hate what He hates.

Today, we are going to talk about **The Sovereignty of God**.

Sovereignty simply defined is...

God's supreme authority, absolute rule, and complete control over all His creation. It means that nothing happens outside of His will or provision, and He governs all things according to the council of His perfect wisdom, justice, and love.

As we dive into this truth today, understand that our pursuit of it will be somewhat limited and overview in nature and scope. That said, it is my hope that as we scratch the surface of this doctrine, that our appetites would be wet to dig deeper, our hearts would be encouraged as we contemplate its implications, and our thinking challenged as we ponder what it means to surrendering to the will of a sovereign God. Today, we are going to look at several texts and three primary truths as it relates to the sovereignty of God...

1. God's Sovereignty over His Creation
2. God's Sovereignty in salvation
3. God's Sovereignty over the affairs of men

Let's start with **God's Sovereignty over His Creation...The first thing that we see is that...**

- He is vastly superior to all that He has created...Let us consider Isaiah 40:12-15

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? 13 Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? 14 Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? 15 Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust.

This text comes as a reminder to Isaiah amid the threat of Babylonian exile that the God that he serves is indeed unique from ALL OTHER earthly authorities...

1. His authority is absolute...he measures the waters; marks the heavens; weighs the mountains! **He holds the universe in the palm of His hand...**
2. His wisdom is unmatched...Isaiah asks a rhetorical question in verses 13-14...

13 Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? 14 Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?

the answer is assumed...NO ONE has given council to the Lord. His wisdom is beyond human comprehension. His plans are always perfect and carried out in accordance with His perfect will.

3. His power is beyond all human comprehension...in verse 15 the nations, which seem powerful by human standards, are nothing more than a drop in the bucket or dust on the scales before God. Earthly power and influence are fleeting...true authority belongs to God alone.
- He infinitely authoritative over light, darkness, and all of human history...Let's read Isaiah 45:7-12
7 I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things. 8 "Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it. 9 "Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'? 10 Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' or to a woman, 'With what are you in labor?'" 11 Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: "Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands? 12 I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host.
1. God alone controls all things...verse 7 makes it abundantly clear that it is God who creates light and darkness, well-being and calamity. Nothing happens outside of His sovereign will. He is indeed Lord over the bitter and sweet elements of his life.
 2. God alone governs in righteousness...In verse 8, the imagery of righteousness and salvation sprouting from the earth shows that God not only governs creation but in his governance, he brings forth justice and redemption. He is actively working to accomplish His purposes, ensuring that His will is carried out in the world.
- He masterfully manages the passage of time...not a NANOSECOND is wasted in God's economy. Let us look at Isaiah 46:9-10 together...

9 remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 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 purpose,'

Brothers and Sisters, as we consider the sovereignty of God over all of His Creation, rest in the truth that if God indeed knows the end from the beginning, then **God sees** the trials of life that you are currently living in. If God is indeed perfect in wisdom, then **God knows** the pain that is presently crippling you. If God's purposes are far beyond the purposes of man, then rest knowing that **God is at work** in your life, accomplishing a future for you that will blow your mind! This brings us to our second point this Morning...

God is sovereign in your salvation...Consider Ephesians 2 with me this Morning.

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- Your death was absolute...there was NOTHING you could do to rescue yourself from the brokenness caused by your sin.
 1. Everything about you was cursed...your lifestyle, your passions, your very nature THROBBED against that of your creator.
 2. The depth of your curse rendered you helpless in your fallen condition...In fact, you didn't even DESIRE rescue...you were an enemy of God!
- His grace was immense and beyond measure and his rescue complete
 1. He found YOU...there was no action on your part that procured your rescue from your fallen state. God in his sovereignty animated that which was DEAD in trespasses and sins.
 2. He gave you faith through his grace so that you could not boast in what you did to achieve salvation. It is not a work of man...it is SOLELY the work of a sovereign God to rescue you and redeem you!

His purpose for your life is SO GOOD...*10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Brothers and sisters, as we consider the sovereignty God in our salvation, we MUST remember that God did not save you for you! God saved you for himself and His glory...that we might live for HIS story and carry out the will and wishes Him who is indeed our sovereign creator. This purpose for your life is good...it is in fact the GREATEST good because it is orchestrated by the will and wishes of this immensely Great and Sovereign God! This brings us to the final point in our study here this morning...

God is sovereign over the affairs of your life...turn with me to 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. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

- God is at work in the lives of those he rescued...He saved you for a purpose! Ephesians 2 says that we are HIS workmanship. Brothers and sisters, if He has given you life(he has created in you a love for the Father whom you once hated), then he is busy working all things for Good in your life.
- God is intentionally moving you towards a goal...God is remaking you into the image of His Son. And what is he using in your life to accomplish this work? All things...both bitter elements and sweet. What an amazing God! Only HE could accomplish this work.
- God in his sovereign wisdom destined you for a level of greatness that only He had the wisdom and foresight to imagine! Think about this...God knew you before the foundations of the earth was laid. And for those whom He foreknew, He predestined THIS level of greatness. Why? That you might reflect perfectly the one who created you. What a truth!

Consider this as you ponder the depth of this sovereignty...Just as God is at work in your life, so is God at work in the lives of those around you...and all at the same time!

As I think about God's sovereign over the affairs of man, I am reminded of one of my favorite stories in History...The story of Esther...I am sure that many of you know it well.

Esther was a young Jewish woman who unexpectedly becomes queen of Persia. As the story unfolds, God's true purpose is revealed when a plot arises to exterminate her people. Encouraged by her cousin Mordecai, she risks her life by approaching King Ahasuarus uninvited—a dangerous act—to advocate for her people. In an incredible display of God's sovereignty, the enemy of the

Jews, Haman, is defeated, and the Jewish people are saved. Though God's name is never explicitly mentioned in the book, His sovereign hand is evident in every turn—placing Esther in the right position at the right time, orchestrating events for the preservation of His people. As much as this SCREAMS the sovereignty of God, I would encourage you to consider another dimension to this story...

- Over 570 years before Esther, a man named Kish fathered Saul, a future king of Israel. Though Saul was chosen to lead, his actions would set in motion a chain of events spanning centuries.
- God commanded Saul through the prophet Samuel to utterly destroy the Amalekites, Israel's long-standing enemy. Had Saul obeyed, the threat of Amalek would have been erased, freeing Israel from their tyranny. However...
- Saul disobeyed, defying God's direct command. Instead of fully executing judgment, he spared King Agag, allowing his lineage to survive. Through that act of rebellion, Agag's descendants lived on—and generations later, Haman...Esther and Israel's future nemesis would be born.
- As a consequence of Saul's defiance, God removed the throne from his family. His dynasty crumbled, yet one line remained through Jonathan, Saul's faithful son, and his descendants, including Mephibosheth. From this same family line, Esther and Mordecai would emerge centuries later.
- Saul's failure allowed the Amalekites to continue plaguing Israel, their hostility lasting for generations as the descendants of Agag survived. The ripple effect of one disobedient act echoed far beyond Saul's reign.
- Israel, having turned from God themselves, faced exile, no longer ruling their own land. Under the control of Persia, they suffered the weight of their rebellion.
- Haman, an Agagite, rose to power within Persia's kingdom, serving as an official under King Ahasuerus. The descendant of Israel's ancient enemy now held sway over their fate.
- Yet God was working behind the scenes. Mordecai, from the line of Jonathan and Kish, became a trusted advisor to the king. Though centuries had passed, God had placed a descendant of Saul's family in a position of influence to counter Israel's adversary.
- Esther, Mordecai's niece, was raised in obscurity, orphaned and seemingly insignificant. Yet God positioned her to become queen, ensuring His people had an advocate right where they needed one.
- When Haman set out to destroy the Jews, Esther stood in the gap, risking her life before the king. Through her courage, God reversed the plans of the enemy and preserved His people.

- The descendants of Kish now had another chance to honor God, this time through faithful obedience, trusting in His power to deliver what Saul failed to do centuries earlier.
- The descendants of Agag reaped the judgment long foretold. Haman—the seed of Saul's ancient mistake—faced total destruction, just as God had decreed all those years ago.
- Out of this deliverance came the Feast of Purim, a celebration that honors God's sovereignty, proving that even in the unseen moments of history, His hand is guiding every detail.

Brothers and sisters, the faithfulness of this sovereign God transcends the foolishness of man. He is indeed **TIRELESSLY** working all things together for your good and **HIS** greatest glory. While the bitter elements of life are difficult to accept and may in fact **SEEM** hopeless, **KNOW** that God sees your present difficulties. He cares about the pain you are presently living through. And he is at work in your trial producing a good that only he could produce.

As we wrap up our time here this morning, I would like for you consider chocolate chip cookies. How many of you are cookie lovers? I love cookies...probably a little too much. And my wife's cookies are delicious! I remember as a kid, walking into kitchen as mom was making cookies and sampling the ingredients when she wasn't paying attention. And there were indeed **A LOT** of different ingredients. I remember tasting the chocolate chips...those were delicious. I remember eating the brown sugar...that was great. And then, I remember taking a spoonful of vanilla extract...have any of you ever done that before? It was horrible! I remember thinking that this was possibly one of the worst things that I had ever put into my mouth!

And yet...somehow...some way when mom put those ingredients into her "magic" mixing bowl in a way that only she could, the end result was **ALWAYS** delicious, perfect little circles of pure delight. The end was **ALWAYS** so good.

So many times in life we struggle to wait for cookies to be done. Instead, we sample the ingredients and turn away in disgust at the bitter elements necessary to make delicious cookies. Brothers and Sisters, God, in his sovereignty is doing a work in your life that is beautiful and amazing. Rest assured...God **NEVER** burns his cookies.

God sees you...God knows your situation and is working **IN IT** for your greatest good and his glory...God is in control...so rest because...

God is Sovereign!