

God's Sovereignty

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

I have a sign by my study door that provides a daily reminder to me. It was given to me by a friend, but I do not know who the author was. It says, "I need constantly to remind myself that 'all things are of God.' Let me not preach sovereignty and then complain of my lot in life. Let me not talk of divine purpose and then spend my days murmuring about my trials and troubles. It is totally inconsistent with faith in the sovereign Christ for me to question His good providence. Paul called covetousness 'idolatry' and said 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content' (Philippians 4:11). I pray for submission, for with it comes peace and rest." Over the years as a preacher and pastor I have proved some things. First, God will provide all my "needs" if I am His servant and I shall not have to beg. Secondly, God will provide the resources to do the work that He would have us to do. If He does not provide for something to be done, then He does not want it done. You cannot shame the lost religionist into giving, and you do not have to do it to the child of God. Thirdly, God will accomplish His purpose at His own pace. I pray for grace to walk with Him, neither ahead nor behind. Fourthly, God will use the means that will glorify Him and not men. The vehicles of modern religious methodology will get many people fast but they shall then be twofold the children of hell. Fifthly, God does not "need" me, or anyone else. He may use me, but I am sure it will be in spite of me and not because of me. Sixthly, I have learned that I am weaker and more sinful than those to whom I preach. I can only say with the apostle, "I am what I am by the grace of God." Lastly, I have learned that I can only preach the preaching God has bidden me to preach. I cannot be or imitate someone else, and only make great blunders when I try.

Every local church is a particular people, called of God in a particular place, under the leadership of a particular pastor, with particular resources and gifts, with a particular dispensation of the gospel for the glory of God. God is the God of sovereignty, not of the rubber stamp!

Pastor Gary Shepard

A true recognition of God's sovereignty will avow God's perfect right to do with us as He wills. The one who bows to the pleasure of the Almighty will acknowledge His absolute right to do with us as seemeth Him good. If He chooses to send poverty, sickness, domestic bereavements, even while the heart is bleeding at every pore, it will say, Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right! Often there will be a struggle, for the carnal mind remains in the believer to the end of his earthly pilgrimage. But though there may be a conflict within his breast, nevertheless, to the one who has really yielded himself to this blessed truth, there will presently be heard that Voice saying, as of old it said to the turbulent Gennesareth, "Peace be still"; and the tempestuous flood within will be

quieted and the subdued soul will lift a tearful but confident eye to heaven and say, "Thy will be done."

Arthur Pink

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Although the sovereignty of God is universal and absolute, it is not the sovereignty of blind power. It is coupled with infinite wisdom, holiness and love. And this doctrine, when properly understood, is a most comforting and reassuring one. Who would not prefer to have his affairs in the hands of a God of infinite power, wisdom, holiness and love, rather than to have them left to fate, or chance, or irrevocable natural law, or to shortsighted and perverted self? Those who reject God's sovereignty should consider what alternatives they have left.

The affairs of the universe, then, are controlled and guided, how? "According to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will." The present day tendency is to set aside the doctrines of Divine Sovereignty and Predestination in order to make room for the autocracy of the human will. The pride and presumption of man, on the one hand, and his ignorance and depravity on the other, lead him to exclude God and to exalt himself so far as he is able; and both of these tendencies combine to lead the great majority of mankind away from Calvinism.

Lorraine Boettner

Whatsoever The Lord Pleaseth

Psalm 135:6

THERE are many precious truths taught throughout the Bible, but there is one that seems to gleam and radiate on every page of Holy Scripture, that of divine sovereignty, our God is God (Isa. 46:9-12). He is on a throne of absolute and universal dominion directing, controlling, ruling, regulating all things after His wise and eternal counsel (Eph. 1:11). "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in Heaven above and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places (Psalm 135:6). What does the scriptures teach that it pleased the Lord to do? There are many things we could consider, but there are five that are plainly revealed in scripture.

1) It pleased the Lord to make you His people! (1 Sam. 12:22).

Israel of old provides us a good picture of God's sovereign electing love. He passed by all the other nations and set his heart upon Israel. Did they merit His favor? certainly not;

read the record, "Ah a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity." He set His love on them because of a covenant made with Abraham. Likewise, we do not merit God's electing love. He chose His spiritual Israel unconditionally, there was nothing in them to merit His love. He set His love on us because of the eternal covenant of grace made with our Surety, Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:22; 2 Thes. 2:13).

2) It pleased the Lord to bruise His Son! (Isa. 53:10).

Jesus Christ stood as the Mediator of the people that were given Him in eternity (John 6:37). In order to redeem them and save them He had to shoulder their sin debt, that's what happened at Calvary, substitution and satisfaction (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Jn. 3:5). He made an effectual atonement for the sin of His covenant people (Hebrews 2:17).

3) It pleased God by the preaching of the gospel to effectually call out His elect! (1 Cor. 1:17-24).

God in His perfect wisdom purposed to reveal the gospel through the very means this world calls foolishness (2 Cor. 4:5-7). His sheep are made to hear the effectual call of the gospel through the preaching of the Word and the revelation of the Holy Spirit (John 10:27-30; 1 Cor. 2:10-14).

4) It pleased God to save His people by His grace! (Gal. 1:15).

When will a man be saved? The only scriptural answer is when it pleases God in sovereign grace to do so (2 Tim. 1:9; Phil. 1:6). Salvation is always by the free grace of God (Rom. 3:24), not by the free will of a depraved sinner (Rom. 9:10-16).

5) It pleased God to put all spiritual blessings in Christ! (Col. 1:19).

Only in our Lord Jesus Christ is the fullness of redemption, righteousness, & reconciliation to be found (1 Cor. 1:30). The believer in Christ stands perfectly complete and accepted before an all demanding God (Eph. 1:3-6).

Pastor Thomas Harding

It has been well said that "true worship is based upon recognized greatness, and greatness is superlatively seen in Sovereignty, and at no other footstool will men really worship." In the presence of the Divine King upon His throne even the seraphim 'veil their faces.'

Divine sovereignty is not the sovereignty of a tyrannical Despot, but the exercised pleasure of One who is infinitely wise and good! Because God is infinitely wise He cannot err, and because He is infinitely righteous He will not do wrong. Here then is the preciousness of this truth. The mere fact itself that God's will is irresistible and

irreversible fills me with fear, but once I realize that God wills only that which is good, my heart is made to rejoice.

Here then is the final answer to the question (concerning our attitude toward God's sovereignty) — What ought to be our attitude toward the sovereignty of God? The becoming attitude for us to take is that of godly fear, implicit obedience, and unreserved resignation and submission. But not only so: the recognition of the sovereignty of God, and the realization that the Sovereign Himself is my Father, ought to overwhelm the heart and cause me to bow before Him in adoring worship. At all times I must say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight."

A. W. Pink

There is a great display of God's sovereignty within the Church that He bought with His own blood. He places whom He will in it, prospers them as He will, gives spiritual gifts as He will and leads them as He will. But in this there is a great equality. He loves them all the same and shall reward them all the same because they all stand before Him on the merits of Christ and not themselves. They all believe the same thing ... they believe on Christ. They all give the same amount ... as the Lord has prospered them. They all do the same thing ... what He has gifted them and enabled them and commanded them to do.

Gary Shepard

We must always put difference between the word of the gospel, and the power that manageth that word; we must put difference between the common and more special operations of that power also; even as there is evidently a difference to be put between those words of Christ that were effectual to do what was said, and of those words of his which were but words only, or at least not so accompanied with power. As for instance: that same Jesus that said to the Leper, 'Say nothing to any man,' said also to Lazarus, 'Come forth;' yet the one obeyed, the other did not; though he that obeyed was least in a capacity to do it, he being now dead, and stunk in his grave. Indeed unbelief hath hindered Christ very much, yet not when he putteth forth himself as Almighty, but when he doth suffer himself by them to be abused who are to be dealt with by ordinary means: otherwise legions of devils, with ten thousand impediments, must fall down before him, and give way unto him. There is a speaking, and a so (true) speaking: 'they so spake, that a great multitude, both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed' (Acts 14:1. . . . There is a difference between the coming of the word when it is in power, (1 Tim. 1:5) and when it is in word only. So then, the blessed grace of election chooseth this man to good, not because he is good; it chooseth him to believe, not because he doth believe; it chooseth him to persevere, not because he doth so; it foreordains that this man shall be

created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. 1:4-6), not if a man will create himself thereto (1 Peter 1:2, Eph. 2:10).

John Bunyan

The whole creation is as a garment, wherein the Lord shows his power clothed unto men; whence in particular he is said to clothe himself with light as with a garment (Psa. 104:2). And in it is the hiding of his power. Hid it is, as a man is hid with a garment; not that he should not be seen at all, but that he should not be seen perfectly and as his is. It shows the man, and he is known by it; but also it hides him, that he is not perfectly or fully seen. So are the works of creation unto God, he so far makes them his garment or clothing as in them to give out some instances of his power and wisdom; but he is also hid in them, in that by them no creature can come to the full knowledge of him. Now, when this work shall cease, and God shall unclothe or unveil all his glory to his saints, and they shall know him perfectly, see him as he is, so far as a created nature is capable of that comprehension, then will he lay them aside and fold them up, at least as to that use, as easily as a man lays aside a garment that he will wear or use no more.

John Owen

It is a greater glory to us that we are allowed to serve God, than it is to him that we offer him that service. He is not rendered happy by us; but we are made happy by him. He can do without such earthly servants; but we cannot do without such a heavenly Master.

William Secker (1660)