

Living By Faith: God's Sovereignty

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Given 30-Jul-11; Sermon #1059

Two weeks ago an email appeared in my inbox featuring an article from *The Atlantic Monthly* magazine, declaring in bold headlines that "Gay is the New Normal." What inspired this headline is that a recent poll showed that a clear majority of Americans now view homosexuality as morally acceptable. The entire history of poll taking on this subject until 2008 showed Americans clearly opposed it. In 2008, for the first time people of this nation were equally split: 48% for, 48% against. In 2010, a clear majority of 52% approved, 43% still disapproved, and 5% was undecided.

In one generation, beginning in 1962 when Bibles were first banned in the public schools, outright acceptance of a sin that the Bible clearly condemns has occurred. In one generation that took place! For same sex-marriage clearly gaining acceptability, we will soon see a state ban against polygamy beginning to be challenged.

This evil growth has been accomplished largely through "in-your-face" intimidation with major assistance from compliant liberal politicians who believe that homosexuals are a large voting bloc, and by liberal judges who blind their eyes to social damages these sins inflict, calling them insignificant—not to be bothered with.

I am going to read through a series of verses. I am not going to give much in the way of commentary on them, at least until I am done. There is one thing these all have in common. God is the one speaking here:

Jeremiah 3:1-3 "They say, 'If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man's, may he return to her again?' Would not that land be greatly polluted? [God is saying no, that would not be good.] But you [Judah] have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return to Me," says the LORD. "Lift up your eyes to the desolate heights and see: Where have you not lain with men? By the road you have sat for them like an Arabian in the wilderness; and you have polluted the land with your harlotries and your wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain. You have had a harlot's forehead; you refuse to be ashamed.

Isaiah 3:4-5 "I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. The people will be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor; the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honorable."

Isaiah 3:16-17 Moreover the LORD says: "Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, making a jingling with their feet, therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will uncover their secret parts."

Zephaniah 3:1-5 Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, to the oppressing city [Jerusalem]! She has not obeyed His voice, she has not received correction; she has not trusted in the LORD, she has not drawn near to her God. Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning. Her

prophets are insolent, treacherous people; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. The LORD is righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, but the unjust knows no shame.

Amos 4:1-3 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, "Bring wine, let us drink!" The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness: "Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Harmon," says the LORD.

Amos 6:1-6 Woe to you who are at ease in Zion [indicating Judah], and trust in Mount Samaria [those who are in Israel], notable persons in the chief nation, to whom the house of Israel comes! Go over to Calneh and see; and from there go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory? Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, who cause the seat of violence to come near; who lie on beds of ivory, stretch out on your couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall; who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, and invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

What these verses all have in common is that they all appear in the same type of context. They were all written just prior to the fall and scattering of either Israel in the north, or Judah to the south.

I recently read a brief overview by one commentator who stated that the Bible shows that in the period before these nations fell, their society showed a significant breakdown in two vital areas. One was in the leadership of politics and business, and the second was in family life, with specific blame falling on the women.

In these verses we just read we see these characteristics either directly named or implied. Listen to this: Rebellion, obstinacy, betrayal, distrust, shamelessness, greed comprising an audacious self-centeredness toward God and fellowman.

There was a time in our history that the overwhelming number of people in the nation expressed a very strong sense of shame whenever they sinned. To them, sin was an ugly thing, and they did whatever they could to hide their moral flaws from others. Some of that still exists, but it was during the late 1950s and on into the 1960s that I perceive was the beginning of the end of this attitude. Sin gradually became less of a stigma attached to bad behavior and was slowly replaced by a growing boldness of attitude, a flaunting of sin.

Today, that sense of shame is, for the most part, gone from the American psyche. Some small percentage of the population still has it, but more and more bold immorality has become a way of life to the extent that sin is blatantly committed. Civility is becoming a thing of the past. Open "in your face" conduct is becoming the normal way of doing things. Consider former President Clinton's well-advertised conduct right in the White House. But then there is our current president openly lying between his teeth regarding governmental issues.

This that I have just described is what the whore's forehead portrayed. It represents blatant, audacious sinning of a street-walker who is out in public openly by means of her appearance, advertising what she is, soliciting herself, and tempting others to engage in sin with her. A whore's forehead represents obdurate practice done right in front, with no attempt at camouflage—a kind of attitude that reminds one of Genesis 19, the story of righteous Lot dealing with the homosexuals in Sodom just before God dropped the fire and brimstone on the people of that city.

We must be very careful to guard ourselves from falling into the temptation of allowing ourselves to be drawn into the same casual approach the world has taken regarding sin. It is our responsibility to overcome. The nation's people, we must understand, did not just jump into this attitude. It gradually grew over the decades to its present state of relaxed and careless place of public acceptability. This state of affairs was significantly aided by the so-called "Christian" church that abandoned its responsibility to "cry aloud and spare not, and show My people their sin." Thus, in our time our people are largely ignorant of what the Bible actually says about sin.

Today I am beginning a series that involves four major subjects that I believe, if paid attention to, will guard us from ever getting into this casual attitude regarding sin. Those subjects are: God's sovereignty, our humility, God's justice, and God's grace. The subjects will probably be pretty much in that order, but I hope to be able to weave them together so that we can easily see that each is linked in relation to each other as *necessary* reinforcements to each other. The objective I am heading toward is what we need to educate ourselves in order to be alert and on guard. I do not want us to see them merely as links, but that each is a necessary part of our attitude toward God and our relationship with Him, and also with each other as a part of Christ's body, the world, and our self-image as well.

I think that you would agree that in this world, especially this Western world, high technology and its accompanying sophistication, that the spirit-of-the-times influence is ever toward the deification of the created—meaning man, meaning ourselves—rather than the glorification of *the* Creator. When we add to this constant influence of this nation's liberalism flowing forth from every means of electronic communication—newspapers, magazines, entertainment, plus academia and religion—this evil deification is rapidly permeating the whole of this our world.

Romans 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

What we observe in the world around us here in the good old USA confirms that the end-time Israel is following the same basic spiritual pattern as our ancestors established anciently. Paul is describing what his day was like, and Israel had a zeal for God, and I believe that there is a certain level of zeal still in the United States. It is there, but human nature does not change. We are following the same trajectory that Israel and Judah did, and we are headed toward the same end. We are going to be conquered, and we are going to be scattered unless, as a nation, we are turning away from those things.

Hopefully we, as part of God's church, are not that way, but these verses show that there is some knowledge of God within the Israelitish nation. We know that this is true here in the United States. A problem is that it is not an enlightened, discerning, intelligent knowledge of God combined with zeal. Rather, God says in Hosea 4:6 that His people (meaning directly in that case there in Hosea) are destroyed for a lack of knowledge, meaning *true* knowledge of Him. I think you are witness to a

Christianity that is practiced in the United States of America is not true Christianity. The name is there. Some of the form of it is there. They do attempt to worship God and Christ, but they really do not obey, as I am going to show you in just a bit.

What does God say there in Hosea 4:6? I am sure He would lay this thing right before us too regarding Israel today. God then lays the greater blame on their teachers for their failure to teach truth.

I found an interesting comment in the *Interpreters Commentary* in that it says the word "ignorant" in verse 3 is better translated as "ignoring." Kind of interesting. In other words, it better shows a deliberate ignoring of the righteousness of God. It was not that they were just ignorant. It was a deliberate ignoring of the righteousness of God.

The broader history of Israel in the Old Testament clearly shows that Israel had the Word of God available to them, but they did not access it in order to truly seek God. They ignored it. That is what is happening today. The Bible is available everywhere practically, but it is ignored; thus the people's ignorance was not completely the teacher's fault. The people should have been studying the Bible on their own. They cannot entirely shift the blame to the ministry—the Methodist minister, the Presbyterian minister, the Church of Christ minister, or whatever it is. Why did not the people pick up the Bible themselves and prove to their own satisfaction what it says?

Almost every home in America I am sure has at least one Bible in the house. Many of them will have many Bibles in the house. When businessmen travel, they go into motels, and most motels have a Bible in the room somewhere that they could read, or not. I think most of the time the TV goes on, but the Bible is not opened.

Paul proves this for us in Romans chapter 1, where he says:

Romans 1:18-21 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest to them, for God has shown it [the Book] to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

God holds mankind without excuse. There are probably some areas of the world where the Bible, the Word of God, is not readily available, but in Israel that is not so, especially in the United States and in Britain. Probably also in Australia, South Africa, France, and New Zealand as well. It is available.

I take the contrast we just read of there, that these verses show that teaching the Israelites did produce something, but it was at best a vague superficial base knowledge of God. But this is not the foundation of *true* knowledge that will work to produce a good relationship between God and man.

Have you ever been witness to what is going on in so many churches these days, especially these huge mega churches having thousands of people attending? Their programs are put on television and they are there for you to see. I am not urging you to see them, but once in a while I catch about five minutes of one. I will tell you what has impressed me. What those people are receiving is really superficial entertainment that gives people an upbeat social experience.

It is a social thing. It has produced a people who think that they are saved, and think that they are going to heaven immediately following death, who in reality think the laws of God are done away. They keep Christmas, and they keep Easter, which are clearly pagan holidays, and yet at the same time they fail to keep the Sabbath which Jesus *clearly* kept, and Paul clearly kept. So the question is, how can they be following Christ if they do not do what *He* did, and they do not follow the path that *He* walked? Instead, they do what the pagans did. God makes it very clear that He holds them responsible, because the truth is available.

They know some of these things I just mentioned. You have probably talked to people who will tell you, "I know Christmas is pagan, but it's for the kids." There is some kind of a justification there. "Well, I think maybe we should be keeping the Sabbath, but, . . ." And then comes another justification where they will say, "Yeah, I kind of always wondered about that, but I never went any further with it when I knew that Jesus kept the Sabbath." Somehow the connections just are not made.

Now, what *should* they be doing? We have already given the answer to this. They should at the very least be seeking God, seeking Jesus Christ in the Scriptures. In the Scriptures there are two major things that are beyond dispute. Number one is that God is the supreme Sovereign over His creation. He is also supreme over His purpose for creating it, and He is also supreme over the plan He has for fulfilling it. The second thing is that man is responsible to this awesome Creator.

Psalm 34:8-11 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing. Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

For my purpose today, verse 11 is the one I am most concerned about. The fear of God does not come naturally. It must be *learned*. Did you see what David said? "Listen to me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord." We indeed must study God's Word, but we must also meditate on Him, *and* the Scriptures will then reveal that God is supreme over everything.

We just read in Romans 1 that God is known by the things that He made. It takes conscious purposeful effort to look at God's creation and think about the beauty, the complexity, and we will just say the *wonderfulness* of what He has made. The earth is awesome!—perfectly fit to support our life. He gives us every breath of air we breathe. He upholds all things by the word of His power. He keeps everything running according to the direction He wants it to run.

One thing I want to emphasize here though before I pass by it is that as awesome as God is as He reveals in His creation, God is also sovereign. He is supreme in love, in power, in wisdom, in forgiveness, in mercy, in patience, in kindness, and many, many more qualities. He is Sovereign in all. Nobody is greater than Him in anything we can think of, except sin. He abhors it with every bit of His being because it destroys the beauty He has made. It destroys the hope He has made for what He has made—meaning you and me.

Now in this church the overwhelming majority of our messages address *our* responsibility to the Creator. We do this because there is always a need that must be fulfilled in this area. However, what about God? Has He no right to solidly entrench reality in our mind, and always serving as the Guide to our life?

How can we possibly live a truly vital faith if a strong and true awareness of the reality of His oversight and presence is not our guide in every aspect of life? After all, who is, brethren, regulating affairs on planet earth today? Things are pretty bad out there, but who is regulating affairs? Is it God? Or is it Satan? On the surface it looks like Satan. It looks like he is winning hands down, that he has won the people on his side and they are doing sin now with an open boldness and putting the Christian church, as it were, on the run.

I think that if I asked that question outside, people intellectually would quickly concede that God reigns supreme in heaven, but that He does so over the world is almost universally denied in the world. Do you know how it is denied? I am going to show you in the book of Titus.

Titus 1:15-16 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled [talking about those people out there in the world God has not yet converted] and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

The "disobedient" discloses the falsehood that they are truly Christians and that God is a reality in their lives; but He is not.

Because of the influence of evolution in education and the weakness of religious teaching of the churches of our time, it is not only denied that God created everything by personal and direct action, but few believe that He has any immediate concern in regulating the works of His own hand. Virtually everything is assumed to be ordered according to the impersonal and abstract laws of nature. I believe that the churches have many members who are either outright deists or maybe incipient ones. A deist is one who believes that God created the world and then stepped away, taking no interest in its operation. Incipient means "just beginning to appear." Brethren, we cannot be of that attitude. We have got to know and obey what we know. That is our responsibility.

II Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: [They are here.] For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away

All these terrible examples of conduct are being done by people who *have a form of godliness*, but denying its power.

Notice especially again verses 4 and 5: "traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness." I believe Paul used those phrases as his overall assessment of the causes of these horrible activities, and the causes are that despite having some knowledge of God, people ignore Him and do their own things which have a higher priority than what God says.

Their pleasure is their desire in terms of conduct. Today we would say, "People are just doing their own thing." Paul puts it in a first century form. People are simply doing their own thing. That is what God says. The question then: Are we copying them? Are we turning away from those things? Where is God in our lives? Do we do any better than those who have a form of godliness but deny its power?

In our time (and I think you will agree with this) everything seems to be out of joint, and you know it is going to get worse. In other words, everything is creaking. So many things happen unexpectedly. Nothing can be counted on any more to be good. With that witness so apparent before our eyes, should not obedience to God have a very high priority in our life? Again I ask a question we have to answer personally. Who is running things on earth, being that there is so much evil?

Let us take something that should be fairly close to some of us here. As the Worldwide Church of God blew apart, how many said Satan did it? No, brethren, Satan did not do it. He may have been used by God, but it was by God's direction and by God's authority that Satan acted, if indeed he had a part in it. He probably did. Do you know that God Himself said *He* did it? He does not blame it on Satan. He said *He* did it. I want you to see what He said specifically in regard to ancient Israel, most specifically Judah, and even more specifically to the city of Jerusalem. Let us notice this in Lamentations 2. Listen carefully to what God said.

Lamentations 2:1-3 How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger! He cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel, and did not remember His footstool in the day of His anger. The Lord has swallowed up and has not pitied all the dwelling places of Jacob. He has thrown down in His wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; He has brought them down to the ground; He has profaned the kingdom and its princes. He has cut off in fierce anger every horn of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy. He has blazed against Jacob like a flaming fire devouring all around.

I could go on and on here where God is revealing that when He gets upset, bad, bad things happen, and nobody can destroy like *He* can destroy! Nobody could have destroyed the Worldwide Church of God the way it happened, except Him. He just literally blew it apart; but even in that, there was mercy. He could have blown up our bodies with it, but instead, what He did is He scattered us, and then gathered some of us together in much smaller groups, and that indeed in His way was an act of mercy to give us an out so that we could still get prepared for the Kingdom of God.

He could have blown us apart so that nobody would recover, but He did not. He stopped short of that. And as with Judah and Israel as well, He blew them apart, but then re-gathered them in other parts of the world, maybe centuries later, but they still exist because He is not done with them yet. I think we can see very clearly here that He takes credit for Israel directly, and for the church in symbol and in principle.

Does it not seem though that Satan has far more to do with affairs on earth than God? Brethren, God's Word shows that God has a tight leash on Satan, that he can do only what God permits. God is Sovereign. He is in complete control. These bad things that are happening on earth are with His permission, and probably in many, many cases He is directly the One that causes them to occur. What does that do to your outlook on things? That is what I am trying to help you with here. How can we know whether He is in complete control? How can we know this? I will tell you. It depends on whether we are walking by faith, or by sight.

What does "walking by faith" signify? It means our thoughts about life, its events, its circumstances are formed and our conduct is regulated and carried out based on the Word of God.

Turn with me to an exceedingly important scripture in the Bible. It is one that all have probably committed to memory. Please turn to Romans 10. Please try to get the import of what Paul is saying here. We will not go through his entire argument, but verse 17 summarizes the argument he is making here.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

We want to know how we can get more faith. We want to know where faith comes from. Here it is. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith comes by means of studying and committing our minds to what *God* says about things.

Let us go a little bit further with this. Paul is actually borrowing on something that he took from the book of Isaiah. In Romans 10:16 Paul mentions Isaiah (which refers to Isaiah 53:1 which says, "Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"), and then he goes to verse 17.

Isaiah is saying that faith exists and begins to be built when people hear the message, believe it, and obey it. That is not the end of things, but that gets us started, and we can never shove the Bible aside because that is one of chief faith-building things we have at our disposal.

I am going to read quotes from three different translations that might help you understand this a little bit better. Just the one verse. The first is from the *Revised English Bible*:

Romans 10:17 (REB) So then faith does comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

If you think about what it says in that translation, you can hear in that translation that what Paul said was a concluding statement. It was summation of an appeal to believe his facts and the logical reasoning that preceded it. (That is, before verse 17.)

Now from the *Phillips' Translation*:

Romans 10:17 (Phillips') Belief, you see, can only come from hearing the message, and the message is the word of Christ.

Romans 10:17 (Moffatt) You see, faith must come from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the word of Christ.

The foundation of faith, brethren, once we are called, is in this Book—the Bible. It tells us what God thinks, and if we want to please Him, we do as Jesus did. He said, "I *always* do what pleases the Father." That is why He was always heard. He was really operating by faith. He believed what God said. But this biblical faith comes from knowing, believing, and using what God says in His Word strongly enough to make it a part of our life.

There is a question. Where is what is going into our mind coming from? This is what makes the difference. This is what separates men from the boys.

Mankind has never lived in a time when powerful and frequent communication is so easily available and seemingly limitless in quantity. Radio, television, the Internet, movies, cell phones, iPods, etc., etc. pound our eyes and ears almost incessantly, but perhaps the most powerful influence communicated is the general attitude of the mass of people our lives is surrounded by in this culture—the spirit of the time; the *zeitgeist*, as the Germans call it.

Few people seriously care any longer what God says in His Word, and respect for the fear of Him barely shows in the attitude and conduct during daily life in this world. So brethren, are we living our lives by faith, by what we truly believe, and that what we truly believe is from God?

Those who do have respect for Him are overwhelmed in civic life, and so public reference to God is taken out of school, out of courts, out of university, out of government, and secularism, for the secularism of mankind dominates, and because of this we have abortion, homosexuality, lesbianism, same-sex marriage. That is proof that what I just told you is true, and thus it appears to those who *do* care, as though Satan has overwhelmed God and is dominating things on earth. Those not living by faith set the world's spirit, set the fashions, set the novels, set the movie themes, set the music, and on and on it goes.

Jude 8 Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.

Jude 10-11 But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

These people invaded the church in the first century, and there is no reason to think they will not invade the church today. Satan is always attempting to do evil things.

Jude 12-13 These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Verse 8 is the one I am most concerned with there. The KJV says, "These speak evil of dignitaries." That word "dignitaries" actually means "glorious ones." I have no doubt that the glorious ones directly referred to here are the apostles; however, it did not end there because disrespect for them, and to and against them, the Bible shows very clearly is disrespect for the Ones who sent them, which Jesus shows very clearly in Matthew 10:40.

I bring this up, because today, in our time, the disrespect is aimed openly and directly at God. Nothing is being held back, and these vile people not only disrespect God verbally, they do it in their public influential conduct.

The margin of my Bible refers one back to Exodus 22:28. I want you to see this. We have to be careful, because it is awfully easy to hate a person like Barak Obama and all of his cohorts, and I know I have to bite my tongue all the time regarding him, and try to say about what he does rather than him personally, because on that I can report on honestly. Look at what God says:

Exodus 22:28 "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

Like I said, I almost bit my tongue off a couple of times here trying to hold myself in. I do not always succeed. The important principle here is that we have to understand that person is in that position because God permitted it. He may not have directly appointed him to that position, but He permitted that person to be in that position, and I will show you something in a little bit regarding this sort of thing.

So we do not want to revile the person *He* put in the office, because it is then a reviling of His judgment. I do not want to do that.

God is in absolute and complete control of His creation. It is very important that we understand that this appearance that Satan and his evil is in control to our physical eyes and ears is deceiving to the *n* th degree if it is allowed to take root there.

Let us go to I Timothy 6. Here is just a brief description of the one they are reviling. They revile God by taking His Book out of the schools. They revile Him by not allowing people to pray in public. They revile Him by their conduct in every aspect of life.

I Timothy 6:14-16 That you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

This is the One they revile and scoff at. I believe that never, at least in the history of this nation, has there been such irreverence for our Creator since the period just before the Flood. The worst offenders in this nation are those who are younger and have been thoroughly schooled in liberalism's concepts.

The important thing to us in the time that God allows us to live is that we make the very best use of it that we possibly can. This will lead to good things.

Let us go to Daniel 11:32. I just want to make a note first as to where this verse appears. It appears in the longest prophecy in the Bible. As we get to the end of this prophecy, we are right in the end time. Verse 40 says that: "at the *time of the end* the king of the south. . ." This is instruction for you and me.

Daniel 11:32 Those who do wickedly against the covenant he [prefiguring of the Beast] shall corrupt with flattery; . . .

Verse 32 is speaking of the man who eventually came along by the name of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. He is the man that almost every commentator who studies into this prophecy concludes that this man is a type of the Beast to come.

Daniel 11:32 . . .but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.

The key to doing great exploits in behalf of God and His way is that we must *know* Him, and God will back up those people and work miraculous things through them. Why? Because they *know* Him.

They have been intimate with Him. For a good portion of their life, they have been walking with Him, talking with Him, praying to Him, glorifying Him, and when we reach that time when the pressure is really on, God is going to do wonderful things through those who know Him.

The world does not know Him, and that is the problem. They know a little bit *about* Him, but that is not the same as *knowing* Him through a relationship that people have had with Him for a good period of time. These are people of faith who have done this.

Let us go to Ephesians 1:11. This is the God that Paul described in I Timothy 6.

Ephesians 1:11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

God says virtually the same thing in Isaiah 46:8-10.

Isaiah 46:8-10 "Remember this, and show yourselves men; recall to mind, O you transgressors. Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,'

God works all things according to the counsel of His will. God does not work a few things, or even many things, but *all* things. But even here I think that I had better qualify "all" things, because at least *one* thing is always excluded from all His children from that word "all,"—and it is this. Please get this: God, in no circumstance, ever ordained any of His children to sin. Regardless of the circumstance, He never ordained any of His children to sin. We are *always* commanded by Him to **choose life**, not death through sin. When we sin, it is our fault because we should know better, though God will come to our rescue in some way. God has already evaluated the situation. Do you have any doubt about His power to be aware that He knows what is going on?

Brethren, God has given man a great deal of power. God has given Satan even more power, but God the Creator is greater than the sum total of all that He has made through Jesus Christ; thus God has created what we assign as natural laws, and much of the material world is, to a degree, regulated by them. God says He upholds all things by the word of His power [Hebrews 1:3]. God's counsel shall stand.

II Peter 1:19-21 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

What God says *will* happen. He always has the power to carry out what He says He will do.

Now because God is holy and just, His Word directly says that His anger burns against sin, and because He is righteous, His judgments will fall upon those who rebel against Him. Because He is

faithful, the threatening in His Word will be fulfilled. Because He is omnipotent, no one can successfully resist Him and overthrow what He wills to do. Because He is omniscient and omnipresent, no problem can escape His eye, and no difficulty can master Him or baffle His wisdom.

Let us make this all-important issue about God and His supremacy as clear as we can because it is of absolute importance to living by faith. There is no middle ground. God is either God, or He is not. And if He *is* God, He does as He pleases, *only* as He pleases, *always* as He pleases. For us to keep this in mind gives us an easy answer for all the mysteries of life. It is not always easy to live. It is just an easy answer.

When you were a child, you did not always understand why your parents did things the way they did—why they spanked you, why they did this, why they did that. Why did they not go *that* way instead of *this* way? Kids are always finding fault with their parents. Why is that? Well, brethren, the answer is actually very simple. Kids just do not know any better. They have not lived long enough. They have not learned enough. They do not have enough experience. Parents operate on a different level from what their children do. Do you get the point? It is the same way with God. We do not have the answers. He does. So what is our responsibility? Trust Him! It cannot be made any simpler, if we will just think of ourselves as a humble child and our experience with our parents.

Let us go to the book of Daniel as we begin to wrap this up. We live in a bad time, we might be saying, but notice this from Daniel—something he said to Nebuchadnezzar, because Nebuchadnezzar had a dream he did not understand.

Daniel 4:35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing [before this Great God]; 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?"

That is where we stand before Him. It is not our responsibility to call Him into account.

Let us close this off with Psalm 139. Each one of us has to live his life before Him, and we all have our problems, our doubts, but this an excellent psalm to recall to and have it engrained in our minds, feed it, believe it, and put it to work.

Psalm 139:1-12 O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me, even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You.

When it comes right down to the issue of sovereignty, the point for you and me is, God is sovereign in our life. Abraham named Him "the God who is there." Since we are His children, wherever we are, *He is*. Let that sink in. Wherever *we* are, He is. Parents can walk away from their children. They can drive away from their children. They can fly away from their children. But wherever *we* are, God is.

If you allow yourself to entertain ideas that He is unconcerned about us, you are gravely mistaken. God's supremacy is so great He can keep track of all that is going on in what He has made. What is going on in the world is being allowed by God. He is permitting it to occur, and even directly causing much of the calamitous events transpiring. He is not detached from these events. Everything is under control. He who sees the sparrow fall also has His eye on us for our good. Please, whatever you do, do not allow Him to slip from your thoughts. Every thought of those who live by faith should begin with Him and His will.