

Chapter Twenty
 Sermon #20
 February 8, 2015

Solomon's Radical Theology
 Truths You Won't Hear in Many Churches

**The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD;
 he turns it wherever he will. (Proverbs 21:1 ESV)**

A few years from now there is a good possibility you will get married. It will be the happiest day of your life up to that point, but even better days are ahead. I think one day that competes for your wedding day as the happiest day of your life is the day your first child is born. The next happiest day is when your second child is born and of course it just keeps getting better even after your sixth or seventh child is born. You think I'm kidding don't you, at least about the numbers. Well I'm not. Children (and grandchildren) are a blessing so why would you stop at society's limit of two? But I digress, that's not my subject for today. Here is my subject for today in the form of a question. "How would you feel about God if your first child was born blind, or with Down's Syndrome, or with a heart defect, or missing limbs? Would you be angry with God because He didn't give you the perfect child you had asked for?" Many parents would indeed be angry with God and say that he was not loving since He could have, if He is as all-powerful as He claims to be, He could have given you a perfect child instead of a handicapped child. If you are thinking wisely by now, you should be asking a critical question which is, "what makes a perfect child?" There is no such thing is there? Good, you are thinking biblically about sin and sin's curse and the defects it has brought into the human race, and you get an A for critical thinking. But back to my original question, how would you feel toward God if a challenged child was born to you?

Perhaps you may choose to not be angry with God by taking a different slant on truth. You may say that God is loving and kind and He would never have sent you a challenged child like that because, well that's just not a loving thing to do. It's not loving to spoil your plans for your future and your future family now is it? Did you catch my slight sarcasm? By now you have grown in wisdom to know that a good parent does not always give his children everything they want or life handed to them on a platter. You have discovered the hard way that tough assignments produce tough kids and mature ones to boot. But again I digress. Back to my question. How would you feel towards God if he gave you such a child? Would you get Him off the hook by saying it wasn't His will, but he was powerless to do anything about it? That may make you feel good for about 10 seconds or as long as it takes for you to realize that the God you have constructed in your mind was powerless to prevent this unhappy event in your life. But if you come to that conclusion, then why bother praying? If God is powerless to give you a socially defined "healthy" child, then isn't he powerless to do about almost anything you ask of Him? Many scholars will tell you that you can't have it both ways. Either God is all-loving and not all powerful or he is all-powerful and not all loving. But why can't we have it both ways? What does the Bible really say about this dilemma?

That is the topic for this sermon (chapter). Can God be both sovereign and all-loving at the same time?

Before I get into this extremely important topic, let me take one more detour before I leave the thought of the last paragraph. If we come to the conclusion that God is all-loving but He is not all-powerful then a logical conclusion may come to your mind. We are fortunate today to have ultra sounds to see and watch the development of our babies in the womb and we have because of that, a type of early warning system that alerts us that something may be physically wrong with our baby. Medical science has come a long way in the past generation so they can now make corrections to many deformities before they get worse, like heart operations that take place in the womb. Surgeons can now even prevent Spina Bifida by using pre-natal surgery as well as many other harmful deformities long before birth. But say the deformity is Down's Syndrome? The majority of parents today are choosing to abort those babies rather than carry them to full term. Using the logic of the previous paragraph, if God is all-loving then he never intended for that child to be born that way and since He is not all-powerful he couldn't have prevented your child from having Down's. If that be the case then shouldn't we be free to help God along and since he didn't want that child to be born that way anyway, and since He is powerless to have stopped the pregnancy on his own, why not help God out? Why not do what God was powerless on His own to do? Why not abort the baby on your own? The logic behind what I just said is faulty so it is a moot point to even go there. As we will see shortly God is both all-loving and all-powerful and he did indeed intend for that child to be born.

However the voice of the world is strong isn't it? They will tell you that child is not fully formed and he is not therefore fully human. Do not be taken in by such faulty logic. Biblically it is plain to see that life begins at conception and by the time you read this you will most likely know that conception is when the male's sperm unites with the female's egg. I just hope that at age ten or eleven or twelve you haven't yet learned *precisely* how this is accomplished in the case of human beings. Psalm 51:5 says, **Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.** The Bible infers here that at the moment of conception is when a new human being inherits a human soul and becomes a human being because at the same time that soul inherited a sin nature along with his human nature. You can thank Adam for that. The Adam that is found in Genesis chapter 2. Here are more verses that conclude that an unborn child is fully human.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5 ESV)

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm 139:13-16 ESV)

“When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. (Exodus 21:22-25 ESV)

Because 3-D sonograms are now giving mothers the ability basically to look inside her own womb and see her baby in living color, abortions have been on the decrease and it is my

prayer that by the time you read this that abortion clinics around the country will be out of business. Still, we need to do everything in our power to put an end to this senseless taking of innocent lives and Solomon commands us to do so in:

Proverbs 24:11 ESV Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.

This sin is America's hidden holocaust. I have no doubt the number one reason America is suffering under so many struggles today including our national debt and terror attacks is the fact that we have allowed millions of innocents to perish through the sin of abortion and you are not too young to be aware of this Christ-ignoring, God-rejecting sin in our country today.

Now back to our original topic. Does Solomon and the rest of the Bible teach that God is both all-loving and all-powerful?

God is All Powerful

(Proverbs 21:1 ESV) says, "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will."

This verse plainly teaches that God is in control of all things because even kings and their royal decisions are in the end dictated by his overarching sovereign will and plans. If man can turn a stream from going one way to another by building earthen dams or embankments, surely it is no big deal for God to do the same. This verse says that men's hearts and minds and decisions they make are putty in God's hands, just as easy to move from one decision to the next as dirt is easy to move to make a stream flow a different direction. The man who said this was a king who was used to having ultimate authority and control of people around him. If he wanted someone dead, they died, by the snap of his fingers. Yet Solomon knew that just as he was responsible in making that decision to have someone killed, so God was actively involved in the decision as well from a distance directing and guiding decisions that continually steered the king in the direction he intended for that king and nation to go, even sinful decisions. This may sound blasphemous at first, blasphemous that God could have any part in a sinful decision of humans in order to bring about his divine will but the Scripture clearly states this is so. This is why I said at the top of the chapter (sermon) that you will not hear this in many churches. It is a hard topic to teach and since there is no easy explanation pastors are hesitant to approach it for fear of offending people or being misquoted or misunderstood.

But what pastors fear to preach the Bible fearlessly teaches. Listen to what Joseph said to his brothers in Genesis 50 when their father Jacob had died and these scoundrels who had once sold the arrogant Joseph into slavery were fearful their powerful brother would now take revenge. Joseph said: **"Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (Genesis 50:19-20 ESV)** The Bible could not be more clear here. It does not say God allowed it to happen and then worked overtime to fix it, it says he meant for them to sell Joseph into slavery so that Joseph would land in Egypt and eventually become prime minister and save his people from starvation.

Would you like proof that God steers human decisions towards his eternal providential plan? How about **(Exodus 14:4 ESV) And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue**

them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD." And they did so. And,

(Exodus 14:17 ESV) And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen.

Of course the Bible says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart but equally so *God* hardened Pharaoh's heart. Both God and Pharaoh were working to get Pharaoh to send his entire army into the dried up Red Sea, but ultimately it had to be more God than Pharaoh because what man in his right mind would do something so stupid as to send his army to their certain deaths against a God who had already taken the lives of every first born child in Egypt and had also sent nine other plagues against that land? Only somebody who was steered by his own desires beyond sanity by the sovereign power of God to do something only God could do and for something that only God would get the glory.

There are other cases where God steered kings' decisions to accomplish his perfect will. **(Deuteronomy 2:30 ESV) But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might give him into your hand, as he is this day.**

God also steered King David's heart and use Satan to bring it about.

Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go, number Israel and Judah." (2 Samuel 24:1 ESV) How did God go about this?

Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel. So David said to Joab and the commanders of the army, "Go, number Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, and bring me a report, that I may know their number." (1 Chronicles 21:1-2 ESV)

The King of Assyria thought he was the meanest and baddest man in the world who could do whatever he pleased and snarf up nations as if they were food on his table. Listen to what God had to say about who was *really* doing the decision-making.

For he (the King of Assyria) says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I remove the boundaries of peoples, and plunder their treasures; like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones. My hand has found like a nest the wealth of the peoples; and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing or opened the mouth or chirped." Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood! (Isaiah 10:13-15 ESV)

There you have it. The human king thought he was doing the decision making to rape and pillage nation after nation but God said, "Naaaaaa, not really. You are the axe, I'm the one holding the axe. You are the saw, I'm the one using the saw. You are the rod, but I'm the rod holder."

I think one of the most hilarious if not the saddest stories of God's sovereign control over a man's heart is when he had to break the pride of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him. The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.' (Daniel 4:16-17 ESV)

Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws. (Daniel 4:33 ESV)

Even our own decision to believe in faith the message of the gospel is not our decision but God who helps us to make that decision and remove from us our stubborn rebellious hearts. God says in **(Acts 16:14 ESV) One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.**

Here is more wisdom from Solomon regarding the sovereignty of God:

The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. (Proverbs 16:1 ESV)

The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps. (Proverbs 16:9 ESV)

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. (Proverbs 16:33 ESV)

Yes, even the roll of the dice is determined by God, can you imagine that? Nothing is left to chance, not even heads or tails on a coin toss!

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand. (Proverbs 19:21 ESV)

You think you are in control of your future? Think again. You may have it all mapped out, where you will go to school, what you will do for a career and when you will get married, but as good as those plans are, God has a way of turning everything on its head and send you in a direction far better than anything you could have planned, because He is a better planner than you. He will send you to a different school, a different career path and all because he knows you better than you know yourself.

It is not just human decisions that God oversees but he also controls nature to the degree he decides who is getting rain this month and who won't. He decides which homes will be destroyed by tornadoes and which ones won't. He decides which ones will be flooded and which ones will escape the advancing waters.

(Psalm 148:8 ESV) fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word!

(Zechariah 10:1) Ask rain from the LORD in the season of the spring rain, from the LORD who makes the storm clouds, and he will give them showers of rain, the vegetation in the field to each man.

Does this make God sound like He is arbitrary and even mean? Does it make Jehovah God sound like He sits in Heaven and uses His almighty Power like a big stick without any concern for who gets hit and how hard? It might, unless you listen to what Solomon has to say about the other side of God.

God is All-Loving and All-Wise

Do you know what a counselor does? Your mother's cousin is a professional counselor and she makes it her life ambition to probe into people's actions and behaviors until she can discover why they do what they do. Sometimes she finds people are so angry with their boss at work and there is no way they can say so or they will get fired so they come home and take it out on the wife and kids. She probes until she finds that is the cause of the misplaced anger. Oftentimes she might discover there was abuse in the past in another person's life that has never been forgiven so she asks relevant questions until it comes out and those questions often hurt. They hurt the spirit like a doctor's poke at an inflamed appendix hurts a person physically until they scream with pain. The outcry of the doctor and the counselor was painful but it helped both the doctor in his exam room and the counselor in her counseling room diagnose the cause of the physical and spiritual fever. Both the counselor and the doctor may prescribe treatments that at first are painful but in the end will cure the sicknesses. The doctor may prescribe surgery and he may not even wait a moment longer to do it. He may rush the person from the clinic to the hospital and get them past other waiting patients to speed them immediately to O.R. Do you think the doctor really cares about the inconvenience to the person's schedule? Maybe the patient had plans for dinner out that night and he just messed up those plans. Is he fretting because a dinner date has been canceled? No, because he is saving a life.

Everything I have just said about a counselor and a doctor can be said of God our loving heavenly Father. He knows us better than any therapist or counselor ever could. He knows us physically better than any doctor could possibly know. Jesus even said that our Father in Heaven cares so much about us he knows the number of our hairs on our heads! If he keeps track of my hair count, don't you think he cares about the bigger issues of life that are bothering me and you?

And because He cares, He has already taken a course of action in our lives to bring about a cure for whatever it is that is causing us pain. That pain, especially if it is a long time bitterness could kill a soul just like a ruptured appendix could kill a patient. This means that God will do whatever it takes, no matter how painful it is to bring about a greater spiritual healing in a person's life. Here is a huge principle I hope you will never forget. **GOD WILL ALWAYS CHOOSE SPIRITUAL HEALING OVER TEMPORARY PHYSICAL DISCOMFORTS.** In other words God will use setbacks, storms, even physical illness to get a person's attention in order to get them to repent and surrender to Him so that they will gain a greater eternal reward. The physical and emotional pain we experience in this life are always less important than missing out on the eternal reward of heaven or the possibility of spending an eternity in hell. Get the point? God will be good and

gracious to a person by burning their earthly house down if it causes them to not spend eternity burning physically and emotionally in hell.

The conclusion to all this is that God will use His power judiciously and sparingly to bring about a greater eternal reward. His power to hurt will be as precise as a surgeon's scalpel and cause no collateral damage. The only problem is that God's use of anesthesia is limited since it is necessary for us when we become wayward to feel the pain.

Here is what Solomon says about how much our Heavenly Father loves us and wants the best for us.

My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights. (Proverbs 3:11-12 ESV)

Our Heavenly Father cares so much about us that he disciplines us so that we are corrected and grow and behave and obey Him and stay in good fellowship with him. I'm sure when you were younger your mom and dad spanked you too hard so you felt unjustly treated or too softly so that it did no good at all. Your Heavenly father know just how hard to spank figuratively to get the job done perfectly. Isn't he good?

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him. (Proverbs 15:8 ESV)

The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous. (Proverbs 15:29 ESV)

God is only a whispered prayer away. He is never out of the office and he will never put you on hold. Whatever need you have you can bring it to him immediately and He is all ears giving you His undivided attention and concern. He will answer with a yes, a no or wait, but you can be assured that whatever answer is coming is the best for you ultimately and that is the only answer that matters.

Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. (Proverbs 28:13 ESV)

Have you sinned? If you are honest you will answer, "which part of the day?" Isn't it the best thing in the world to know that your heavenly father is waiting for you to come and confess your sin so that he can forgive you immediately, and without penance or payment? There is no need to feel as we used to say that you need to spend time in the doghouse for a while until God is ready to see your face again. No He is ready and willing to receive you right now and you will get His mercy poured out on you. Oh, and by the way, do you think God is surprised about your sin? Do you think He ever says to himself, "What??? Did they do that? I can't believe it". Of course not. Your sin does not surprise the all-knowing and all understanding God.

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD. (Proverbs 17:15 ESV)

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you. (Proverbs 25:21-22 ESV)

Do you think that God will let slide in terms of payment the person who stole from you? Not at all. He keeps track of every unjust action taken against you and he will make them pay. If you treat your enemy with kindness God has guaranteed to pour heaping coals upon their foreheads. Those coals are the white hot burning conviction feelings of the Holy Spirit that will make them repent and cause them to make restitution or they will become hardened in their unrepentant spirit. Either way, justice for you will occur. The coals in this imagery were the hot coals used in a smelting furnace to get the dross out of silver or gold. Oftentimes hot coals were added to the top of the pot to make it happen sooner. Sometimes the dross would all be removed and there would be gold left to salvage (that's the hoped for outcome). Other times all the dross would be removed and there would be nothing left in the pot meaning there was only a continual hardening of a person's already hard heart.

Here is the wonderful conclusion to this chapter and sermon. Now you know that your God is all powerful and He is able to orchestrate all events in your life, even the painful ones to bring about a good purpose. And He is all-loving enough to make sure that His power is working for a greater good, your greater good and the greater good of those around you. If He wasn't all loving and all wise he would be a despicable God in the order of Satan. Certainly not someone you would admire or love. If He was all-loving and all-wise but not all-powerful to accomplish His purposes He would be a pathetic half God or no god who is weak and contemptible. So now you know. God loves you enough to hear your prayers and powerful enough to answer them. But even though you know all that, you may make the biggest mistake of your life.

Knowing is Not the Same as Loving

The biggest mistake you may make is that you know all this about God but you don't really know God. It is possible to become an expert on God and still not have a relationship with Him. You would be ever so close. It would be like a scientist who studies the dangers of tar to our lungs in cigarette smoke but continues to light up a pack and a half each day. The knowledge has no effect on his life. Don't make that mistake about God. The knowledge contained about Him in His word is designed to make us fall in love with Him and have a relationship with Him. It is there for us to marvel at His wisdom, love and power but not to do so at a distance in a theoretical way. I don't love my wife theoretically. I love her personally and I do that by getting closer to her each day mentally and emotionally and by walking hand in hand with her through life, figuratively most of the time, and literally whenever we can. That's what God wants from you. Go ahead. Put your hand in His. Walk down the lanes of today by holding on to his hand and watching Him work His magic in and around you. It is a wonderful adventure.