

# ***Loved by God, Part 3 – The Sovereignty of God***

## Selected Scriptures

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### **Introduction:**

It's always a privilege to open God's Word and to be able to drink from its truths, and I want to continue to do that in these series of messages that are messages that speak of our God and that speak of the truth of God for our life. I want to talk about the sovereignty of God. If we are to understand what it means to be loved by God, then we need to understand that our God is sovereign. [Here there is a lengthy reading of an article about Dr. Bruce Bickel's experience as a pilot in Vietnam as an example of God's sovereignty.] I want to talk about the sovereignty of God. I want very simply to talk about three aspects of the sovereignty of God: "The Definition of Sovereignty," "The Biblical Case for Sovereignty," and "The Extent of Sovereignty."

### **I. The Definition of Sovereignty**

If, in fact, God is sovereign, how do we define it? If you've got a pen or pencil and you want to write down this definition, I would say that the word "sovereignty," while sometimes not found in some English translations of the Bible, certainly is there in manifold because you could use, for instance, certain synonyms that are exactly what the word "sovereignty" itself means. For instance, you could use words like "kingship," "rulership," "lordship," "governance," "supremacy," "control," "divine monarchy," "omnipotence," "power." Any of those words really speaks synonymously of the concept of sovereignty. It means that God is in control. That's what sovereignty is. In fact, it just is a word that explains that God is God, that He does everything that He wills to do, and He does not do things that are over against His will. He does everything according to His character. He can't deny Himself.

The Bible teaches us very, very clearly that there are, in fact, some things that God cannot do. And immediately if you make that kind of statement, someone might say, "Well, aha! Then God isn't sovereign because only someone who is completely sovereign, totally sovereign, can do anything they want to do." But the Bible makes it very, very clear that God's sovereignty is doing that which is consistent with His character. If there is something that isn't consistent with His character, then God will not do it even though He's completely sovereign. For instance, in James chapter 1, the Bible says that God tempts no man (James 1:13). That's something that God cannot do. He doesn't tempt man. Now He will *test* man, but He doesn't *tempt* man in the

sense that He seduces man to do evil. But that doesn't mean that He's any less sovereign. He's totally sovereign in the sense that everything that He wills to do which is consistent with His plans or His purposes He is fully capable of doing and He does it. But those things which are inconsistent with His character—like seducing men to evil—He does not do. But that doesn't mean that He isn't sovereign. He governs all His creatures and all their actions, which is the classic definition of course of God's sovereign providence. I think that's a subset, by the way, of the concept of sovereignty. *Sovereignty* you could see as the overarching umbrella term of God being in control, God being powerfully in control. *Providence* is that which He works out in time in the life of every single person and in the world that He has created. So if you want to see a definition of sovereignty, it's that God is in control of the world, and if you want to see a definition of providence, it is that God controls all the events of the world to bring about His sovereign ends. That's a definition of His sovereignty. You could say it like this: God's rule extends over the entire universe completely and comprehensively, and He rules as its perfect divine Ruler and Judge. It's a great definition of sovereignty. And when you apply it to the Person of God, it means that He's created His world, that He's sovereign over it, and that He providentially—in space and time—controls all the events of our world. He isn't just the Creator God, but He's also the Creator God who continues to sustain the universe by “the word of His power.” That's what Hebrews 1:3 says. He does it through Christ by Christ upholding the world by “the word of His power.” That's what Colossians 1:17 says. God is sovereign and providentially moves in certain ways, either directly or indirectly, because He's the sovereign Ruler of the universe who controls all things. So that's a definition of sovereignty.

For us practically, we understand about our God that if He is in fact in total control, you don't have to worry. You don't have to have anxiety about your life because God knows it all and He's controlling it all. That's the great thing about being a Christian. You know who's in control. That doesn't mean that you know how everything's going to turn out. Certainly not. But you do know that God holds the key. He knows the plan. He knows the purpose. He knows about your life. He knows about my life. He knows what we're going to do. He knows why we're going to do it. He controls it all! Can you worship a God, can you be loved by a God, who knows the millions and millions and millions of contingencies in life? Certainly, you can! If you affirm the sovereignty of God, you know that no matter what happens—if “A” doesn't happen, then “B” happens; if “B” doesn't happen, “C” happens—you know that God is in control. With all of these contingencies in life—well, if this doesn't happen, then will it go this way, and if it doesn't go that way, will it go another way—if you and I for one moment assume that we were in control of our life, we'd be basket cases because we're not sovereign. We're not all powerful. We don't know how it's going to turn out and that adds pressure and anxiety to our lives because we don't know how it's going to go.

But if you put your trust in a sovereign God you know that God knows the plan, and you can trust a sovereign God for His plan. That's the definition of sovereignty.

## II. The Biblical Basis for Sovereignty

Now let's talk about "The Biblical Basis for Sovereignty." It's one thing to define it; it's another to say, "What does God's Word say about it?" And maybe for some general passages let me have you thumb through the Bible with me to speak of some passages that affirm the sovereignty of God.

Look with me first of all in Isaiah chapter 14. I'm just going to give you at least initially some passages of Scripture that speak very generically and then we'll get into some more specifics of what the Bible teaches, how the Bible defines the sovereignty of God. Isaiah chapter 14, beginning in verse 24. This is a word or an oracle concerning Assyria. Listen to what God says through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah 14:24-27:

<sup>24</sup>The LORD of hosts has sworn:  
"As I have planned,  
so shall it be [God says],  
and as I have purposed,  
so shall it stand."

Well, if you're like me, you read a verse like that and you say to yourself, "Only a powerful Being, only an omnipotent Being, only a sovereign Being can say something like this and then follow through with it." Did you notice that?

"As I have planned,  
so shall it be,  
and as I have purposed,  
so shall it stand,  
<sup>25</sup>that I will break the Assyrian in my land,  
and on my mountains trample him underfoot;  
and his yoke shall depart from them,  
and his burden from their shoulder."

<sup>26</sup>This is the purpose that is purposed  
concerning the whole earth,  
and this is the hand that is stretched out  
over all the nations [God's sovereign hand].

<sup>27</sup>For the LORD of hosts has purposed,  
and who will annul it?  
His hand is stretched out,  
and who will turn it back?

Rhetorically. The answer to that question? No one! God's got it all figured out. He's got it all planned. He's got it all purposed. Nothing will annul His plan.

How about another Scripture? Isaiah chapter 43, beginning in verse 11. I love this! Isaiah 43:11-13:

- <sup>11</sup> “I, I am the LORD,  
and besides me there is no savior.  
<sup>12</sup> I declared and saved and proclaimed,  
when there was no strange god among you;  
and you are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and I am God.  
<sup>13</sup> Also henceforth I am he;  
there is none who can deliver from my hand;  
I work, and who can turn it back?”

The answer, of course, is no one! Nothing! God is completely sovereign! He’s in control!

Look at Jeremiah’s prophecy in chapter 32. This is just a survey of the Bible’s teaching on the sovereignty of God. Jeremiah affirms the same idea as God speaking through Isaiah the prophet. Jeremiah 32:17: “Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.” Look at verse 27: “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?” Again rhetorically, no! Nothing’s too hard for You!

Lamentations, just after Jeremiah’s prophecy, written probably no doubt by Jeremiah himself. This is the sovereign hand of our God. Lamentations 5:19: “But you, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations.” Now even by the time that was written in Lamentations 5, how many generations had already come and gone? How many kingdoms had already tottered and fallen? Hundreds, if not thousands, if not hundreds of thousands spanning the globe had all fallen and tottered, but His kingdom “endures to all generations.” The psalm that was read, Psalms 103:19 (NASB): “[His] sovereignty rules over all.” Your kingdom, it rules over all!

You remember in Daniel’s prophecy—Daniel chapter 4—the response of Nebuchadnezzar as he was put out to pasture, shall we say. After his senses came back to him—and that only by the sovereign will of God—Nebuchadnezzar says in Daniel 4:34-35:

<sup>34</sup> At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever,

for his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;  
<sup>35</sup> all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,

and he does according to his will among the host of heaven  
and among the inhabitants of the earth;  
and none can stay his hand  
or say to him, "What have you done?"

Reminiscent, isn't it, of Romans chapter 9, where the clay is attempting to say to the potter, "Why have you made me like this?" (Rom. 9:20). It's an illegitimate question. Why could something created say to the Creator, "Why have you done this?" God is sovereign!

Look at chapter 6 of Daniel. Daniel 6:25-27:

<sup>25</sup> Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth [this after Daniel and his friends had been preserved by a sovereign God in the lions' den]: "Peace be multiplied to you. <sup>26</sup> I make a decree [this human king says], that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel,

for he is the living God,  
enduring forever;  
his kingdom shall never be destroyed,  
and his dominion shall be to the end.

<sup>27</sup> He delivers and rescues;  
he works signs and wonders  
in heaven and on earth,  
he who has saved Daniel  
from the power of the lions."

I mean, just everywhere you look in the Bible it's a reaffirmation again and again and again of the sovereignty of God, and also true in the New Testament. Look at Luke chapter 1. The angel is trying to comfort Mary about what he's just shocked her in saying about her being a favored one who is going to be the one actually birthing the Messiah. Luke 1:30-33,37:

<sup>30</sup> And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great [listen to this] and will be called the Son of the Most High [Son of the Most High is a designation that means He will be divine]. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David [and this isn't just like some human kingdom; notice what he says, this angel], <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. [I mean, that's just no small statement about Jesus and His kingdom; Jesus is sovereign!] . . . <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God."

No wonder in Romans chapter 11 Paul says this—Romans 11:36—no wonder he finishes this entire section of Romans 9, 10, and 11 on the sovereign electing purposes of God and he becomes himself so overwhelmed by the reality of it that he says, Romans 11:36: “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” You can’t get more sovereign than “from him and through him and to him are all things.” That’s an affirmation, an attestation, of sovereignty! As I said, Colossians 1:16-17, the world is upheld by Christ! “In Him all things [everything] hold together.” Only a sovereign God could make such a claim, and only our God is the One who can bring it to pass.

Now someone might say, “All right. Well, those are a few passages—maybe too many for us—that’s just a few passages that affirm the sovereignty of God, but I’m not convinced. What about the little things? I mean, you’re talking about the overarching things. What about the little things?” How about this. Let’s get real specific. God is sovereign even over the ordinary aspects of life and living. You say, “Well, you gave me the big picture, but what about the little picture? What about my own life?” Look at Matthew chapter 5. You don’t think God is in sovereign control even over the little things of life, even over your little life or my little life? Absolutely! The Bible affirms even in very specific detail, even in minute detail, that God is sovereign. Matthew 5:45, you know it well. Verse 44 says: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” verse 45, “so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.” Notice this: “For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” And in Matthew 10 the Bible says that God knows even the number of all of the hairs on your head. He knows them all! Matthew 10:30: “Even the hairs of your head are all numbered.” Do you know what I think that verse, even beyond its context, is teaching us? You can talk about the overarching sovereignty of God—you can talk about kingdoms toppling, kingdoms falling, kingdoms ending, and new kingdoms beginning on a human level—and you can talk about the macro, but on the micro level even the very hairs on your head are numbered by a sovereign God. He knows everything about us through and through. Everything!

Look at Acts chapter 14. God is sovereign, even over ordinary aspects of life and living. You may not have seen all of these verses strung together like this before, but this is a great affirmation of the sovereignty of God. Acts 14:17: “[God] did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” You say, “What’s significant about that?” It ought to be significant every time you open your mouth and put some food in it. God is sovereignly in control of everything we need that sustains our life—like food, like shelter, like clothing, like the sun—all of the things that we need in life to be sustained.

Look at Acts chapter 17. You notice that what Paul is doing is he’s arguing to the point with these pagans that God is in sovereign control and that they ought to affirm

this sovereign God that is the God of the Bible. Look at Acts 17:27. Verse 26 says: “He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth [that’s an amazing statement about the sovereign God], having determined allotted periods [that’s amazing] and the boundaries of their dwelling place.” In other words, God has even mapped out every nation of mankind, Paul says, determining allotted periods, their boundaries, where you’re going to live, who you are. Verse 27: “That they [that is, those who’ve been created by God] should seek God, [in the hope that they might] perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.” Verse 28: “For ‘in him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘for we are indeed his offspring.’” Boy! Right there in just a few verses you have an affirmation that God creates all nations of mankind who are living on the face of the earth, that He’s determined all of their allotted periods, that He’s determined the boundaries of their living, their dwelling place, and in Him we live and move and have our being. Indeed, we’re even His offspring! Six or seven affirmations in just a few verses that say God is in sovereign control even over the most minute details—where you were born, who you are, the color of your hair, everything about you, who your siblings are, who your parents are, whether you have money or not, whether you have food, shelter, clothing. He’s sovereign over it all!

How about even Ephesians chapter 3? Same affirmation even in Paul’s prayer for the believers at Ephesus in Ephesians 3:14-16: “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being.” Don’t miss verse 15: “I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family [every head of a household] in heaven and on earth is named.” There’s not one single person, there’s not one single family, there’s not one single dwelling that escapes God’s sovereign plan and purpose.

Now someone’s going to say immediately, “Yeah, okay. All of that might be true, but what about that sort of sticky conversation about God being sovereign and yet man having human volition, human responsibility?” Well, that’s a very specific issue and the Bible speaks to that. Look back at Genesis chapter 50. This is that famous text where Joseph’s father, who was named Israel, had just died. And Joseph’s brothers, who had sold him into slavery, were maybe not quite sure whether or not Joseph was going to be kind to them after his father had died. These brothers are maybe going to find a tough time and maybe they themselves are going to be harshly treated, even killed. They don’t know. They even scheme a little bit coming up with what appears to be communication from their father that says after I’m gone this and this and that must happen. And they connive and scheme even at this point, believing that maybe their fate is in the hand of a human instrument who can do with them what he wills. Now it’s at that point with Joseph being as powerful as he is—he obviously has the power of life and death in some

sense over them because he's the ruler, he's the prime minister of Egypt—it's a time that he might be proud, but notice what he says in Genesis 50:20. Verse 19 says: "But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear [speaking to his brothers] for am I in the place of God?" A clear affirmation that God is sovereign even over Joseph. Verse 20: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good." What kind of good? "To bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today," including, of course, Joseph and his brothers, ultimately the twelve tribes of Israel. God has a plan. God has a sovereign plan. Even in the midst of human sin and even human freedom—human volition, human responsibility—Joseph says the overarching plan and purpose of God will not be thwarted, and it is from one of the twelve tribes of Israel that ultimately the Messiah will come. Now maybe Joseph didn't understand all of the implications of that, but certainly what is recorded for us in Scripture is that God meant something for good, even if mankind means it for evil. He's going to overrule it. He has the sovereign power to overrule it.

Look at Psalm 115. This is amazing! Again, everywhere you want to look in the Bible you're going to see on every page some kind of affirmation about the sovereignty of God. Psalm 115:1-7, 16-18:

<sup>1</sup> Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory,  
for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!

<sup>2</sup> Why should the nations say,  
"Where is their God?"

<sup>3</sup> Our God is in the heavens;  
he does all that he pleases.

No one can thwart Him! No one can say, "You're not going to do this to me." The Psalmist even goes on in this psalm to, in a sense, mock the idols that men have made. Do they have a human volition that made these idols? Yes. But under the banner even of their human instrumentation, their human ideals, their human trickery:

<sup>4</sup> Their idols are silver and gold,  
the work of human hands.

<sup>5</sup> They have mouths, but do not speak;  
eyes, but do not see.

<sup>6</sup> They have ears, but do not hear;  
noses, but do not smell.

<sup>7</sup> They have hands, but do not feel;  
feet, but do not walk;  
and they do not make a sound in their throat.

Do you know what the Psalmist is doing? He's saying something like: "Yeah, you made them. You made these idols. But they can't do anything for you. It's only a sovereign God who does all that He pleases." No wonder he says in verse 16:

- <sup>16</sup> The heavens are the LORD's heavens,  
but the earth he has given to the children of man.
- <sup>17</sup> The dead do not praise the LORD,  
nor do any who go down into silence.
- <sup>18</sup> But we will bless the LORD  
from this time forth and forevermore.

Do you want to see sovereignty and human responsibility in one verse? Turn to Philippians 2. This is just one example of several verses that affirm that while God is sovereign it doesn't violate human volition. Philippians 2:12: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, [here's the human volition] work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." You say, "Whose responsibility is it for you to work out your salvation with fear and trembling?" It's yours! It's a command here. You do it! You work it out! Verse 13: "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." One verse! There it is! You say, "Am I supposed to live my Christian life?" What's the answer? Yes! "Can I do so in such a way that I'm living my Christian life completely on my own apart even from the sovereign power of God?" No. "For it is God who wills and works for his good pleasure." This is no violation of the human will. The human will, however, is subjected to the sovereign plan and purposes of God.

Do you want to see it in maybe the highest expression of it? In Acts chapter 2, there may be the highest expression because it speaks of the very crucifixion of Jesus Christ Himself. Do you want to see the work of man, the volition of man, even in this context the sinfulness of man, but never apart from the sovereign outworking of the plan of God? Acts 2:22-23:

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, [notice this] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

There it is! You say, "Who killed Jesus?" Well, it says right here He "was crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men." And somebody's going to say, "Now there's the volition of man. There's the freedom of man. He does what he wants to do." And the answer to that is to some degree, but not apart from the sovereignty of God. Why? Because this Jesus was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God."

Look at Acts chapter 4. You assume that these early Christians affirmed the sovereignty of God? Yes! Look at Acts 4:11: "This Jesus [by affirmation] is the stone that was rejected by you [that's human volition], the builders, [but look at God's sovereignty] which has become the cornerstone."

Look at verse 23. These believers were praying for boldness. Acts 4:23-26:

<sup>23</sup> When they were released [from prison, from being persecuted], they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup> And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord [Ruler, Lord, lordship, kingship—all those synonyms that I mentioned earlier], who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, <sup>25</sup> who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

“Why did the Gentiles rage,  
and the peoples plot in vain?

<sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers were gathered together,  
against the Lord and against his Anointed’ —

That’s human volition. That’s what the kings of the earth did, but we’re praying to a sovereign God. Why do we pray to a sovereign God? Verse 28:

<sup>28</sup> “to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”

Amazing! And look at the response because they’re praying the right kinds of theological prayers. Verse 31:

<sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled [or controlled] with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

They spoke the Word of God with boldness! What’s the Word of God? Sovereign Lord—that’s the Word of God! They were bold in doing it.

Romans 8:28. You can’t get around it. 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.” He works everything out! You don’t have to worry. It doesn’t mean that you’re obviated from your responsibility, but it means you don’t have to worry about it. You don’t have to be concerned about it. You have a job issue? You have a money problem? Got relationship issues? You don’t have to worry about those things. God has everything in sovereign control. Does it mean that you’re not responsible to have the right kind of relationships? No. Does it mean that you’re supposed to be a slacker at work? No. Does it mean that you don’t care about these money issues? No. But the concern is ultimately placed in the hands of a sovereign Lord. Look, if you and I were being beaten and thrown in prison for the sake of Jesus Christ like they were in Acts chapter 4, could you say like they did, “Sovereign Lord, do whatever Your hand predestined to take place”? Could you say that now in your small issues and my small issues of life? We’re not being beaten or cast into prison because of

our faith in Christ. Can we say with our piddly little problems: “You are sovereign, Lord. I can place all of my issues in Your hands.” Of course, we can!

It’s the same even with not just the ordinary aspects of life and living, not just with regard to this idea of my own human responsibility, but even with my very salvation. Isn’t that true? Even with my very salvation God is sovereignly in control. Look at Ephesians chapter 1. Don’t miss this. This is something you can memorize in your Bible, all of these references to the sovereign hand of God in my very salvation. Look at Ephesians chapter 1, beginning in verse 5. It’s amazing! It’s one of the greatest chapters in all the Bible. Ephesians 1:5: “He predestined us for adoption [to himself] as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.” Verse 9: “Making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ.” Verse 11: “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” Boy! You ought to memorize that verse—Ephesians 1:11. Whenever you’ve got money problems, relationship issues, fear, worry, anxiety, parenting, whatever it is, God says that our lives have been “predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” Look at verse 19: “And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power [that’s sovereignty; that’s one of our synonyms] toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might.” You say, “Well, how powerful is that really?” Verse 20: “That he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead [that’s power, my friends] and seated [Christ] at his right hand in the heavenly places.” That’s sovereignty! That’s rulership! That’s kingship! You say, “To what extent?” Verse 21: “Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.” I think that just about covers it. Verses 22-23: “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

When you are down, when you are discouraged, when you think that not quite everything is right in your life and it ought to be, and you want it to be, and you’re praying about it, read Ephesians chapter 1 and remind yourself over and over and over again who’s in charge. Why am I worried? Why do I fret? Why am I concerned? God has everything in control. There are times when even in my own house and with the passel of kids that we have and all of the challenges and responsibilities, and when everything looks chaotic, and when my wife might be tending to sway into the worry and concern and the battle of the day, many, many times I’ve reminded her, “Guess what? We’re on our way to heaven! What could be more glorious than that? What could be more wonderful than that?” And there is nothing in this life that can get us so down, so discouraged, so despondent that we do not affirm the fact that He is above all rule and all authority and all power and all dominion and “above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body” of which we are a part. So what do we really have to be concerned about? And you know, after that you’re pretty convicted. You’re pretty convicted about your attitude. You’re convicted about the fact that you’re saying to yourself, “Things aren’t going well.” And then what we often do—I do it and you do it as human beings—is that we start trying to

manipulate the processes, to control our environment, to control things around us. And what that often does is nothing more than continue to frustrate us because we can't pull it off, we can't do it, instead of trusting a sovereign God.

Titus chapter 2. You don't have to be concerned about anything in your sanctification if you underwent what happened in your salvation. Look at Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age." I love that: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation." And what it does is it trains us, goads us, into renouncing ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled lives and be upright in this godless age. That's the grace of God! That's the sovereign grace of God! That powerful!

Look at Titus 3:4-5: "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us [see in that sovereign salvation], not because of works done by us in righteousness [not by my plan, not by my merit], but according to his own mercy [sovereign mercy]." Sovereign in salvation, sovereign in sanctification, sovereign in glorification—there's not a moment of time and not a miniscule area of life, certainly in my Christian life and yours, that God isn't completely sovereign over.

### III. The Extent of Sovereignty

Here's the answer. Here's the extent. Total! Comprehensive! Complete! Full! Someone might still be wondering, might still be questioning, might still be asking, "Yes, but everything? Okay, you said in my salvation. You said in the ordinary things of life and living. You've said so much already, but can I have full and complete assurance?" Yes! Genesis chapter 17. It's amazing! This is the extent of God's sovereignty. When you're down and discouraged and you wonder if everything is being controlled by God, don't forget Genesis 17:1-2: "When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty [I'm God Sovereign; I'm El Shaddai]; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.'" No wonder verse 3 says: "Then Abram fell on his face." You'd fall on your face too if God came into your very presence and said, "I am El Shaddai—God Almighty."

Look at chapter 18. Genesis 18:14: "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" Come on, Sarah. You laughed! You said in verse 12: "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" In other words, "Shall I have a child?" It was the heart of every Hebrew woman to birth children. It was their very legacy. And Sarah says she is too old. But God says, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" In other words, "If I created the woman, did I also not create the womb? And if I created the womb, did I also not create the seed? And can I do it? Can I bring them together? Of course, I can!"

Deuteronomy chapter 3. Is anything too hard for the LORD? Is His sovereignty extensive? Of course! Deuteronomy 3:24: "O Lord GOD," Moses says, and maybe he might be one of those who's wondering. He says: "O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in

heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours?" You know, when you get a glimpse of sovereignty, maybe it just forces you to ask rhetorical questions. Is anything too hard for the LORD? Is anything too hard for our Almighty God who does such works and mighty acts as these? Can you imagine parting the Red Sea, the Old Testament equivalent of the greatest event in salvation history, the cross itself? Is anything too hard for God? Do you remember Job's response in Job 42? Do you remember after even questioning God's purposes, God's plan, as he did, he still says when all was said and done, Job 42:1-2: "Then Job answered the LORD and said: 'I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.'" No purpose! What's the extent of His sovereignty? No purpose can be thwarted! None! It is fully, completely, comprehensively extensive.

Jeremiah 10, same kind of thrust in Jeremiah's prophecy of the extensive nature of God's sovereign rule. Jeremiah 10:6-12, 23:

<sup>6</sup> There is none like you, O LORD;  
you are great, and your name is great in might.

<sup>7</sup> Who would not fear you, O King of the nations?  
For this is your due;  
for among all the wise ones of the nations  
and in all their kingdoms  
there is none like you.

<sup>8</sup> They are both stupid and foolish;  
the instruction of idols is but wood!

<sup>9</sup> Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish,  
and gold from Uphaz.

They are the work of the craftsman and of the hands of the  
goldsmith;  
their clothing is violet and purple;  
they are all the work of skilled men.

<sup>10</sup> But the LORD is the true God [in other words, there are people  
who can make fine and exquisite idols, but that absolutely is a  
dead piece of wood because the LORD is the true God]  
he is the living God and the everlasting King.

At his wrath the earth quakes,  
and the nations cannot endure his indignation.

<sup>11</sup> Thus shall you say to them: "The gods who did not make the heavens  
and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens."

<sup>12</sup> It is he who made the earth by his power,  
who established the world by his wisdom,  
and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.

<sup>23</sup> I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself,  
that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.

How clear can it be! Jeremiah 27:5: “It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me.” That’s a pretty extensive view of sovereignty! God made it all!

I guess we should stop at Revelation chapter 1. We haven’t looked at every single verse and we haven’t looked at every single Bible book, but this is probably a great place to stop. Revelation 1:8. Jesus says: “I am the Alpha and the Omega.” What’s that? Oh, nothing but the beginning and the end! “I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’”

Look, we have not done—the church world, let alone the pagan world—the justice that is due our God and His almighty character, His almighty Being. We don’t talk enough about this.

Revelation 19:1: “After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven crying out, ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.’” Yes! Verse 6: “Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude [John the Apostle says], like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.’” Sovereignty!

## **Conclusion:**

Do you believe in God’s sovereignty? Do you believe that? You say, “Of course, I do. I would die for that truth!” Do you live in light of God’s sovereignty? Is that the way you live your life? I mean, it’s one thing to say this is what I believe, it’s entirely another to say this is the way I live. I live in light of what I believe. That’s a challenge for us, maybe even as a well-taught church, maybe even as a good, solid, reformed church, the question would still be: Do I live in light of what I know to be true about the sovereignty of God?

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