

The Philosophy of Ministry – Week 9

“Ministry and God’s Sovereignty”

1. What is the Sovereignty of God

- A. “Sovereign”** – can be defined as “supreme _____, supreme power to govern”.
- B. The 1828 Edition of Webster's Dictionary** defines Sovereign as: “Supreme in power; possessing supreme dominion; as a sovereign ruler of the universe. Supreme; superior to all others; chief. God is the sovereign good of all who love and obey him. Supremely efficacious; superior to all others; predominant; effectual; as a sovereign remedy.”
- C. Charles Hodge** - Sovereignty is not a property of the divine nature, but a prerogative arising out of the perfections of the Supreme Being. If God be a Spirit, and therefore a person, infinite, eternal, and immutable in his being and perfections, the Creator and Preserver of the universe, He is of right its absolute sovereign. Infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, with the right of possession, which belongs to God in all his creatures, are the immutable foundation of his dominion. (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 440.)
- D. Easton's Bible Dictionary** - Sovereignty is God's absolute right to do all things according to his own good pleasure.
- E. New Unger's Bible Dictionary** says that regarding the Sovereignty of God, that He is under no external restraint whatsoever. He is the Supreme Dispenser of all events. All forms of existence are within the scope of His dominion. And yet this is not to be viewed in any such way as to abridge the reality of the moral freedom of God's responsible creatures or to make men anything else than the arbiters of their own eternal destinies. God has seen fit to create beings with the power of choice between good and evil. He rules over them in justice and wisdom and grace. (Unger, M. F., Harrison, R. K., Vos, H. F., Barber, C. J., & Unger, M. F. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Chicago: Moody Press).
- F. John Piper** – “God’s sovereignty is his right and power to do all that he decides to do.”
- G. Arthur Pink** – To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in Heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purpose, or resist His will.... The sovereignty of the God of Scripture is absolute, irresistible, infinite. To put it now in its strongest form, we insist that God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases; that whatever takes place in time is but the outworking of that which He decreed in eternity. (Arthur Pink – *Sovereignty of God*)

2. Biblical Support for God’s Sovereignty

- A. Psalm 33:11** — *The _____ of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*
- B. Psalm 115:3** — *But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*

- C. Psalm 135:6** — *Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.*
- D. Daniel 4:25** — *That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he _____.*
- E. Daniel 4:35** — *And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his _____ in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*
- F. Job 42:1-2** — **1;** *Then Job answered the LORD, and said,* **2;** *I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.*
- G. Isaiah 14:24** — *The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:*
- H. Isaiah 43:13, 45:9-10**
- I. Isaiah 46:9-10** — **9;** *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,* **10;** *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do _____ my pleasure:*
- J.** How does the life of Jonah depict the sovereign rule of God?
- K. Acts 2:23** — *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*
- L. Acts 4:27-28** — **27;** *For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,* **28;** *For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*
- M. Romans 9:15-23**
- N. Ephesians 1:9** — **9;** *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*
- O. Ephesians 1:11** — *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of _____ own will:*
- P. Revelation 17:16-17-** *And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. **For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill His _____, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.***
- The beast is the antichrist, the ten horns are ten world rulers/kings who will rule at this time under the leadership of the antichrist. The women called “mystery Babylon” (v.5) who represents the false religious system of the world infects the entire world (v.1-2, 5) with her false teachings. The antichrist will use this system to unite the world powers but in the end they will all turn on her and destroy her and burn her with fire. Evil will even turn on itself in the days of the tribulation. Yet all this is accomplished according as God had sovereignly willed. John declares that God will put in the hearts of the 10 kings to give their power to the beast/antichrist until the word of God is fulfilled. Here we see the glorious sovereign rule of God who will bring His perfect will to pass

3. Misunderstandings concerning God's Sovereignty

A. Sovereignty and free will

1. Some believe the sovereignty of God removes man's freedom. They extend the sovereignty of God as the Supreme ruler to the point that says God even "causes" everything to happen. If that is true then God would not only be the author of good, but the author of _____.
2. **There are things God divinely "causes" to happen, such as:**
 - a. Spoke light into existence.
 - b. Spoke the world into existence.
 - c. God sent a worldwide flood.
 - d. God caused Mary to become pregnant.
3. **There are things God "allows" to happen:**
 - a. God allowed Adam and Eve to eat the fruit – He didn't "cause" them to do that.
 - b. God allowed the soldiers to crucify Jesus, He didn't "cause" them to do that.
4. **Sovereignty doesn't remove man's freedom, rather man's freedom will always work within the _____ of God's sovereignty.**
 - a. Satan was free to attack Job, but that freedom was limited by God. God's word even says after Job did not blame God: **Job 1:22** — *In all this Job sinned not, **nor charged God foolishly.***
 - b. Joseph's brothers freely abused Joseph and sold him into slavery, but they did so inside the purposes of God.
5. **God will at times _____ man's freedom.**
 - a. Many times the Jews sought to take and kill Jesus but they could not. Why?
 - 1) **John 7:30** — *Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.*
 - 2) **John 8:20** — *These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.*
 - 3) **Luke 4:28-30** — **28;** *And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, **29;** And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. **30;** But he passing through the midst of them went his way,*
 - 4) Could men kill Jesus before the set time? _____
 - b. **Why did Jesus tell Paul not to fear opposition at Corinth?**
 - 1) **Acts 18:9-10** — **9;** *Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: **10;** For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.*
 - 2) Could Paul have been killed at Corinth?
6. The fact that _____ came into the world reveals the truth that men are free moral agents. James one clearly states God cannot tempt man with sin.

a. **James 1:13–14 — 13;** *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14; But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

b. God created Adam and Even as sinless people and they chose through their own free will to sin.

B. God has sovereignly chosen to give men freedom or what may be called human _____. In Scripture God is seen giving man a choice to make.

1. **In the garden (Genesis 3).**

2. **Deuteronomy 30:15–19 — 15;** *See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; 19; I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:*

C. Extremes to avoid:

1. **Removing _____ freedom,** this can be defined as “fatalism” or “determinism”.

a. Defining the terms:

1) **Fatalism** - The belief that “what will be will be,” since all past, present, and future events have already been predetermined by God man has no free will.

2) **Determinism** - Determinism is related to fatalism, since determinists believe that all events, including human actions, are caused by God.

b. Those in this extreme will say, “Well whatever is going to happen will happen, God decreed it so it doesn’t matter what I do.” They see God as a divine “puppet master” pulling the strings.

1) They say, “Why pray, what will be, will be”. Or “Why evangelize or make any real choices, God is going to do what He will do.

2) This is a false understanding of Sovereignty. Sovereignty doesn’t mean God causes everything or authors everything, but rather that He allows all that happens and will use all things to accomplish His purposes and perfect will.

2. **Removing _____ Freedom.**

a. Some extend man’s freedom to the point of removing God’s freedom and rejecting God’s sovereign rule.

b. This group includes those who are proponents of _____ free will. They see man’s free choice as reigning supreme. They see man as “_____”.

c. Autonomy can be defined as the right to self -governing. It is derived from two Greek words, autos and nomos, which mean “a law unto oneself.” It is to say that man is a free moral agent and can make their own decisions and are not subject to the will or determination of another.

d. Question: If man is totally free and autonomous, could God also be totally free and autonomous? _____

1) If man is a law unto themselves with absolute freedom then there is no way God can be sovereign. Because if God is sovereign, meaning that His freedom is absolute and extends

over His whole creation so that He has the power and ability to choose whatsoever He wills, then there could be no creature who can be totally free and autonomous because to do so would limit God's autonomy over them.

- 2) God would not be free to operate sovereignly and freely in their life without interrupting their freedom.
- e. Again, man is a free moral agent, but his freedom works inside the boundaries of God's sovereignty.

D. Sovereignty and Pain

1. **Question:** Does God have all the power to either allow to happen or to stop from happening anything in the world? _____
2. Does God have all knowledge to fully know all that is bad that will happen? _____
3. So if God has all the power and all the knowledge, then if something happens, what can we conclude? _____
4. This does not mean God _____ of all things, in that he rejoices in it, but that he allows it.
5. One of the greatest mysteries that we see in Scripture as well as in life is how God's sovereignty intermingles with man. How man as free moral agents live on this earth, who oppose God, who can hate God, who seek to overthrow God, yet even in their wickedness, God turns all things to work toward His own glorious purposes.
 - a. Who is an example of this in Scripture?
 - b. _____ is an example of this: He hated Christ, sold Him out, and betrayed Christ; yet in His wicked betrayal, God used that to bring about His will. Judas was both predestined to do what he did, but he also chose to betray Christ.
 - c. God's sovereignty is so supreme, that He turns the evil of this world to bring to pass His own glorious purposes.
6. What is the greatest injustice the world ever committed? _____
7. What good came from this greatest of all injustices? _____
 - a. People can say, "But sin has cost me so much in life!"; but I would ask, "has sin cost you more than it cost God?"
 - b. How can the following verses be applied to life when we do not understand the pains of life?
 - 1) **Proverbs 3:5-6 — 5;** *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6; In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*
 - 2) **Isaiah 55:8-9 — 8;** *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9; For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

4. Implications of God's Sovereignty in Ministry

A. We can have peace in the face of the _____ of life.

1. 2 Corinthians 12:7–10 — 7; *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8; For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9; And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10; Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

2. What did Paul pray three times for? _____

3. How does Christ respond? _____.

4. According to verse 7, what was the purpose of the thorn? _____.

5. According to Jesus, pride was a greater threat to Paul than a spiritual attack.

6. Application for ministry:

- a. What trials and hardships are you going through?
- b. What if you knew that God was the author of those trials, how would it change your perspective?
- c. How does Romans 8:28 apply to this truth?

7. How does the life of Joseph reflect the sovereign will of God?

8. How important was it for Joseph to understand God's will?

9. What in your life are you frustrated or upset with? _____

- a. How would it change if you knew God wanted that challenge, that difficulty, or that struggle to be in your life?
- b. How would you respond differently to the situation if you knew God was the author of that situation?

B. We can have peace in the midst of increasing _____ in the world**1. Consider the following verses if we do not serve a sovereign God:**

a. 2 Timothy 3:1 — *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

1) Perilous (Gr. *chalepos*) – fierce, dangerous, savage; the same word is used to speak of the demon possessed man in Matthew 8:28 – whom the Bible describes as exceeding fierce.

2) Perilous also speaks of these times as being “hard to bear, difficult to deal with, painful, grievous times”.

b. 2 Timothy 3:12–13 — *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. 13; But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.*

c. If God is not sovereign, if He is not in control and if things are going to get increasingly worse, how would that make you feel?

d. The single greatest truth for every Christian to know in times of worldly uncertainties, the pillow that you can rest your head upon, the Rock that you can trust in to sustain you in times of storms is what is known as the Sovereignty of God.

- e. **J I Packer** - *To know that nothing happens in God's world apart from God's will may frighten the godless, but it stabilizes the saints.*
 - f. **Spurgeon** - *There is no attribute of God more comforting to his children than the doctrine of divine sovereignty.*
2. It is why God can say: **Psalm 46:10-11** - ***Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. 11; The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.***
- C. **We can have peace in the midst of great _____ against God.**
1. **Psalm 2 speaks of man's rebellious contempt for God's Sovereign rule as they seek to throw off God's authority over them.**
 2. **Psalm 2:1-3 — 1;** *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 2; The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, 3; Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.*
 3. Here man rages against God as they seek to remove God's rule and authority over them.
 4. How does God respond to man's attempts to overthrow the rule of God in verse 4? _____
 - **Psalm 2:4 — 4;** *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.*
 5. Why does God laugh?
 - a. This is a mocking laughter at the futility of the rebellious efforts of the nations to overthrow God's Sovereign plans.
 - b. **"the Lord shall have them in derision"**
 - 1) **Derision** – speaks of laughing in mockery; this is God laughing in utter contempt of their rebellious schemes.
 - 2) When Christ hung on the cross, the rebellious Christ haters laughed and ridiculed the Lord; but here in heaven, the Sovereign God looks upon such rebellion, and as He sits in absolute authority He laughs at how foolish they are.
 6. **V. 5 – Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath and vex (distress) them in his sore (deep) displeasure."**
 - a. God's laughter is mocking how foolish their defiance is against the hand of sovereignty; here we see His laughter turns to a wrathful response of righteous judgment against their sinfulness.
 - b. The old British commentator Thomas Adams writes, *"Oh, what are his frowns, if His smiles be so terrible!"*
 7. **What divine pronouncement comes from the throne of God in the face of the world's opposition?**
 - a. **Psalm 2:6 — Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.**
 - b. In the face of a world that hated and crucified Christ; in a world that has sought to silence the name of Christ; that has persecuted those who bear His name; **The Father declares: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."**
 - c. **Against all their challenges, against their desire to overthrow God's plan,** God here declares in His absolute authority that He will

indeed set His king enthroned upon Jerusalem's most notable hill of Zion.

8. Psalm 2 is quoted at least _____ times in the NT and is the first of what are known as the Messianic Psalms – as it makes prophetic references to Christ. We know this Psalm speaks of Christ because when it is quoted in the NT it always refers to Christ.
9. **Acts 4:23-28** (Peter quotes Psalms 2 after being threatened to stop preaching of Christ by the Jewish authorities)
 - a. What is the first thing their prayer focuses on in verse 24? _____
 - b. The second thing their prayer involved was _____.
 - c. They recognized persecution was not outside the will of God, but according to the Word of God.
 - d. After reminding themselves of God as Creator, as author of Scripture, they recognize that even the suffering, persecution, and death of Christ was ultimately according to whose will? _____
 - e. **“determined before”** (Strong's 4309; “proorizo” – from pro=before + horizo = to determine/ordain). **To predetermine, to predestinate, to decide beforehand.**
 - 1) **Vines** – “to mark out beforehand, to determine before, foreordain;”
 - 2) This is God's Sovereign choosing and determining before any events took place.
 - 3) What did God choose and preordain here in Acts 4:23-28? _____
 - f. They applied the Sovereign will of God in the death of Christ to be also true of their own lives (v.29-31).

D. We can have joy in the security of our _____.

1. **“Proorizo”** is used _____ times in the NT (Acts 4:28, Romans 8:29, 30, 1 Corinthians 2:7, Ephesians 1:5, 11).
 2. Once it is used of God preordaining/predestinating Christ to suffer, once it is used of God's preordaining/predestinating when the mystery of God's Word would be revealed (1 Cor. 2:7); the other 4 times it is used speaks of God's Work in preordaining/predestinating people to salvation.
 3. God's predestination not only involved Christ's suffering, but also our _____.
- a. **Ephesians 1:5** — *Having predestinated (proorizo) us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*
 - b. **Ephesians 1:11** — *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated (proorizo) according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*
 - c. **Romans 8:29** - *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate (proorizo) to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*
 - d. **Romans 8:30** — *Moreover whom he did predestinate (proorizo), them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

4. God's Work of predestination does not remove man's freedom, but it does mean that God's ultimate purpose of saving the elect will be accomplished.
 - a. **John 6:37** — *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*
 - b. **John 6:39** — *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*
 - c. **John 17:2** — *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*
 - d. **John 17:6, 9, 11, 24**
5. If God predestinates does that mean man has no choice?
 - a. **Warren Wiersbe** - The Bible teaches both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and when you accept both, there is no contradiction or conflict. No person is more free than the believer who surrenders to the sovereign will of God. To ignore God's sovereignty is to exalt human responsibility and make man his own savior, but to deny responsibility is to make man a robot without accountability. The Bible preserves a beautiful balance that exalts God and enables His people to live joyously and victoriously no matter what the circumstances might be (Acts 4:23-31; Ro 8:31-39).
 - b. Though it is a challenge to understand how God's sovereign work in salvation and man's freedom come together, we must resist the temptation to remove God's sovereignty as well as removing man's freedom.

E. We can have joy in the fulfillment of our _____.

1. **Romans 8:28-30** — **28**; *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29; For whom he did foreknow, he also did **predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30; Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*
2. **Philippians 1:6** — *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*
3. **Philippians 2:12-13** — **12**; *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13; For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Week 10 Assignments:

- **Assignment:**
 - Read: Chapter 9 – Pursuit of God – “Meekness & Rest”
 - Paragraph one: Summarize what this chapter was about.
 - Paragraph two: How you can apply these truths to your life.
 - Prepare for Test over the Sovereignty of God lesson.