

Week 3

January 15-21

Week 3 – January 15th – 21st, Genesis 35:28-29; 40:1-50:26; Job 1-11

The theme for this week is the sovereignty of God. The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology defines the Sovereignty of God as “The biblical teaching that God is king, supreme ruler, and lawgiver of the entire universe.”

We will see this important truth in the lives of two men, Joseph and Job. In Joseph’s life we see him go from being wrongly imprisoned to second in command in all of Egypt. In the life of Job we will meet a righteous man who must come to grips with trials and tribulations that are brought into his life. Each day this week you will see God’s sovereignty powerfully demonstrated in the lives of these two men.

I also want to add a word about why you are reading Job right after Genesis in our chronological reading. Job is a godly man but makes no mention of God’s law given to Moses and he performs his own sacrifices (Job 42:8). Both of these would not make sense if Job lived after Moses. Scholars generally agree that the events of Job best fit during the time of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob).

January 15th

Genesis 35:28-29; 40:1-41:57. "It is better to be a poor but wise youth than to be an old and foolish king...Such a youth could come from prison and succeed" (Ecclesiastes 4:13-14a).

It was a courageous choice full of integrity that landed Joseph in jail, but it was the sovereign hand of God that brought him out. Joseph had no ability to change his position. Through the series of events you read today, God brought about restoration for Joseph. However, it is not as though Joseph didn't do anything. I see three key things Joseph did:

- 1) Joseph worked hard for the chief jailer,
- 2) Joseph exercised wisdom and the gift of interpreting dreams,
- 3) Joseph exercised patience, spending over two years in jail.

Indeed, Joseph did his part and so did God. God orchestrated different meetings, gave dreams to people, and gave Joseph the wisdom and ability to interpret those dreams. Thus, we see an important principle: God's sovereignty and man's responsibility work hand in hand in our lives.

January 16th

Genesis 42:1-45:15. "To God be the glory; great things He has done"

Joseph gives God full credit for ending up in Egypt and for his position as second only to Pharaoh. He recognizes that it was the hand of God in his life all this time. When Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, or when he was falsely accused and jailed by Potiphar, or when he was forgotten by Pharaoh's cupbearer for two years, he knew that God's hand was guiding his life.

Like Joseph, are you able to give God the glory for what he has done in your life? Joseph's life was far from easy. There were good times and bad, but in it all, Joseph recognized that God was in control. Are you in a difficult stage of life? Do not despair, for God is in control. Is life seemingly perfect for you right now? Great, but don't be proud, for all you have is from God. So, no matter what stage of life you are in, you ought to give glory to God as Joseph did.

January 17th

Genesis 45:16-47:27. "The Beauty of God's Sovereignty"

There are many important truths that are related to, or find their origins in, the sovereignty of God. In today's reading, I am struck by God's provision for Jacob and his family. God demonstrated His faithfulness to Jacob by providing a way of escape during these terrible years of famine.

From time to time I will meet someone who does not want to acknowledge that God is sovereign. They want to ignore that God is indeed ruler of His creation. However, at the same time they are praying for God to provide for their needs. Ignoring God's sovereignty and asking for his provision is a contradiction, for God's ability to provide is dependent on His absolute sovereignty. If God were subject to some external force, then His ability to meet our needs would be limited. I hope you see that it isn't a restriction of our freedom to believe in God's sovereignty. To the contrary, His sovereignty allows us to trust in His promises, care and provision, which will truly set us free.

January 18th

Genesis 47:28-50:26. "Looking to the Future"

Genesis 50:24 foreshadows the events of the book of Exodus as God led Israel out of Egypt. Joseph is speaking of a future time when God will lead His people back to the Promised Land. Why is it that Joseph can make this statement with any amount of confidence? It is because Joseph believes in the sovereignty of God. He experienced the hand of God in his own life and he was taught about the great promises God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so he has no difficulty in knowing that God will act on His promises.

God's sovereignty is part of the reason we can have hope for the future. God's promises concerning the future would be meaningless if He is not sovereign. His ability to bring about His plan of redemption would be subject to failure if He wasn't sovereign. Joseph did not worry over the future of Israel for he knew God's sovereignty. Do you worry or fret over the future? We all do at times, but those who trust in a sovereign God are not consumed by such worry. What a blessing to know that God is in control of our future.

January 19th

Job 1-4. "Sovereign over all Creation"

Nothing exists that doesn't fall under God's sovereignty. This profound truth extends even to the existence of evil. Many have wondered why God allows evil to exist, but this question is ultimately futile because we cannot change the fact that it does exist. What we must focus on is how to live appropriately in light of the fact that evil is present in this world.

A large part of that issue is the ability to put Satan and his evil forces into a proper context. Satan is not the evil equal of God; rather he is a created being, a fallen angel who will ultimately be defeated by our great and glorious God (Rev. 20:10).

The story of Job helps us to understand the proper context of evil. God, in His sovereignty, grants Satan a measure of authority in Job's life. So, we know that Satan and evil are real and have significant power and authority in this world. However, none of it is beyond the sovereignty of God. Thus, in spite of evil, the believer can rejoice in the sovereignty of God and the knowledge of the Lord's ultimate victory.

January 20th

Job 5-7. "God Ways are Higher than our Ways"

"God's ways are as hard to discern as the pathways of the wind, and as mysterious as a tiny baby being formed in a mother's womb" (Eccl. 11:5).

I would imagine that at this moment Job would very much relate to the above verse. Job is struggling to reconcile his current state with how he has lived his life. We all struggle with this same issue; we often ask the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" This may be an exclusively American question, though, because the majority of us live a charmed life compared to the rest of the world.

A key principle we learn from Job is that living a righteous life will not guarantee a life free of trials and grief. The purpose of living a righteous life or a life of obedience to God is not to manipulate God into blessing us, but rather to bring pleasure to our Heavenly Father who loves us.

January 21st

Job 8-11. "God's Sovereignty Hits Home"

There is a difference between knowing truth about God and allowing that truth to impact how we live our lives. The same day I started writing about God's sovereignty in Job's life, I was diagnosed with pinkeye and was coming down with a nasty cold. I was miserable. Worse than that, I had become grouchy and irritable and was acting like a jerk (best word to describe it) to my family. After two days of my inappropriate behavior my wife had to confront me about it. I knew I was acting out, but it hit me like a ton of bricks when she said it. I realized how much of a hypocrite I had been for writing about God's sovereignty in Job's life while not allowing His sovereignty to control my life. I entirely ignored the fact that even though I felt bad, God was still in control and had a purpose for all this. Are you like me? Have you lost sight of God's sovereignty in your life? Are you allowing life's circumstances to dictate your behavior rather than the truth of God's Word? I want to encourage you to take a step back, reevaluate, and recommit to living with God's sovereignty as a constant reality in your life. -David Curtis

General Questions for each day:

Summarize the day's Bible passage in your own words.

What thoughts, actions, attitudes or beliefs are addressed in the passage?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your life today?

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Bible Discussion Guide:

In what ways does God's sovereignty impact our lives?

How would life be different if God was not sovereign?

Review the events of Joseph's life. How did God demonstrate His sovereignty in Joseph's life?

How did Joseph react to the negative events in his life?

How did he react to the positive events?

In your own life, what are some ways God has revealed his sovereignty?

How have you reacted to negative events? What about positive events?

What have you learned from studying the life of Joseph that will impact how you react to life's circumstances in the future?

We also read the first 11 chapters of Job this week. In what ways did God demonstrate his sovereignty over Job's life?

The devotional for January 19th stated that nothing exists outside of God's sovereignty, including evil. How does this truth impact our lives?

Have you ever experienced a time when you did not understand what was happening in your life? How did you respond?

What can we learn from Job's response that will help us to respond appropriately to difficult circumstances?

Personal application: What is one thing you were able to take away from studying the lives of Joseph and Job that will change the way you live?