



The Things That Matter

Christian Life Assembly

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Objectives

- **Seek to hear from God, in His own words, how great He is.**
- **Seek to know doctrine. (2nd Tim 4:3 For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear.)**
- **When we are done, it is my prayer that God will be further revealed (glorified) and exalted.**



God is Sovereign

Romans 11:33 Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! 34

For who can know the Lord's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? 35 And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? 36 For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory.

All glory to him forever! Amen.

God is Sovereign

- No one is born loving the sovereignty of God – we are all born presuming and assuming our own sovereignty.
- Just as difficult times make us more spiritual, they also tend to make us lovers (and wanters) of His sovereignty.
- ★ The question is this – will we believe what the Bible teaches about our God even if it is way over our heads, or will we settle for only those things we can reason through?



God is Sovereign

- Let's deal first with the issues that make people nervous about God's sovereignty.
- ★ • 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. *He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.*
- ★ • Rom 8:29 *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.





God is Sovereign

- The two truths, that God choose those who would be saved, and He is not willing that any should perish are not in conflict.
- ★ The truth that God elected those who would receive Him in advance, does not change the fact that people must believe in order to be saved.
- In my view this is not God's sovereignty versus the free will of man because I do not believe our wills are free of sin's influence. (Adam and Eve excepted)



God is Sovereign

- There is perhaps no greater area of contention on the sovereignty of God than personal salvation.
- One side says that God chose (elected) us before we were born, and the other says that choosing God is our choice to make, or not.
- So which is it?
- Did He choose us, or did we choose Him?

God is Sovereign

- Eph 1:4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.
- ★ We can say with certainty that God choose us – this is not in dispute.
- Acts 13:48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life became believers.

God is Sovereign

- John 1:10 He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. 11 He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.
- Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let anyone who hears this say, "Come." Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.
- The Bible is equally clear that God's offer of salvation must be freely responded to with faith.



God is Sovereign

- C. H. Spurgeon was once asked if he could reconcile the two truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. “I wouldn’t try,” he replied, “I never reconcile friends.”

 John 6:44 “For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up.”

 John 12:32 “And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.”



God is Sovereign

- There is some resistance to this doctrine even in the church – why?
 - I believe it is a matter of the flesh not wanting to cede control of anything – even to God.
 - The arguments are mostly rooted in “if God is in control, how can there be free will?”.
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God is Sovereign

- One of the things I hope to demonstrate today is that the sovereignty of God, and our ability to choose, are seldom at odds with each other.
- There is God's perfect will, and there is God's permissive will.
- *All things are under His absolute control, but He does not control all things.*



God is Sovereign

- **John 9:1** As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. **2** "Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?" **3** "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him."
- Another scripture that we have trouble grasping – the man was 38 years old, and he was born blind specifically so that God's power could be seen in his life.

God is Sovereign

- Do not fixate on the cause as the decisive explanation of suffering.
- Resist the notion that suffering has no meaning.
- Turn to the purposes and plans of God. There is no suffering outside God's sovereign purposes.
- When we suffer it is not hidden from God, and He is able to bring beauty from some of life's ugliest ashes.

God is Sovereign

- There is a condition to be met in order for our suffering to be meaningful and valuable to us – *we must first see His glory as more important than our present circumstances.*
- It is clear from the text that Jesus thought God's glory was a sufficient explanation for 38 years of blindness.
- The fact that many of us have trouble with the "God's glory" explanation reveals our weak perspective of His glory.

God is Sovereign

- This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18.
- We are handicapped by sin in our view of eternity, and therefore in our evaluation of eternal things.
- We do not always comprehend the true value of our present conditions - what we think is good is often not best.

God is Sovereign

- All that we hold dear is held together and made possible by the sovereignty of our God.
- By definition, sovereignty is having supreme and ultimate rank, power, and authority.
- If God is not sovereign then he is not God.
- None of us would want to spend one minute in a world that has no Sovereign God.

A neglected chapter of the Bible.

- Romans 9 is a great chapter of the Bible, but is often avoided because we have trouble fitting its message into our tidy doctrinal packages.
- Romans 9 speaks of things we find hard to accept for just one reason – we are not God.
- We should not afford ourselves the luxury of picking and choosing what we want God to be like when it is all too obvious He is perfect as He is.

Rom 9:10-17

This son was our ancestor Isaac. When he married Rebekah, she gave birth to twins. 11 But before they were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she received a message from God. (This message shows that God chooses people according to his own purposes; 12 he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.) She was told, "Your older son will serve your younger son." 13 In the words of the Scriptures, "I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau." 14 Are we saying, then, that God was unfair? Of course not! 15 For God said to Moses, "I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose." 16 So it is God who decides to show mercy. We can neither choose it nor work for it. 17 For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth."

Rom 9:18-24

So you see, God chooses to show mercy to some, and he chooses to harden the hearts of others so they refuse to listen. 19 Well then, you might say, "Why does God blame people for not responding? Haven't they simply done what he makes them do?" 20 No, don't say that. Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into? 22 In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who were made for destruction. 23 He does this to make the riches of his glory shine even brighter on those to whom he shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory.

Question

If you read Romans 9, and take it literally, are you okay with God choosing Jacob over Esau before either one of them ever had a chance to do good, or to do evil?

Rom 9:18-24

- Our corrupt sense of fairness recoils at God choosing Jacob to rule over his brother Esau when neither one had yet made a mistake (Esau) or had done well enough to merit such elevation (Jacob).
- We think God to be capricious and arbitrary in his selection of Jacob, and we don't know what to do with that.
- It often does not fit our template for how God is supposed to behave.

Rom 9:18-24

- **God is still everything else we know Him to be and so much more.**
- **He will not allow Himself to be limited to what we approve, or are able to comprehend.**
- **Who are we to question God – he is not in the wrong because I don't happen to understand his workings.**

Nebuchadnezzar

- Dan 5:21 He was driven from human society. He was given the mind of a wild animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them.
- God is not limited to the choices we give Him nor by the circumstances we create. (see Mathias in Acts 1)

Kings, Politicians, and Presidents

- Ps 75:5-7 Don't raise your fists in defiance at the heavens or speak with such arrogance.'" 6 For no one on earth—from east or west, or even from the wilderness— should raise a defiant fist. 7 It is God alone who judges; he decides who will rise and who will fall.
- Prov 21:1 The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the Lord; he guides it wherever he pleases.
- Does not “trust and obey” fit perfectly here?

Point to Ponder

And the Lord said, in effect, "I will not simply be analyzed, I will be adored. I will not simply be pondered, I will be proclaimed. My sovereignty is not simply to be scrutinized, it is to be heralded. It is not grist for the mill of controversy, it is gospel for sinners who know that their only hope is the sovereign triumph of God's grace over their rebellious will." John Piper



Questions

