



Teaching God's Word to Train Disciples

Fellowship BIBLE CHURCH

Audio of Pastor Don Griffin's sermons is available at
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For the past three weeks, four counting today, we have been learning to relate to God based on who He is and what He has done. The first week we saw God as the creator. As you look at our planet you see plenty of evidence for intelligent design. Our world is like a fine watch that has been created with great precision and skill. So, we have evidence of an intelligent designer, but we also have evidence of an intelligence sustainer. If you were to see a life-sized robot operating efficiently in various tasks, you would know that robot didn't just appear. Three things would be obvious about that robot. First, It

Learning to Relate to God His Sovereignty Part 4

was created by someone with more intelligence than itself. Second, someone programmed the robot to do what it does. And last, the robot has some kind of power source. Maybe it runs off of a battery that someone is recharging from time to time. That being true, we would understand that not only did someone design the robot, someone is also sustaining the robot.

That is what you see when you see this world. This world was not created and then left alone. This world was created by a person who now takes an active interest in it and who is busy guiding its affairs. The theological term for that is the "sovereignty of God." The sovereignty of God teaches us that there is no such thing as luck or chance. You can have God or chance, but you can't have both. When a cowboy applied for health insurance, the agent routinely asked if he had had any accidents during the previous year. The cowboy replied, "No. But I was bitten by a rattlesnake, and a horse kicked me in the ribs. That laid me up for a while." The agent said, "Weren't those accidents?" "No," replied

the cowboy, "They did it on purpose." In the same way, we live in a purposeful universe. Things do not just happen by chance or accident, God is ruling over all. Someone has said, "God is too sovereign to be lucky."

As you look through the Scripture, it is very plain that God is sovereign.

"The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, O my soul" (Psalm 103:19-22).

Arthur Pink defined God's sovereignty like this, "

The sovereignty of God may be defined as the exercise of His supremacy. Being infinitely elevated above the highest creature, He is the Most High, Lord of heaven and earth. Subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent; God does as He pleases, only as He pleases always as He pleases. None can thwart Him, none can hinder Him."

A little boy once offered up this simple prayer: "God bless mother and daddy, my brother and sister; and God, do take care of yourself, because if anything happens to YOU, we're all sunk."

If we are talking in theory, we have no problem with this doctrine. It is not hard for us to believe that God orders the path of the stars in the skies. After all, somebody's got to take care of the stars, and we are o.k. with God doing it. Our problems start when sovereignty becomes more personal. To speak of the stars is one thing. We can leave that with God. But to say that God is in charge of all that happens to me—that's another story.

FACTS ABOUT GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

1. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IS A MYSTERIOUS DOCTRINE

Four Objections

Psalm 103:19, "The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all."

I can think of four reasons to doubt that this verse is true.

a) The Problem of Unexplainable Catastrophes

If God is in control, why does He allow a volcano to erupt in Hawaii that destroys 20 homes? Why does He allow a snowstorm that hits Kansas and leaves 15 dead?

Why is it that some people seem to be miraculously protected from such things and others lose their lives? There are lots of ways to answer that question, but in the final analysis the only answer we can safely offer is, "We don't know."

b) The Prosperity of the Wicked

A man named "Asaph" wrote Psalm 73,

*"Surely God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.*

*2 But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.*

*3 For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

*4 They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.*

*5 They are free from the burdens common to man;
they are not plagued by human ills.*

As Asaph studied the Bad Guys, they seemed to not have a problem in the world. They're living on Easy Street. The good die young, and the wicked live to old age. What does it mean to say "His kingdom rules over all" when we are kicked in the teeth?

c) The Paradox of Sovereignty and Free Will

If God is sovereign and in control of my life, how can I truly have free will? Or if I really have free will, how can God be sovereign? And that can lead you

to some very interesting questions, such as If God is sovereign, why pray? If God is sovereign, why not just kick back and watch TV? Why do anything?

d) The presence of evil in this world

If god is truly sovereign why is there evil in this world? We have to understand that there are two wills let loose in the universe. In the beginning there was only one will-God's. When there was only one will, the universe was filled with peace and harmony. Ever since Lucifer fell from heaven and became Satan, there has been another will in the universe. A will opposed to God as completely as one can ever be opposed to another.

And now, in this age of two wills, there is untold misery and heartache. Satan committed the first sin. He led the first rebellion. He was in the Garden of Eden. He was there when Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. He roams the world today like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). He does all that he does in an attempt to hinder God's work, and that he might remain the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). First John 5:19, "the Evil One controls the whole world."

Faith is not to say, "everything is going great. Therefore I believe that god is in control." Faith says "everything is not going great, but we believe god is in control anyway."

2. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IS AN EXALTING DOCTRINE

The sovereignty of God is an exalting doctrine because it gives us a very big God. Many years ago J. B. Phillips wrote the classic book *Your God Is Too Small*. The title told the whole story. Many of us have a problem because our God is too small. But if you ever understand that God is sovereign over the entire universe, you'll never have a small God again.

3. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IS AN EMPOWERING DOCTRINE

If you believe God is sovereign, nobody can intimidate you. What gave David the courage to face the

giant Goliath? He said, “I come to you in the name of the God of Israel, the Lord of hosts?” David had a God so big that Goliath was like a midget to him.

The Bible stresses God’s complete sovereignty over the universe. It’s not that he rules over everything except your boss or your husband or your children or your problems. The Sovereign Lord rules over all things.

RESPONDING TO THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

1. Look at Life From the Top Down

We have the opportunity to look at life two ways—from the bottom-up or from the top-down. From the top down means to start with God and then go to the problems of life. From the bottom up means to start with my problems and then work upwards to God.

If you start with you, you’ll end with you and be no better off. If you start with God, you’ve started in the only possible place to find any lasting answers. Job is an example of seeing a life from the top-down. In the beginning, job experiences a series of catastrophes that left him scratching his sores on the ash heap, with a wife urging him to curse God and die.

Job never finds out why God chose him for such suffering. He apparently never finds out about Satan’s part in the whole scheme. So in terms of specific answers, he is left in the dark. But by the end of the book, he bows before the Lord and says,

“I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you” (Job 42:2 NLT).

The question might be put this way: Am I willing to believe that God knows what he’s doing in my life when I don’t have a clue?

2. Be Humbled at the Thought of Such a Great God

With the way that we all regularly mess up in life, it is astounding that any of us would be proud. To know who God is in his sovereignty makes pride not only an astounding thing but an unbelievable thing.

Daniel 4 tells the amazing story of a pagan king who learned the truth about God’s sovereignty the hard

way. It happened in the ancient city of Babylon to the most powerful man in the world, king Nebuchadnezzar. One night while he was sleeping in his palace, he dreamed of a vast tree that stretched to the sky. Its branches were large and strong so that all kinds of birds nested in the tree, and all kinds of animals found shade beneath the limbs. Suddenly the tree was cut down, and its branches were stripped. Its fruit was scattered, and he also dreamed of a man who lost his mind and began to live among the animals.

The king asked Daniel if he could interpret the dream.

“You, O king, are the tree” (Daniel 4:23). Nebuchadnezzar had become so great in his kingdom that people from all the earth flocked to him. That’s the good news. The bad news is that the king would lose his mind and would eat grass like the cattle for seven years until he acknowledged that God was sovereign (v. 25).

One year later, as the king took a walk on the roof of the royal palace, he began to say,

“Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” (v. 30).

Even while the words were on his lips, the voice of God spoke announcing his punishment. In that very moment the mightiest man on earth lost his mind, began to run through the streets of the capitol city, bellowing like a cow. He made his way outside and began to live with the cattle. His hair grew long and his nails were like the claws of a bird.

Seven long years passed while Nebuchadnezzar lived with the beasts of the field. Daniel 4:34 tells what happened next:

“I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.”

Then the king gives us the moral of the story in verse

35: “All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: ‘What have you done?’”

You can search through all 66 books of the Bible and you won’t find a better statement of what God’s sovereignty really means.

Daniel 4:37, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble."

3. Be Encouraged in Evangelism

God's sovereignty gives us encouragement in evangelism because we know that winning the lost is not our job. Our job is to look for opportunities and pray for open doors to share the story of Jesus. It's God's job to lead us, to empower us, to give us those open doors. It is the work of a Sovereign God to convict sinners and create in them a hunger for the Lord. We don't save anyone. We're participants and also spectators of God's grace at work. That takes a ton of pressure off us. Someone said, "Do your best and sleep like a baby."

4. Be Comforted in the Midst of Trials and Afflictions

Five days before Christmas 2004, thieves broke into the Calvary Baptist Church in Lilburn Georgia and took presents the church planned to deliver to orphans. If god is sovereign, why would he let something like that happened? God intends to bring good out of what He allows. Sometimes we see the good that is done, and sometimes we don't. In case of the robbery, the news of the robbery, people began calling from as far away as Canada and California to offer assistance. The church was given approximately ten times more in donations than had been stolen. The church delivered donations of nearly \$24,000 in cash, checks and gift cards to the children's home for Christmas.

Kenneth Dobbs, president of the Georgia Baptist Children's Home said the good the robbery far exceeded anyone's expectations. I don't think the kids on this campus will ever forget this experience." That's the way God works. He is able to bring good out of bad. In this world with so many questions, I is a blessing to know that He who rules the universe rules in my life.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

1. If God is Sovereign, good will ultimately triumph over evil

Earlier on I spoke of two wills in this world. There's what god wants, and there's what Satan wants. Observing what is going on in our world today, and certainly does not seem as though the good that god wants is prevailing. It seems as though the darkness is spreading, but that is only temporary. If god is sovereign, then there is no way that evil will ultimately win.

2. If God is Sovereign, all of his prophetic promises will come to pass

The bible teaches the fact that Jesus Christ will one day come back and rule over this earth. It teaches that the whole world will be set free from the curse of sin. We will live in a new society that is clean and godly. The imperfections and weaknesses of our bodies will be removed and we will know even as we are known.

3. If God is Sovereign, then I can be faithful to god to the end

Our world is a world of temptation, and we often feel the pressure coming from every side. Is it going to be possible for you and for me to continue serving god to the end of our lives. Will we continue to grow in grace? If god is sovereign, then you can. One year from now, you can be a changed person with spiritual insights and strength that you never dreamed possible.

4. If God is Sovereign, there's nothing that he wants me to do that I can't do

If you look at the stories of those people god used in the bible, you find they were often not the most likely to succeed. There's David who went from being a little boy taking care of his father sheep to being the king of Israel. There's Joseph who went from being a slave to being one of the mightiest men in the world. And God can make you whatever he wants you to be.

There are very few things in this world of which we can say that they are a sure a deal, but we can say that when it comes to god-his will and his promises. While others in this world are staggering in the darkness, we can walk in the light that becomes brighter and brighter for the rest of our days.

We say together with Paul, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! To him be the glory forever!”