

How Firm is Your Foundation?



September 27, 2022

Lesson Four

Introduction

So far, we've considered these attributes of God:

- God is solitary
- God is infinite
- God is omniscient
- God is supreme
- God is immutable

Please keep in mind that God is all of these at all times. He is 100% in every attribute.

The Sovereignty of God

"God's sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation, and to be sovereign God must be all-knowing, all-powerful, and absolutely free." (*The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 124).

The freedom God knows is unlimited.

Isaiah 46:8 – 11: (ESV)

"Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose, calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it."

Daniel 4:35: (ESV)

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?"

Ephesians 1:11: (ESV)

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.

God is sovereign. That means he is subject to no one. He never has to go to Plan B. **He is unaffected by anything outside of himself.**

However, the fact that God is sovereign immediately causes us to have some questions:

- **Why then did God allow sin, evil, pain and death? If God is sovereign, he could have prevented these things from ever entering our earth.**

"The Christian admits that he does not have the final answer to the riddle of permitted evil." (Tozer p.126)

This we can know:

- In his infinite wisdom God has permitted evil to exist, but it is temporary and limited in scope.



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- God sovereignly decided that man should be free to exercise moral choice. “Man’s will is free because God is sovereign. A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon on His creatures. He would be afraid to do so.” (Tozer, p. 127)

God has no rules or laws to go by; he makes the rules. What he does is right because he does it.

An Illustration:

A great ocean liner leaves NY for England. Its destination is determined and nothing can change it. On board are several scores of passengers. They are not in chains, they can do as they please, move about as they will. But all the while the ship is carrying them steadily onward toward a predetermined port.



“Both freedom and sovereignty are present here and they do not contradict each other.” P.127

God’s keeps a steady course over all the world—over everybody and everything—throughout all history. He is unhindered toward reaching his predetermined purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began. We know enough about his predetermined purpose to give us hope and firm assurance that we will spend eternity with him.

From *God’s Devil* by Erwin Lutzer, p.22

My first premise is that *God has absolute sovereignty in His universe*. That means that even evil is a part of the larger plan of God. Of course, I do not mean to imply that God either does evil or approves of it. However, I do mean that by virtue of His role as Creator and Sustainer of the universe, God is the ultimate (though not the immediate) cause of all that comes to pass.

I am convinced that unless we grasp how the devil fits into God’s scheme of things, we will find it more difficult to stand against his conspiracy against us personally and his influence within our culture. How we perceive our enemy will largely determine how we fight against him.

We can have a proper theology of the devil only if we have a proper theology of God. Only when we stand in awe of God will we find it unnecessary to be in awe of Satan. . . .The greater our God, the smaller our devil.

We must live with the unshakable confidence not only that God will win in the end but that He is actually winning even now, day by day. We do not have to wait until Satan is cast into the lake of fire before we can rejoice that our enemy is crushed.

- If you do not believe that God is sovereign, then you must believe that the world has gone out of his control.
- If you believe that God is sovereign, then you look at everything in your life differently. Nothing happens by chance. No one is in your life by accident.
- If anything can take God by surprise, he is not sovereign and we are in a mess.

This doctrine should be a great comfort to those who know God personally through Jesus Christ. Why?

There is no Plan B with God. Everything is Plan A.

Isaiah 61:1 – 3:

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ²to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all

who mourn, ³and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

Every person has been given by God the freedom to choose whether she will make a right choice or a wrong choice. But no one has the freedom to negotiate the results of the choice she makes. God's sovereign will determine the consequences.

Don't be surprised that the more you get to know God, the more you know that you don't know very much at all.

Here's another issue we face when we proclaim that God is sovereign.

To say that God is sovereign over all would mean that humans have no responsibility. That would mean that whatever people do, good or bad, is not their fault or their credit, because they are like puppets on a string.

Human responsibility is part of God's sovereignty.

- God created angels, some were elected, some were not. God knew which angels would sin and which would not, but in his sovereignty, he gave them the power to make decisions—even bad decisions.
- God sovereignly put Adam in the garden of Eden on a conditional footing. That means that he gave Adam the ability to choose to obey him or not.

Isaiah 45:9: (ESV) Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, "What are you making?" or "Your work has no handles"?

How often have you complained in your spirit about the way you are formed? God has given you the freedom to rebel against him—to be bitter if you choose.

- God placed Israel under a conditional footing.
- **God has placed his elect upon an *unconditional* footing.**

2 Timothy 2:19: (ESV) But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his." And "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

Hebrews 10:14: (ESV) For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Romans 9:18: (ESV) So then he has mercy on whomever he wills and he hardens whomever he wills.

Here's another question raised by God's sovereignty:

To say that God is sovereign means that not everyone can be saved, only those whom God has sovereignly chosen.

If we say that God sent Jesus to die for the sins of the world so that everyone could be saved, then we have to deal with the fact that the majority of the world are dying in sin and are not saved. So that would mean that God has failed.

Psalms 76:10a: (ESV) Surely the wrath of man shall praise you.

Example: Moses was kept from entering the Promised Land simply because of one disobedient act:

Moses said:

Deuteronomy 3:26: (ESV) But the Lord was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me. And the Lord said to me, “Enough from you; do not speak to me of this matter again.”

But when Hezekiah was sick unto death and Isaiah told him he was going to die, he prayed and wept and begged God to spare his life. And God said he would add fifteen years to his life.

Romans 9:14-15: (ESV) What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

“God did not elect any sinner because he foresaw that he would believe, for the simple but sufficient reason that no sinner ever does believe until God gives him faith; just as no man can see until God gives him sight. Sight is God’s gift, seeing is the consequence of my using his gift. So faith is God’s gift, believing is the consequence of my using his gift. If it were true that God had elected certain ones to be saved because in due time they would believe, then that would make believing a meritorious act, and in that event the saved sinner would have ground for boasting, which Scripture emphatically denies.” (A.W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, p. 33)

Ephesians 2:8 - 9: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

Another question:

If we believe that God is sovereign and that he does as he pleases, then what is the purpose of prayer?

“Should someone ask, But what is the use of praying to one whose will is already fixed? We answer, Because he so requires it.” (Pink, p. 50)

Here are some key Scriptures that teach us the purpose of prayer:

1 John 5:14: (ESV) And this is the confidence we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

James 4:3: (ESV) You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

John 16:23b: (ESV) Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

Luke 18:1: (ESV) And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

James 5:15-16: (ESV) And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

“But to affirm that God will not and cannot bring to pass his eternal purpose unless we pray is utterly erroneous, for the same God who has decreed the end has also decreed that his end shall be reached through his appointed means, and one of these is prayer. The God who has determined to grant a blessing also gives a spirit of supplication which first seeks the blessing.” (Pink, p.)

Luther: “Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness.

Why does God want us to pray?

- To offer him praise and honor and worship. When Jesus taught us how to pray, it begins with praise and honor to God. “Our Father, in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”

- Real prayer is an act of worship. That is why it changes us, because we worship God, acknowledging his sovereignty over us.
- God wants us to pray because it is a spiritual blessing for us, it is a means for us to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- Prayer humbles us.
- God has appointed prayer for us to seek from him the things which we need, in accordance with his will. It is the way God has ordained to accomplish his will.
- Prayer is the way and means God has appointed, for the communication of the blessing of his goodness to his people.

We are to pray in accordance with God's will (1 John 5:14). If we don't know what God's will is, but we desire it earnestly, then we pray according to **Romans 8:27**:

And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (ESV)

Far from being a disincentive to pray, God's sovereignty should cause us to pray because he is sovereign. His sovereignty is the foundation of prayer.

The bottom line is we pray because he bids us to pray. Because Jesus prayed. Because Jesus taught us how to pray. These are enough reasons in themselves.

Think about how Jesus prayed in **John 17:5**:

And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. (ESV)

Jesus of course knew that after his death and resurrection he would be glorified by the Father. Yet here he prays that God will do what he knows God will do.

In **John 17:11**: I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of^[a] your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

He prayed that God would keep those who were his, those who were destined to be born again. Of course, he knew that not one of those given to him by the Father would perish, yet he prays for this.

Why pray for anyone's conversion if God has already chosen those who will be saved?

In Acts 16:14 we see that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to understand the gospel. We can pray the same for those we want to be saved.

We can pray 2 Corinthians 4:6: For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Praying for someone to be saved is like preaching. Romans 10:14 says that the lost need a preacher in order to hear and believe. Belief in Christ is a gift that God gives a person, at his discretion, but God has ordained that the means by which a person is saved is through the preaching of people. The preaching is just as predestined as the believing of the gospel. God knows those who are his and he will raise up messengers to win them.

Immortal, Invisible God. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlbnP4_yj18