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# The Sovereignty of God

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Resounding throughout the pages of Scripture is the proclamation that God is King. And the concept most closely associated with His kingship is His sovereignty. To say that God is sovereign is not to say merely that He is stronger than everyone else, although this is true. Rather, to call Him sovereign is to ascribe to Him a rule and authority that transcends space and time, leaving nothing outside its scope. In this lesson, Dr. Lawson examines the nature and extent of God's sovereign rule, showing how a biblical understanding of this topic can change the way we view the progress of history, the events of the present world, and the circumstances of our own lives.

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalm 33:1–22; Psalm 93:1–5; Ephesians 1:3–12

### TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the foundational importance of God's sovereignty
2. To demonstrate the extent of God's sovereignty, which stretches through space and time
3. To instill awe in the face of God's limitless power
4. To show how God's sovereignty ought to provide comfort to those facing adversity

### QUOTATIONS

*There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: "Mine!"*

—Abraham Kuyper

*God's sovereignty has ever appeared to me a great part of his glory. It has often been my delight to approach God, and adore him as a sovereign God.*

—Jonathan Edwards

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. The God Who Reigns

- A. God's sovereignty refers to His right to rule, govern, and preside over all things.
  - i. One who is sovereign is supreme in rank, power, and authority.
  - ii. The Scriptures repeatedly attest to God's matchless rule, especially in the enthronement psalms, which resound with the theme that the Lord reigns.
- B. God's sovereignty communicates His power over His enemies.
  - i. Many Christians live as if the devil is sovereign, fearing the effects of his power and malice in their lives.
  - ii. However, though Satan's power is greater than ours, it is nothing compared to the might of our sovereign Lord.
- C. God's sovereignty establishes His power over our circumstances.
  - i. Our future does not rest in the hands of human beings.
  - ii. Our destiny does not depend upon blind chance.
  - iii. Rather, God is actively involved in our lives, directing them according to His holy purposes.
- D. God's reign is not limited to past or future events; it permeates our present reality.
- E. God's reign is not limited to specific enclaves of Christian influence, but is cosmic in scope.

### II. God's Eternal Purposes

- A. God's sovereign rule extends back to eternity.
- B. Ephesians 1:11 articulates God's eternal sovereignty in salvation, that Christians are "predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will."
  - i. The counsel of God refers to the inter-Trinitarian deliberation that preceded the creation of the universe.
  - ii. The will of God refers to His divine decisions and desires, which encompass and establish each aspect of our lives.
  - iii. The purpose of God refers to His divine determination to carry out His righteous will.
  - iv. God's act of predestination guarantees that His sovereign will is brought about in totality.

### III. Arenas of Divine Sovereignty

- A. God's sovereignty governs creation.
  - i. Everything that exists has God as its source.
  - ii. All things belong to God and exist for His glory.
  - iii. Plants, creatures, and the forces of nature are under God's complete control (Ps. 33:6–9).
- B. God's sovereignty governs history and providence.
  - i. Rather than simply create things and set them in motion, God orders and directs human affairs (Ps. 33:10–11).

- ii. In all circumstances, God is at work for the glory of His name and the good of His people (Rom. 8:28).
- C. God's sovereignty governs salvation.
  - i. God predestines His people for salvation based on His eternal purposes, not His simple foreknowledge of human actions and decisions (Eph. 1:3–7).
  - ii. God's choice of His elect was made by Himself and for His glory.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Because the devil is stronger than we are, Christians are wise to fear him.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. A factual understanding of divine sovereignty must recognize that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. God in His sovereignty ordained that Satan would rebel against Him
  - b. The devil only rarely thwarts God's purposes
  - c. God will become fully sovereign once He defeats Satan
  - d. God's power is vastly superior to Satan's power
3. Because God is sovereign, which of the following statements is false?
  - a. The future ultimately does not rest in human hands.
  - b. God's rule includes the past, present, and future.
  - c. Humans have very little influence over their own lives.
  - d. A Christian's destiny does not depend on blind chance.
4. Before the creation of the world, God chose to save certain individuals according to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. His foreknowledge of those who would respond positively to the gospel
  - b. The kind intention of His will
  - c. Each individual's future works of love
  - d. Their belonging to a faithful church
5. While it is true that God is sovereign over all, He nevertheless makes room where He withholds His influence so as to preserve the free choices of individual humans.
  - a. True
  - b. False

### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can God's absolute sovereignty comfort those who are facing adversity? Is there a situation in your own life where you can find relief by meditating on God's sovereignty?

2. How does God's sovereignty over salvation keep Christians from relying on their own works?
3. Consider various churches that you have visited, or Christians with whom you have spoken. Do you see a correlation between their view of God's sovereignty and the way they speak about Him and live their lives?
4. How would you counsel another Christian who lives in fear of Satan and the forces of evil in this present world? Are there specific passages that would be instructive?