The Sovereign God

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[0:00] And I can't solve every issue with God's sovereignty, and I can't answer every question, but what I will not do is put in front of you a God smaller than the God of the Bible.

He is sovereign. And He works all things after the counsel of His will. And there are times where it is easy to say, look what God has done, and we rejoice in it.
And there are times where we say, God, would you remove this suffering from me? And the answer is, as was given to Paul, I won't remove the suffering, but my grace will be sufficient for you.
Now for most of you in this room, probably, for some, that's a very real issue today. For others of you, that doesn't land real personal yet.
For most of you, I would imagine life is pretty good and not perfect, but fairly simple and easy.
[1:19] I know school can be hard, and thinking about college can be hard, and relationships can be hard. I get that. But for most of you, you're young, and you're strong, and you're healthy.

For most of you, probably, your families are healthy. But a day will come where something is going to invade your life, and you're going to be tempted to say, God, has this escaped your sovereign hand?
God, has this come to me? This pain, this hurt, this weakness? Has this come to me, somehow, apart from your sovereignty?
And I can't answer every question that you may have about it, but this I can tell you. Even your suffering is used on purpose by God for good.
God is sovereign over big and small things. Well, that leads me to a fourth question.
[2:42] If I affirm the Bible's teaching on those three, and if God uses His sovereignty to accomplish His purposes, which the Bible says He does, I think it's a fair follow-up question to say, okay, then what are God's sovereign purposes?

The Bible affirms He uses sovereignty to accomplish His will. What are these sovereign purposes God has? Thankfully, the Bible gives us some help here.
Genesis 50, 20, As for you, what you meant evil against me, God meant for good.
God's sovereign purposes are for the good of His people. Yes, there are schemes and plans of the enemy, and there are schemes and plans of evil people that want your demise.
That's true. But even that, the Bible says, is something God uses for good. His sovereign purposes are for your good.
[3:47] Give you another example. Romans 8, 28. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

What are God's sovereign purposes? Your good. God is sovereignly working in your life for your good.
The question is, what is the best good for your life? If God uses His sovereignty to accomplish His purpose for the good of His people, what is that which is most for your good?
Haggai 1. Just a quick background. In Haggai, the people of God have been in exile in Babylon. They've come back home.
The temple is in shambles. They need to rebuild the temple. In the year 520 B.C., God raises up Haggai to motivate and call on the people to rebuild the temple because the temple.
[5:01] Because the temple is in ruins. They start to work on the temple and they get discouraged and distracted and they quit working. In Haggai 1, here's what God says.

Now therefore, thus says Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. You have sown much but harvested little.
You eat but you never have enough. You drink but you never have your fill. You clothe yourself but you're never warm. And you earn wages but you put into a bag with holes.

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In other words, God says you're doing all this stuff but something's off. You're active, you're working, but something is missing from your life.
And it's so serious. Listen to verse 9 of Haggai 1. You looked and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, here's what God says.
[6:02] I blew it away. Is God sovereign over the wind and the storms and the events of man?

The Bible says absolutely. God says, I blew it away. This wasn't a circumstance. This wasn't a coincidence.
God says, I did this. Why? Here's His answer in Haggai 1. Because of my house that lies in ruins while each of you busies himself with his own house.
Let's put this all together here. The people of God in Haggai 1 were more consumed with their houses and businesses than they were the worship of God.
And because of that, God sovereignly says, You built it and I blew it down. Because they were not focused on putting God first.
[7:22] So what are God's sovereign purposes? Two things. Your good. And what is your greatest good?

His glory. If you want to make sense of the sovereignty of God, God right here is the Bible's central answer to how you and to me as followers of God ought to understand this.
Yes, God is in the heavens. He does as He pleases. Yes, He's sovereign over weather and big things and small things and the hearts of men. Yes, He's sovereign over our own purposes.
He decides what to do according to perfect wisdom. But when the question comes, But what are the purposes of God to which He uses His sovereignty?
Here's the Bible's answer. It's for your greatest good. And your greatest good is to live for His glory.
And if you take one thing away from this message on the sovereignty of God, I'm begging you, please take that away from what the Bible says.
[8:34] That God is using this day His sovereignty for His people, for their good. And your greatest good is to live for His glory.

Which brings up, if we're being honest, I think a fifth question that deserves to be asked. Does God's sovereignty eliminate your responsibility or accountability?
Does God's sovereignty eliminate your responsibility or accountability? It's a fair question, isn't it? If God is sovereign, if He has right and authority and power to do all that He wants, and He works all things according to the counsel of His will, and His will is according to that which is perfectly wise, does that eliminate my responsibility for the decisions I make, the choices I make, the way that I live?
Here's the Bible's answer. I'll give you just a few. Luke 23, 34, on the cross, Jesus said, Father, forgive them.
These are the very people who were executing Him. The very people who were mocking Him. The very people who were taunting Him. The very people who were cursing Him.
[10:05] The very people who were spitting upon Him. He says to them, He prays for their forgiveness. And innocent people don't need to be forgiven.

They were held accountable before God. Acts 2, 23. Here's the message. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.
God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. And then in the same chapter in verse 36, Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.
So if I were to ask you this morning, students, Was Jesus crucified according to the plan and foreknowledge of God?
What's your answer? Yes. How do you know? Acts 2, 23 specifically says that. If I were to ask you, Was Jesus crucified by the hands of sinful men?
[11:21] What's your answer? Yes. Yes. Yes. Can you chapter and verse it? Yes. Acts 2, 36. He was crucified according to the plan and foreknowledge of God, and He was crucified at the hands of sinful disobedient men.

Is God sovereign over the cross? He is. Are the people making those choices and decisions and actions to rebel against the God of the universe and to reject His Messiah and put Him to death, held accountable for their choices?

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Absolutely they are. Acts 17, 30 and 31 says, Do you ever maybe have a friend at school, and you want to share the gospel with them, but you kind of think, I don't know, I mean, do I really have the right to call them to repent?
Have you ever gone on a mission trip, out of state or out of the country, and you have this kind of hesitancy, and you think, I don't know, I'm in a different state, I'm in a different nation, I'm in a different culture, do I really have the right to tell them to abandon their beliefs and to call on the name of Jesus?
I give you a chapter and verse to help you with that one. It's Acts 17, 30 and 31. God has commanded all people everywhere to repent.
[13:25] Your friend at school, your neighbor, your cousin, your coach, the person on the mission trip that you met, the person beside you on the airplane, the family that lives 10,000 miles away, God has commanded people everywhere to repent.

What right, what authority do you have to tell people to believe the gospel and repent in Christ? Here it is. The God in the heavens who rules over all things has given you the authority on His behalf to command people everywhere to repent.
And when you say, but this sounds confusing, Jesus died according to the plan of God, and He also died at the hands of sinful men, how do I reconcile that?
How do I fit that all together? You can't improve on the way that a pastor from many years ago named Charles Spurgeon answered that.
He was asked, how do you reconcile the truths of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility? His answer, I wouldn't try.
[14:56] I never reconcile friends. These two truths line up and run side by side.

Is God sovereign? You bet He is. Are we accountable for our choices and responsible for the way that we live? Absolutely. God's sovereignty upholds His authority while retaining our responsibility for our actions.
And so on the authority of Acts 17, I want to call on every person in this room this morning to repent and make sure that you're trusting in Christ.
Christ. To be here, you expressed a belief in God, a relationship with Christ, and you've had to demonstrate your commitment and faithfulness to the church.
But it's possible you did those things and have never truly given your life to Jesus. It's possible that you appreciate your church and enjoy your youth ministry and are thankful for your youth pastor and love your friends, but may have never truly repented of your sin and turned to Christ for salvation.
[16:31] And if that's true, I want to call you even this morning to repent of your sin and trust in Jesus Christ.

There is nothing more important in your life or eternity than to make sure that you truly belong to Jesus. Well, let's get more personal as we bring this to an end.
Question six, what does God's sovereignty mean to me? If you believe what the Bible says, you affirm what the Bible teaches, what does this mean to me? Number one, we need to continually orient our lives around God to make sense of this world.
We need to continually orient our lives around God to make sense of this world. Asaph in Psalm 73 was upset with God, frustrated with God.
He says in Psalm 73 verse 17, until I went into the sanctuary of God. There was something about coming for worship that helped him to understand who God really is.
[17:51] Number two, we have to remember that God is accomplishing things that we cannot see even when what we do see seems to not make sense.

We have to remember that God is accomplishing things that we cannot see even when what we do see seems to not make sense.
If you want to read about that, read Habakkuk 1. Your youth pastor can help you with the context and background. Habakkuk 1 is very instructive here.
Habakkuk says, God, you're not doing anything. You're silent. You're deaf. You're distant. You're weak. You're not doing anything.
And God says, that's not true. I am doing something. And he says, you are? And God says, yes. And he says, well, what are you doing? And God says, I'm raising up the Chaldeans and they're going to come and they're going to destroy this area and bring the people to its knees.

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[19:10] And Habakkuk says, God, you can't do that. For Habakkuk, he struggled because he thought God was weak or passive. And then he struggled because he said, God, you can't do what you said you're going to do.

And God basically says, this is my paraphrase, you want to bet? Then he tells him exactly what he's going to do. We have to remember that God is accomplishing things that we cannot see.
even when what we do see seems to not make sense. God is working whether I see it or not and whether I understand it or not. A final question.
Why is God's sovereignty and encouragement to me? I've tried to give you quick Bible answers here to these six questions. The Bible affirms of who God is.
I want to end with this one. Why is this an encouragement to me? Number one, because it means God has a purpose and a plan.
[20:18] It means God has a purpose and a plan. God's sovereignty is not random. It's not arbitrary. His purpose is to accomplish His will.

His plan is how He will see to it that it's done. God knows what I do not know. God knows what I do not know. A second reason this is an encouragement to us is because God knows what I do not know and God sees what I do not see.
Does God ever do things that we don't fully understand? Are there times where we say, God, why are you doing this? God, why are you allowing this?
God, why don't you take care of this? God, why don't you change this? And there are times we say, this just doesn't make sense to me. God, life would seem so much better if you would just do this.
And, let's be honest, sometimes our struggle is not a question of God, are you powerful enough to do this? We know that He is. Our struggle is, God, I believe you're powerful to do this.
[21:26] Then why don't you? And in those moments of doubt or question or confusion, remind yourself of this.

God knows what I don't know and God sees what I don't see. Isaiah 55, 8 and 9, My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Let me give you a third reason this is an encouragement.
Because it means in the end, evil will be destroyed, righteousness will prevail, and all things will exist for the good of His people and the glory of His name.
of His name. It's an encouragement because it means in the end, evil will be destroyed, righteousness will prevail, and all things will exist for the good of His people and the glory of His name.
[22:45] Habakkuk 2, 14, Romans 5, 1-5 speaks to that. We sang of it just a moment ago. Though the wrong seems off so strong, God is the ruler yet.

In the end, it will all be made right. God is powerful enough to bring all things to their appointed end. Isaiah 46, 10, I am the Lord declaring the end from the beginning.
Last thing, we'll close with this. How do I live in light of God's sovereignty?
We've taken these questions, we've tried to understand the Bible's answer. We've got to go forth from this place and be football players and cheerleaders and band members and singers and actors and actresses and students.
We've got to go forth from this place and do chores and part-time jobs and go to church. We've got to live our lives. We've got to leave camp and live our lives.
[24:09] How do I live in light of what the Bible says of our sovereign God? Number one, live in peace knowing our God is sovereign.

He's in charge. Live in the peace of that. Number two, live in humility remembering He is God and you're not.
Number three, live in worship knowing that He is good and working for your good.
Number four, live in confidence knowing that in the end all things will be made right.
Is there mystery with the providence and sovereignty of God? Yes. Yes. Is the full understanding of it beyond our full comprehension?
[25:23] Yes. but is it a glorious doctrine that allows us to live in peace and humility with confidence in every way?

In every way. Lord, we thank You for Your Word. These are big truths that we have considered early on this Wednesday morning.

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and while I do pray that our students here would understand and have grown in their knowledge of who You are, while I do pray that there is a greater degree of comprehension of this doctrine, Lord, I also pray there is a sense in which we just look to You and say, God, You are greater than we could ever explain.
More worthy than we could ever understand. More glorious than we could ever put words to.
Your sovereignty, God, we affirm, speaks of Your authority and Your right and Your power and to that we tremble but You've told us You use Your power for our good and with that we draw near and You've told us that our greatest good is to live for Your glory and with that we worship.
[27:18] May we even now respond as such in Christ's name. Amen.

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