

The Sovereignty of God

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Well Good Afternoon to all of you again! Greetings to those that will be watching this later via some electronic media!

We used to have a saying in the Church years ago. We used it quite a bit and got a little bit shop-worn. We used to say that "God's on His throne."

The way we meant that, of course, was in the context of what was happening in the Church at the time. We had one doctrine after another being thrown out. It was worrying all of us. We had some teachings being advanced that were a little bit creepy, if I can put it that way. And we just thought that all of our belief system, our whole foundation was being attacked from basically the leadership of the Church.

But we fell back on that saying—"God is on His throne." We thought that kind of covered all of our woes; take care of all the things that we were trying to work through at that particular time. Basically, we didn't want to get bumped out of our comfort zone. So we used that saying all the time, "God is on His throne."

And that concept, in and of itself, it certainly wasn't wrong. That's a true statement. God is on His throne. But we were using that as sort of a spiritual relief valve because of the things that were going on, because of the anguish that we were going through, the things that were happening in the Church.

But in reality and looking back, we can kind of pull that string backwards and we can see that God was on His throne. God was working things out. If we're looking for them, we can see the positive and the negative things as a result even with the scattering of the Brethren. There's been positive things with that.

What our problem was and what it always is humanly, we always expect things to work out differently. We never expect them to happen the way they do. We're kind of in the same position, our human nature's in the same position as the disciples of Christ. You know when things weren't going a certain way, the disciples wanted to ask Christ if they should call down lightning and just strike everybody! Strike everything, burn down villages too, do all kinds of things!

And we kind of want to do that too, but it just doesn't work that way. It hardly ever works that way. God has a timetable. God has a plan. As someone said one time that "Man plans," which we do all the time, "and God laughs." I think there's a proverb to that effect. I never looked it up.

But God can laugh because He is on His throne. And He is in control of everything. That's the title of the topic that I'm going to use today: *The Sovereignty of God*.

Some of the meanings of *sovereignty*—we call ourselves in the U.S.—we call ourselves a sovereign nation. We want to be independent of other nations. We don't want anybody interfering with us in any way. We don't like anyone pushing their politics or their policies or their ideologies on us. We have a big military to prevent that from happening. We just don't want anybody to mess with us at all.

I remember back in the sixties. You know we're pretty territorial and we were actually doing flyovers then of Russia back in the sixties. I don't know if anybody—nah, there's nobody here old enough to remember that, is there? (I'm being silly. I'm being silly, of course. My wife says I'm really good at that.) But anyhow, I remember one time we were doing flyovers in the SR 71 Blackbird. (We saw one of those one time at the Feast in Tucson. We went to the Air Museum there and saw one of them. It was quite an impressive thing.) Anyhow they fly really high. And we were doing flyovers over Russia and Russia didn't like that. They considered themselves a sovereign nation too. And they shot Gary Powers down—if you remember that—held him prisoner for a number of years.

But what do we mean by God's Sovereignty?

I don't know whether you've ever been to—if you're like me, like most of us these days, we've got about a thousand websites that we go to—sometimes on a regular basis, sometimes not, but anyhow, there's a website called theopedia.com. I don't know if you've ever used that or not—theopedia.com. Anyhow, this is what they say about the sovereignty of God. And I'll just quote them because their words are actually better than mine, so. It says:

The **Sovereignty of God** is the biblical teaching that all things are under God's rule and control, and that nothing happens without His direction or permission.

We know that.

God works not just some things, but all things according to the counsel of His own will.

And he quotes Ephesians 1 verse 11. It goes on and says:

His purposes are all inclusive and never thwarted;

And he references Isaiah 46 verse 11.

... nothing takes Him by surprise. The sovereignty of God is not merely that God has the power and right to govern all things, but that He does so always and without exception. In other words, God is not merely sovereign *de jure* ...

In other words: *in principle*.

... but sovereign *de facto*.

In practice—He's there on His throne all the time.

And there's another quote from that same source. And this one goes, and I'm quoting:

"What do we mean by [the sovereignty of God]? We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the god-hood of God. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that God is God. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the Most High, doing according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay His hand or say unto Him, ["What have You done?"]

And this author—this actually comes from a book—this author cites Daniel 4 verse 35. I just included that. I'll read that and this is from the NIV.

Daniel 4:35. 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?" (NIV)

Continuing the quote from the author:

"To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in Heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsel, thwart His purpose, or resist His will."

And then he cites Psalm 115 verse 3, and this is from the New King James, where it says:

Psalm 115:3. But our God *is* in heaven; he does whatever He pleases. (NKJ)

Continuing the quote:

"To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is "The Governor among the nations"

And he cites Psalm 22 verse 28 from the Authorized Version.

Psalm 22:28. For the kingdom is the LORD's [or the Eternal's]: and he is the governor among the nations. (KJV)

Continuing the quote:

... [He sets up] kingdoms, [overthrows] empires, and [determines] the course of dynasties as [pleases] Him best. To say that God is Sovereign

is to declare that He is the "Only [Ruler], the King of kings, and Lord of lords"."

And he cites 1 Timothy 6 verse 15. And this is from the New Living Translation.

1 Timothy 6:15. For at [just] the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of [all] kings and Lord of [all] lords. (NLT)

And this author says:

"Such is the God of the Bible."

And the name of that book, oddly enough, is called The Sovereignty of God.

But we know all that. We know that God is sovereign. We know that He's the Creator of all things, having done that through the One who became our Savior. He's on His throne; He's in control. But once in a while I think we kind of lose sight of that. We kind of get caught up in the outlook and the perspective of the world.

And this is a very huge topic so I'll only try to touch on a couple of areas here. And the First One is going to be:

God is sovereign over the unconverted.

And the Second one is very simply:

God is sovereign over the converted.

And in regard to these, again what I'm really referring to is the perspective that we have. In other words, how we see things. Do we see things from God's perspective that He is in control? Or do we see things from the world's perspective that it's just kind of a random chance? Everything's a random chance.

So what do we mean by God being sovereign over the unconverted? And I'm talking about the peoples of the nations of the world at large. What are their— this is a rhetorical question— Actually when I first gave this, this was in-house one and we were able to kind of have an open kind of interactive thing.

But I asked the question, "What is our most common concept of God?" Well, to answer that question is that God is love, 1 John. Right? That's our common concept of God. And we might wonder then if we use human logic, we might wonder "Well, if God is love, how come we have all the misery that we see in the world today?" Well, the religionists look at God strictly in that single, that one dimension that God is love. But God is multi-dimensional. That's only one aspect of God.

God says that He knows the hairs on our head, every one of them! Well, most of us have hair. He knows all the hair on our heads. He knows every sparrow that falls to the ground. And you know we can extrapolate from that every living thing—everything that has life, right down to the DNA!

I have a book in my library called The Signatures in the Cell. I haven't read that yet. It's kind of a heavy book. I need the time to sit down and do that, but the whole premise of the book is that there's intelligent design right down to the cell, right down to the DNA of everything, every living thing. And God is aware of all of that. He knows all of that—all that detail!

So we know that God is holy. He's righteous in His judgment, His justice, everything that He does. He sets in motion immutable laws—you know those physical laws, those spiritual laws.

Mr. Armstrong used to say that all the time that God has laws, immutable laws. If we break those laws, we're going to pay a penalty. Man doesn't believe that in general. Sometimes I think we kind of lose sight of that too. But he was absolutely right on that.

And again we know from Genesis to Revelation the Bible talks about God's sovereignty. So let's just look at some Scriptures. Kind of get a handle on this and maybe recalibrate our thinking and get God's perspective on this.

The Psalms are absolutely loaded—Ryan used those Psalms there. (I'm not sure where the—I'll risk hurting his feelings a little bit. But that was a lazy song search. You know one page after the other! Ha-ha, I'm just kidding here. He's laughing so maybe I got away with it.) But the Psalms, as you know, even those Psalms we sang—every one of them—"Praise God, Praise God's rulership, His Lordship, His Kingship, His monarchy, everything!"

Let's go to Psalm 33. Actually, I'm going to read Psalm 33 verses 1 through 22. This is from the Harper Collins Translation, where it says:

Psalm 33:1. Rejoice in the LORD [or the Eternal, if you prefer], you righteous ones! Praise from the upright is beautiful. 2) Praise the [Eternal] with the lyre; make music to Him with a ten stringed harp. 3) Sing a new song to Him: play skillfully on the strings with a joyful shout. (HCT)

We should all recognize that as one of our hymns.

Verse 4:

Psalm 33:4. For the word of the [Eternal] *is* right, and all of His work *is* trustworthy. 5) He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the [Eternal's] unfailing love. (HCT)

You know we can misread that sometime. If we only see one dimension of a love, we can misread that, misunderstand that.

Verse 6:

Psalm 33:6. The heavens were made by the word of the [Eternal] (HCT)

Of course, we know that the *word* or *breath* are just symbolic of His creative will. And literally it's the prior cause of all that is. He just spoke and it was done!

Psalm 33:6b. and all the stars by the breath of His mouth. (HCT)

Finishing verse 6. Verse 7:

Psalm 33:7. He gathers the waters of the sea into a heap; He puts the depths into storehouses. 8) Let the whole earth tremble before the [Eternal]; and let the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. 9) For He spoke, and it came into being; (HCT)

Points right back to Genesis.

Psalm 33:9b. He commanded and it came into existence. (HCT)

And maybe even further—we don't know. That's the only record we have is beginning in Genesis. It could have been even further.

Verse 10:

Psalm 33:10. The [Eternal] frustrates the counsel of the nations; He thwarts the plans of the peoples. 11) The counsel of the [Eternal] stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation. (HCT)

God has a plan. Mr. Armstrong used to talk about that all the time. God does have a plan. That hasn't changed. Nothing has changed.

Verse 12:

Psalm 33:12. Happy *is* the nation whose God *is* the [Eternal], the people He has chosen to be His own possession. 13) The [Eternal] looks down from heaven; He observes everyone. 14) He gazes on all the inhabitants of the earth from His dwelling place. 15) He alone crafts their hearts; He considers all their works. 16) A king *is* not saved by a large army; a warrior will not be delivered by great strength. 17) The horse *is* a false hope for safety; (HCT)

But we put a lot of hope in our military—a lot of trust. How many thousands of troops do we have spread around the world now? About 180—about 90 some thousand in each Iraq and Afghanistan! No safety in that. It's not going to solve anything. It's not going to cure anything.

But to finish verse 17:

Psalm 33:17b. it provides no escape by its great power. (HCT)

18:

Psalm 33:18: Now the eye of the [Eternal] *is* on those who fear Him, those who depend on His faithful love, 19) to deliver them from death, and to keep them alive in famine. 20) We wait for the [Eternal]; He *is* our help and shield. 21) For our hearts rejoice in Him, because we trust in His holy name. 22) May your faithful love rest on us, [Eternal], for we put our hope in you. (HCT)

Doesn't give any author for that at least in my New King James, but the title it gives is "The Sovereignty of the LORD in Creation and History." Because God has always been there; He's always been in control of it.

One commentator stated that the sovereignty of God is the heart and core of the entire Bible and especially emphasized in the Psalms. He further states and I'll just quote him:

The Psalms are the expression of the daily experience of a child of God. And then we find the believer's sorrows and joys, his fears and comfort, his desires and prayers. In them we find the proper emphasis on the Christian life.

And certainly we have our focus, if we're looking at things like God does, we will have that correct focus. And it will govern our lives.

The emphasis is obvious too. God is the sovereign God. The Christian finds his comfort in that fact. He not only believes it to be true, but it's the heart and soul of his faith.

We're to worship God with all of our heart, with all of our mind, with all of our soul, with all of our strength, everything! We can only do that, actually, do that correctly if we recognize God is the most sovereign, worthy of the worship.

Anyhow he put that very well and our focus when we read the Psalms should be that! We should look at see those things because it's right up front there in all the Psalms.

Let's go to another Psalm that has to do with God's judgment and justice. It's over in Psalm 75. Psalm 75 verses 1 through 10 of the New Kings James.

Psalm 75:1. We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare *that* Your name is near. 2) "When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. (NKJ)

In other words, God won't fail to judge, but will do it according to His timetable. And that's something that we kind of lose sight of in our day to day lives—God's timetable. We'll talk more about that later.

Verse 3:

Psalm 75:3. The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved; I set up its pillars firmly. Selah. (NKJ)

Pillars here is actually just kind of a symbol for that which stabilizes the whole world order because if Satan had his way, we'd live in absolute chaos. We probably wouldn't even have a world that exists. He would destroy everything if he could. He could do that if God let him do that.

James is doing a series on Job, which is very interesting. And he's going to point out some of the things that, hopefully, I'll point out here.

Verse 4:

Psalm 75:4. 'I said to the boastful, 'Do not deal boastfully,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up the horn. (NKJ)

Now that *horn* here actually is a symbol of power and strength. And, as we'll see later on, this could be a reference to the nations. This could be a reference to manmade power and authority.

It continues here in verse 4.

Psalm 75:5. Do not lift up your horn on high; do *not* speak with a stiff neck.'" (KJV)

Pride, arrogance, and stubbornness—all those human carnal things! We don't see any of that at all these days! Do we?

Psalm 75:6. For exaltation *comes* neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. 7) But God *is* the Judge: he puts down one, and exalts another. 8) For in the hand of the [Eternal] *there is* a cup, and the wine is red; it is fully mixed, and He pours it out; surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth drain *and* drink down. (KJV)

Little bit of a reference there to Revelation, right? Of course, the cup there is talking about the—it's a reference to the morally wicked it's talking about here and the cup they're going to drink is the cup of God's wrath because He's going to execute His righteous judgment at the very end.

And the fact is that those powers and authority that think they have so much power now are not going to have any choice. They're going to drink that cup of wrath from God. Nothing they can do about it.

Verse 9:

Psalm 75:9. But I will declare forever, I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. 10) 'All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off, *but* the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.'" (NKJ)

So the Psalms tell us repeatedly that God exerts His power and control over the earth. And that not only includes weather, the elements—

I saw an article in our local paper a while back. And it talked about how vulnerable the United States was in the face of national disasters. We had Katrina a few years ago. We got the oil spill now. We got all kinds of things going on. If you actually look at that, we're kind of powerless in the face of those things—earthquakes, volcanoes going off—things around the world. We really don't have much control over that. There's not much we can do.

You know those things could be a blessing. Oil's a blessing, if it's in the right place! Ha-ha! And you can use it. It's the same with the economy, money, gold, things like that. They're fine in their right place, but you know if they're being misused or destroyed and it comes to the point where it doesn't mean anything, it becomes a curse rather than a blessing. I think in this country now we're seeing some of the curses that I think we can probably look forward to for a time. And once again, God is in control of that.

Man wants to be totally independent of God. He doesn't want to be bound in any way by God. He doesn't want to have God's will exerted on him. He doesn't want to recognize the sovereignty of God at all. He strives—we even go to war to preserve our own power, our own authority, but God said that He's the One that gives it to whoever He pleases.

You know we have a classic example in the Bible of a world-ruling empire. And that's over in Daniel chapter 4. There's a classic example that we have. And I'm actually going to read Daniel 4 verses 1 through 37 from the New King James. Daniel 4:1:

Daniel 4:1. Nebuchadnezzar the king, To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. 2) I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. 3) How great *are* His signs, and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion *is* from generation to generation. (NKJ)

He's not really flattering God here. He's not doing that at all as we can see as we go down further here.

Verse 4:

Daniel 4:4. I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. 5) I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6) Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise *men* of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7) Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation. 8) But at last Daniel came before me (his name *is*

Beltshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him *is* the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream before him, *saying*: 9) "Beltshazzar, chief of the magicians [what he called him], because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God *is* in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation. 10) "These *were* the visions of my head *while* on my bed: "I was looking, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. 11) The tree grew and became strong; its height reached to the heavens, and it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. (NKJ)

Of course, it's talking about the Babylonian Empire here.

Verse 12:

Daniel 4:12. Its leaves *were* lovely, its fruit abundant, and in it *was* food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, the birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it. 13) "I saw in the visions of my head *while* on my bed, and there was a watcher, (NKJ)

Actually this is an angel, a messenger from God.

Daniel 4:13b. a holy one, coming down from heaven. 14) He cried aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. (NKJ)

God was going to strip the kingdom from him.

Verse 15:

Daniel 4:15. Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, (NKJ)

He left the roots because whenever he recovered from what was going to befall him, his kingdom was still going to be there.

Daniel 4:15b. [and the roots were] *bound* with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and *let* him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. 16) Let his heart be changed from *that of* a man, let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times pass over him. 17) 'This decision *is* by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.' (NKJ)

Verse 18:

Daniel 4:18. "This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Beltshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise *men* of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God *is* in you." 19) Then Daniel, whose

name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. (NKJ)

You know he had maybe a little fear here of the messenger being shot.

Daniel 4:19b. So the king spoke, and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, *may* the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies! 20) The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which *could be seen* by all the earth, 21) whose leaves *were* lovely and its fruit abundant, in which *was* food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home— 22) *it is* you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth. 23) And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, *bound* with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him'; 24) this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High [God is in control!], which has come upon my lord the king: 25) They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. 26) And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump *and* roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules. (NKJ)

He's going to get his kingdom back.

Daniel 4:27. Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by *being* righteous, (NKJ)

Stop doing what you're doing!

Daniel 4:27b. and your iniquities by showing mercy to *the* poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity." 28) All *this* came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. (NKJ)

You know he could have changed.

It's kind of interesting there that no matter what, how many despots, cruel dictators have we seen in the world, we like to say "They're just that way," or "There's nothing we can do about that." But you know, they do have a choice and it actually says that right there. He had a choice. So God didn't take his free will even though God's in control! Some people look at God being in absolute control of everything that men don't have free will. We'll talk about that a little bit farther along here.

Verse 29, it took him a year to think about it.

Daniel 4:29. At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. 30) The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" 31) While the word was *still* in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! 32) And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and [He] gives it to whomever He chooses." 33) That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and [he] ate grass (NKJ)

His hair grew like feathers. He was probably the first bag man.

Verse 34:

Daniel 4:34. And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: for His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom *is* from generation to generation. 35) All the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing; he does according to His will in the army of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" (NKJ)

We quoted that earlier; earlier the author did that.

Daniel 4:36. At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. (NKJ)

And he praised God from that point.

So there's one outstanding example. The greatest empire on the face of the earth brought to its knees by God! But look at all the other examples we have throughout the Bible.

The whole panorama of history, which we can't really see, we get our history with a spin on it. It depends on who wrote it. It depends on what country wrote it. And we know all of that.

But going right back to Adam and Eve, if we look at all the characters in the Bible and how God actually intervened in their lives, how God changed things, how God manipulated, engineers things down through history, because His plan is intact. It's been there from the beginning and it will be there in the end. And

everything has served God's purpose. God's hand has been in everything. And we don't ever want to lose sight of that.

But you know we can right back to Genesis to Adam and Eve. We can see that Satan was right there because he's always in the mix. He's always trying to thwart God's plans in every way that he can and every way that God allows him to do that. Rick talked about that recently in a sermon.

We can come down to the Tower of Babel. Look at Nimrod. If we go back in history and look at all the characters and everything there, you know we have the good, bad, and the ugly. We can get some lessons from all of those and sometimes especially from the ugly. We have the Tower of Babel. We have Nimrod who thought he was the absolute power. He thought he was in control. He was the authority and man decided to do whatever he wanted to do. Kind of like we do today!

Even the technology that we have today, hasn't God let us discover the technology as He has purposed in His mind and in His plan? We don't look at it that way. We think we've achieved all these things.

But everything was confused at the Tower of Babel. At that point, things might have accelerated ahead. That wasn't God's plan. So it wasn't going to happen. And once again Satan was right there.

We can look at the flood, come to the flood. And God worked with Noah and his family, destroyed the rest of the earth. But Satan was right there. All the people that mocked Noah as he was building the ark!

And we come down to Pharaoh. *Pharaoh* means the title "Sovereign of Egypt." That's what *Pharaoh* means. But Satan was right there and God used him. Greatest nation on the earth at that time—greatest empire!

The nation of Israel, repeatedly God intervened, changed things, manipulated things so that they would be where God wanted them to be. They were scattered from time to time because of their sins. And all the other nations—we don't have the history of the other nations. We just have it of Israel, basically. Or we have it in part, in pieces of the other nations, but we don't have the complete history like we do of Israel. We can see all of that and God's hand in all that. So right from the Patriarchs on down, we can see all that. We could develop a whole list of characters, nations. It could go on and actually that could be quite a long Bible study.

But you know over in Numbers, basically in Numbers 22 through 24 there, we have the story of Balak, who enlisted Balaam to curse and cause the Israelites to sin whenever they were coming to their end of the journey in the wilderness and came into his territory. He wanted them destroyed. We can look at that and was God in control? Here we have Balaam, we have Balak, and we had a jackass, all at the right place at the right time to serve God's purpose!

We can come to the New Testament. We have the Pharisees. We have Judas. We have Pilate. We have Herod, Caiaphas the High Priest—the instigator who was actually behind Christ being crucified. We have Barabbas. Christ took his place, his stake at the crucifixion. We have the two thieves on each side. All of those served God's purpose. We have the Roman soldiers that beat him and that crucified him all at the right place at the right time—part of God's plan!

So the point there is:

God is Sovereign over everything and everyone!

Let's go over to Romans 13 and kind of look at the impact this should have on us as God's people. We talked about the unconverted. We talked about the perspective that man has apart from God. He thinks he's in charge. He's thinks he's the authority over everything. But over in Romans 13—

Just thinking back for a minute and Christ's example with Pilate, do you remember where Pilate asked him—he asked Christ, "Well, don't You know that I have the authority, I have the power to release You." And what did Christ tell him? He told him that he didn't have any power or authority at all, except it was given him from above! It served God's purpose. God's hand was in that!

And even with Herod, the same situation over in Luke 13 just as a reference along about verse 31, 32, 33 in there, it talks about the account where the Pharisees were trying to get rid of Christ. And they told Him that Herod was trying to kill Him. And what did Christ tell them? He told them, "You tell that fox," which He called Herod, which is not a flattering term. He called him a sleazy politician, in other words. You tell him that He was going to be crucified and killed where God planned for Him to be crucified and killed. Not where Herod decided to do it!

But again to go back to Romans 13, this whole idea of God's sovereignty, the impact that should have on us, Romans 13 verses 1 through 8. And this is from the New Revised Standard.

Romans 13:1. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. 2) Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3) For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval, 4) for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain; it is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. 5) Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but because of conscience. (NRS)

We know God is in charge!

Verse 6:

Romans 13:6. For the same reason you also pay taxes, (NRS)

We've had folks that don't pay taxes, don't believe in paying taxes.

Romans 13:6b. well, the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. 7) Pay to all what is due them, taxes to whom taxes are due, (NRS)

Christ taught that also. Did he not? Actually do you remember when He was handed a coin and the image on that coin? That was the emperor at that time of Rome. That was Tiberius who was the emperor at the time of Christ. He said, "Pay taxes to that man" or that empire.

Romans 13:7b. revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due. (NRS)

You know we don't really like that discourse from Paul, do we? We don't much like that at all. Again, if we get God's perspective instead of looking at it in our natural human way—which we have a great tendency to do especially in this age and time—we can look back at that Roman Empire there. We can see a decadent, immoral, politically corrupt society. The greatest empire on the earth at that time!

It's not a whole lot different now where we find ourselves. But these words are inspired by God through Paul. And, as much as it pains us, we can look at our nation around today and we need to have a right outlook on it because we can really get wrapped up and tied up actually—mentally and emotionally—sometimes if we forget who's in control, who's working it out, and who's hand is in everything. We have to remember that God doesn't change a thing. He hasn't changed a thing since Babylon. He hasn't changed a thing since Nebuchadnezzar. He hasn't changed a thing since Genesis or anything down through that history we can look at that we just talked briefly about.

So what should our attitude be despite all that we endure and face every day, even the political climate that we don't maybe like too much these days? Verse 8:

Romans 13:8. Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. (NRS)

No wiggle room there really for our human attitudes no matter how much we don't like things!

If we trust God, then He's in control and then He's indeed Sovereign over all the nations and really does set up whomever He chooses to eventually work out His plan. And it may be sooner than we think. We don't need to worry and fret and get all upset over the national and international scene that we see in the world. Sure we should be watching things. Sure we should be praying, but we should be trying to look at things the very best we can. When we can get our human

nature, our human reasoning, and all of that out of the way—sometimes I tell my wife and my ignorance gets in the way. But God is allowing those things to happen at His pace. Again, He has His timetable no matter what we think.

I have to admit that I have to kind of watch my temperament and my attitude about that. My wife and I have a little dispute every time the news comes on because I have a tendency to get a little irate. When I stop and think about it, I realize all this is happening.

I have a cartoon. I know you can't see that at all, but there's—it's an editorial thing. And it kind of speaks to the attitude maybe of everybody. Again, my point being that:

We kind of get caught up in this too.

Anyhow there's a door here and on the door it says "Anger Management." And this guy's got his head stuck out the door and he's obviously a shrink. And his secretary's there. She's looking at an appointment book. And she says, "Can you put in the entire country at 3 o'clock?" That's kind of where we are today!

Again, if we really think about this—and I've had to look at it very hard too because my attitude hasn't been the best—but there's another thing that should actually humble us and help us on a personal level in the context of God's sovereignty. Let's remember what it says over in—and again, we don't need to turn there; we shouldn't need to turn there—over in John 6 verses 44 and 65. "None can come to the Son unless the Father calls them." That's us! Unless He draws them!

We can be turning over to Ephesians because this is brought out in great detail over in the first chapter of Ephesians.

Well, you know I have to look at myself once in a while and kind of wonder why God called me. And I think all of us can kind of, if we reflect on that, we can look back on when we were first called and we could wonder why God would call us, why He would use us for anything. We wonder about that. And actually my wife says she wonders about that more than I do.

Ephesians first chapter. The point I'm trying to make here is:

We need to appreciate the fact that if God has been involved in all the details down through history, He's involved with each and every one of us right now!

We're all part of that plan. We mustn't forget that at anytime.

Ephesians the first chapter, actually I'm going to read verse 1 through 23, New King James. Ephesians 1 verse 1:

Ephesians 1:1. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: 2) Grace to you

and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing (NKJ)

And those things are so much more than the physical blessings that we enjoy.

Ephesians 1:3b. in the heavenly *places* in Christ, (NKJ)

Finishing the verse. Verse 4:

Ephesians 1:4. just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5) having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, (NKJ)

Pretty interesting couple of verses there!

You know *predestination*, we used to teach that actually God just in His plan He just had the idea that He was going to choose a group of people—no particular people—in advance. We kind of used to teach that because I think it was a safe conclusion. And I guess the logic—I don't know for sure—but I think the logic behind that was that we didn't get big heads that we were something real special that God was waiting for historically to come on the scene.

But we have to think about that a little bit. If God knows everything right down to the DNA of everything, past, present, future, if He knows all of that in His supreme intelligence, all the details that He worked out, all the events on the world scene, does it make sense that He was just guessing when He called us? Kind of like on a roulette wheel! That's just my opinion. I'm just throwing it out there. I'm not changing doctrine or developing any doctrine. Okay?

Verse 6—but called us! Offered salvation to us! Verse 6:

Ephesians 1:6. to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. 7) In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (NKJ)

It's by His—the Great Sovereign God's—grace not any of our efforts! And we know that.

Ephesians 1:8. which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9) having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, (NKJ)

It says very plainly there that God has given some understanding that at least some of the scope of His plan of what He's doing. We know that we don't know everything. Sometimes we claim that we know more than we actually know. But at least He's given us some understanding of that.

I've been studying recently in the Book of Ezekiel. And Ezekiel is a very interesting prophecy. He was a very precise prophet. They've actually catalogued and compared dates from his writings and they've correlated that with actual history. So he's very precise.

But, anyhow, repeatedly throughout Ezekiel they talk and when the Israelites were taken captive, they were taken captive by the Assyrians. And Cyrus, God used Cyrus. Remember God said Cyrus was His servant? He used him to haul off Israel. And basically we get the idea that when Israel was taken away captive, that Babylon, other places, the whole nation, they were just taken up kind of taken up like the movies we've seen on the holocaust, where all the Jews were collected taken wholesale everywhere. Well, that isn't actually what happened.

If you read the Book of Ezekiel very closely, what happened was the rulership, the leadership, the priests, the kings, the rulers, the princes, the ruling dynasty, they were the ones that were taken captive because they were the ones that were leading the nation into idolatry, Sabbath breaking, and all those things. But God says repeatedly through that, He said after He's taken them captive and many of them died—most of them died in a lot of cases—"When this is done, then they're going to know that I am the LORD." And you've got to think about that for a minute because if they're dead, how would they know that? Well, it's in the future! And the point being God is writing this indelible lesson through history, through His intervention. And all the events with all the characters, all the people, the ones that we know of and the ones we have the record of in our Bibles, the other ones that we don't have any record of, we can look at secular history and get some of that. But He's bringing all of that together because He has a plan. And He's working it out and it's going to be on His timetable. So that's when they're going to know—when they're resurrected! They're going to know that that God was Sovereign! He was in control of all of that. They're going to learn the same things that we can know and understand at this point—at least in measure. We know God's in charge. We know who's on His throne.

Verse 10:

Ephesians 1:10. that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, (NKJ)

It is on a timetable. It is going to come together at some point.

Ephesians 1:10b. both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. 11) In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, (NKJ)

He's in control of it. He's going to make it happen. It's not our will. It's not anything we can do. He's going to make it happen. It's not even an angelic will. It's in God's will! He's going to use the angels, but it's His alone. He's the One that knows the time when He's actually going to intervene.

Verse 12:

Ephesians 1:12. that we who first trusted in Christ (NKJ)

We just kept Pentecost. "First trusted"—we're the firstfruits! We're the first ones to understand at least part of God's plan.

Ephesians 1:12. that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13) In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, (KJV)

Verse 14, it uses *who* for the holy spirit, but:

Ephesians 1:14. [which] is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. 15) Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16) do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, (NKJ)

And that knowledge is: That God is all ruling. He is absolutely in control. He's unequivocally in control of all things, past, present, and future.

And you know, once again, where it's talking about, where I mentioned in Ezekiel that "they will know" in the future. Well, what's going to happen during the millennium? First you have to have instruction. You have to have the knowledge. Correct? And then you have to have with that knowledge, you're going to repent. You're going to change. And then you're going to be converted. But there's a process in that. And a good deal of that is going to be—I don't know; maybe it's going to be like a college education. I don't know. I have no idea how that's going to work. But we have a part in that. So God's going to use us for that.

But once again, Satan's always in the mix, right? Revelation 12:9, he deceives the whole world! And again, how does he do that? I think—and it's just my own little theory—that Satan exploits our capacity, because our capacity as human beings is very, very limited. I can't have six different outlooks on things. I just can't do it. I either have one or another. And far too many times I just have this human carnal outlook on something rather than have God's. And the only way, if I stay close to God, then I can have God's perspective, God's outlook. And Satan exploits that. He's done that to the nations throughout history! And, of course God has allowed that. And again that's even going to work out in the end! If it doesn't now, it's going to work out during the millennium.

So the point there is that:

If we have God's perspective, we can only say like Christ did, "Not My will, but Your will be done."

Continuing in Ephesians 1 verse 18:

Ephesians 1:18. the eyes of your understanding being enlightened;
(NKJ)

Paul continuing to talk to the Ephesians, here reminding them:

Ephesians 1:18b. that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19) and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20) which He worked in Christ when He raised *Him* from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, (NKJ)

Paul very plainly telling them, "It's going to happen to you too! You're going to be changed or resurrected."

Verse 21:

Ephesians 1:21. far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. (NKJ)

Verse 22:

Ephesians 1:22. And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, 23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (NKJ)

You know you read that first chapter of Ephesians and you just have to say, "Wow! Can anything be any clearer? Can it be any clearer?"

We ought to totally revere and worship that Sovereign God that we have, that has called us, that has given us this promise of inheritance, this promise of eternal life. And He's working out His sure purpose and we have a part in that! Let's not forget that.

We must never for a second doubt that God is in control and that He is Sovereign God over everything! He is controlling everything and sometimes we just need to stop complaining about the things that are going on around us or the circumstances that we may find ourselves in and realize that God is working it all out! He is in control. He is our Sovereign God!