

The Sovereignty of God #1

by Ernest C. Reisinger

Ernest C. Reisinger explores the profound comfort and assurance found in the sovereignty of God as presented in Psalm 93.

Duration: 40:18

Scripture: Psalm 93:1-2, Psalm 93:5, Psalm 119:89, Psalm 119:111

Topics: "Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the symbolic meaning of floods, waters, and waves in relation to power. He emphasizes that these forces are opposite to the power of the Lord, who is mightier than any opposing force. The speaker presents two viewpoints on the voice of floods, one suggesting it represents the voice of nature, which is the voice of God. Regardless of the interpretation, the sermon emphasizes the sovereignty of God over things that humans cannot control. The speaker also references personal experiences and biblical verses to reinforce the belief in God's sovereignty.

Transcript

Mr. Fisher is not the only book salesman. I'm a book salesman too. And my motives are the same as his, to get the truth out to people.

Because of our subject tonight, I've called your attention to this book. I think I did call your attention to it more than once over these seven and a half years. And I know many of you have been blessed by reading it.

There's a little story with this, and I'm sure that maybe I've told you that. When you get old, you ought to have a rule with people. If you've said this before, they put up their fingers.

So you say, okay, I'm sorry about that. Well, I don't want you to do that tonight. I have that rule with some people.

I say, now, if I've told you this before, just put up your finger. That happens to you when you get older. But my brother's first, second church in Long Branch Baptist Church in Canada, the chairman of his deacons, his wife, was a very intelligent, educated lady.

But she was subject to great depressions. Great depressions. In fact, she had to take a lot of medication at times.

And one time, for a very short time, she was institutionalized. My brother gave her this book, and part of her anxiety and part of her depressions was concerned about her family, concerned about the future, and those deep concerns that concern every mother. After she read this book, and God grasped her heart with the truth of the Bible that God is sovereign, she never took any more pills and never needed any more medication and never had those bad, deep depressions.

I recommend it to you, not only to give away, but to read. Well, that's taken up a lot of my preaching time tonight. So I have to ask Sonny to give me 15 more minutes.

I'd like you to turn to Psalm 93 tonight. This was Calvin's favorite psalm. A psalm that sets forth the eternal reign of the Lord.

And I think I'll just read it through first, before we begin, as our beginning. The Lord reigneth. He is clothed with majesty.

The Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself. The world also is established, that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is established of old.

Thou art from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O Lord. The floods have lifted up their voice.

The floods have lifted up their waves. The Lord is mightier than the noise of many waters. Yea, than the might of the waves of the sea.

Thy testimonies, O Lord, are sure. Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, forever. The whole of this psalm will be the foundation of our meditation and consideration tonight.

My subject is the most comforting, encouraging truth in all the Bible. And if it were properly grasped and properly held, it would eliminate fear and doubt and depression and despair. If properly grasped.

Well, what am I talking about? Well, I'm talking about that subject right there. The sovereignty of God. The absolute sovereignty of God.

That is, that God is on a throne. God is reigning. God is in control.

God is in charge of the world. And you see that in the first two verses of the psalm. We'll look at those more carefully in a moment.

Spurgeon said of this psalm, He said, it's a psalm of omnipotent sovereignty. Jehovah, despite all opposition, reigns supreme. Matthew Henry said, and let me give you that quote.

Matthew Henry said about this psalm, It relates both to the kingdom of providence, by which he upholds and governs the world, and especially the kingdom of his grace, by which he secures and sanctifies and preserves the church. The administration of both of these kingdoms is put into the hands of the Messiah. And to him, doubtlessly, the prophet here bears witness.

Well, the God of the Bible is on a throne. And he's reigning from that throne tonight. And if I didn't believe that, I would stop preaching, and I would stop reading the Bible, and I'd turn in my button.

Because the next step, without a God that's sovereign, the next step is atheism, to become an atheist. This doctrine is one that made the reformers strong. It's one that made the reformers steadfast in the

things that they did.

And when we read those great biographies, underneath that great conviction that they had, underneath the great suffering that they had and went through, the Christians before us, underneath is their strong belief that the God of the Bible was a sovereign God, reigning from a throne. And that would be true of all Christians of all times. It is this truth that I believe in all my heart, that will give comfort, hope, encouragement in the darkest hours of your life.

And if you haven't had any dark hours yet, be patient. If those clouds of doubt have not covered your head and mind and heart at times, be patient, they will. This doctrine is not a doctrine of gloom, however, that locks us up into the cogs of fatalism, as some mistakenly suppose.

No, no. It's a doctrine of glory. It's a doctrine of hope.

It's a doctrine of comfort. It's a doctrine of joy. Let me be very clear as to what I mean.

We use these terms so loosely. What do we mean when we say the sovereignty of God? Well, let me give you a human definition, and then let me give you a Bible definition. I hope the human definition has biblical substance.

But let me give you a definition. What do I mean? And throughout this little meditation tonight, when I use this expression, this is what I mean, so we'll be clear on that. I mean a God that can do anything He wants to, anytime He wants to do it, anywhere He wishes to do it, for any purpose for which He wishes to accomplish.

That's sovereignty. And that goes for me, my family, my loved ones, our material possessions. A God that can do anything He wants to, anytime He wants to, any way He wishes to do it, or for any purposes He would like to accomplish.

Oh, if I could lay hold of that all the time in my own heart, if you could lay hold of that biblical teaching of the God of the Bible, truly, truly, truly, it would eliminate depression. It would eliminate fear about the present. It would eliminate the fears you have about your family and your finances and your health, if we could latch on to that.

And it would latch on to us. It's the truth that gripped Job's heart so, even though he had lost his family, he had more deaths than you ever had yet. He had more deaths than his family.

He lost all his possessions and finally his health, but yet it was because of this truth he could say, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. At the bottom of a statement like that is belief and conviction in the truth that the God of heaven and the God that runs the earth is a sovereign God.

That's why the psalmist could say, Be still, be still, and know that I am God. Well, I gave you a human definition that I say I hope had biblical substance, but let me give you a verse of scripture, and I'd like you to turn to it tonight, that I think is the shortest, most concise, succinct definition that I know in the Bible, if I was to only give one verse for a definition. It's found in Romans 11, verse 36.

It says this, For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. I studied at home this week, and I came to this verse, and I had to call Pastor Fisher to ask him to pull down

his Greek testament, because I was interested in three prepositions that are found in this verse.

You notice there are three prepositions there, of, through, to. And I had a commentator make some statements about those prepositions, and I wanted to see that that was right, so I called him and he confirmed the thoughts on that. That little word, the first preposition is ek.

We have, like for the church, it's ekklesia, meaning called out. So the first one means called out of, called out of. The second means, the second, through, means by means of, by means of.

And the last one, to, is eis, and it means unto Him. Now if you put that together, if you put those three prepositions together, what you have is this. All things have their source in God's decrees and purposes out of Him.

Secondly, all things that happen is because of His power that brought it to pass through Him by the means of. And the last preposition, to or into, eis, eis, all that He plans to bring to pass will ultimately bring glory to His name because it moves into Him, of Him, through Him, unto Him. Now that's the Bible definition, so the rest of the evening you'll understand what I mean when I say the sovereignty of God.

That sovereignty, for Him, through Him, to Him, are all things. That, my dear friends, is the God of the Bible. That's the God of the Bible.

May I ask, is that your God? Is that the kind of a concept that you have of God? I must give a word of personal testimony tonight about this subject. It's the biblical truth. It's this biblical truth of the absolute sovereignty of God that I have turned to many times.

Many times I've pillored my head on this great truth. Lord, you know. Lord, you're able.

Lord, it's past my reach. I say there's no sweeter balm to Christ's true shape in time of doubt, in time of trial, in time of affliction. And I didn't say that the afflictions and the trials and the pain is always immediately removed.

That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying when you believe in a God like that, you can wait through Him. You see, because you'll know that the trial, the affliction, you'll know that they're not past your heavenly Father's reach or past His will for your life.

It is when God turns our personal plans, when God turns our personal lives, our little world upside down and sometimes inside out. Ah, then, with no other pillar to lay your questioning mind or your torn emotions or your weeping eyes or your broken heart, with nowhere else to lay your head, there's only one thing to comfort in times like that, for the Christian. And that's the absolute sovereignty of God.

God who is sovereign in creation. God who is sovereign in redemption. God who is sovereign in providence.

A God who is sovereign in time, places, and things. And a God who is sovereign right now, right now. That's the God of the Bible.

And when our lips express those many why's, why this, why that, why that that enter into our mind, when our lips express those why's that enter into our mind, questions with no human answers, where do we go? Where do we go? And believe me, there are many, many, many questions that no human mind has the answer for. Where do we go? Well, I'll tell you where I go. I run to that great truth that God of the Bible is

sovereign.

And I say what Jesus taught me to say. Even so, Father, if it seems good in thy sight. Even so, Father, for it seems good in thy sight.

I suppose why I'm speaking on that subject now is that I believe in the last while I've gone through what I believe is the lowest point of my Christian pilgrimage. You see, preachers don't have a pastor. And preachers' wives, in the real sense of the word, don't have a pastor either.

And this was never meant to be a sermon. I was fleeing to this because the state of my own soul and mind and the dark clouds were over my head. I was fleeing to this psalm this last week.

You know, and my wife had to say to me once in the last while, she says, you really believe in the sovereignty of God. Well, what she was saying, I didn't act like I was believing in the sovereignty of God. But she had to remind me that I believed in the sovereignty of God.

Well, sure I did, right then when she said it. I believed it in my head. I believed it theologically.

But there's a difference between knowing about God, knowing theological things about God, and knowing God in the present experience. And sometimes we need to bring up our experience to catch up with our mind and our theology. So my brother told me about a sociology professor he had in college one time.

He used to do various things in the class. He was a great man. He tried to get them to think.

One of his great motives when he was at Bucknell University was to get the students to think. My brother told me one time he came to class and spent a whole period with 13 reasons why we should eat rats. You know, they're economical, they're very accessible, they're high in protein, and he labored away 13 reasons.

And when he was finished, he says, any questions, any objections? Not a word. And then he asked one boy, do you believe you should eat rats? He says yes, but he never ate any. You see, they were convinced in their head, but not one person in that class ever ate rats because they weren't convinced in their stomach.

They weren't convinced in their stomach. Well, so sometimes with these great and precious Bible truths, we believe them theologically, but not biblically. And by that I don't mean that theology isn't biblical.

But not biblically, because you see, biblical belief always embodies it, it has flesh on it. Some would say it's truth fleshed out and experienced. It's one thing to believe them.

It's another thing to enter into their comfort and their truth and have them grip our whole being, our mind and our emotions and our will. We must not only believe, but we must taste and see that the Lord is good. And your faith and your hope, my faith and my hope, will never exceed, will never exceed our view of God's power and God's greatness.

When my wife reminded me that I believed in the sovereignty of God, I say again, I hadn't forgotten it theologically, but I wasn't entering into that. I wasn't tasting the sweet benefits of that for the particular time. So again this week, I reflected on the sovereignty of God.

And as I say, this message didn't start to be something that was meant to be preached. It began, it began to try to find some encouragement and comfort and consolation for my own soul. I turned to this psalm that Spurgeon calls a psalm of omnipotent sovereignty.

Not only did I read it many times, study it, meditate it on every word, and tried to pray it into my soul. But I'd like to approach it, this subject, by using this whole psalm as a foundation for the subject of the sovereignty of God. And I had hoped to do three things, but I'll only get two of them done, I'm sure of that.

I see the thought. One, I want to say a few words about the meaning of the sovereignty of God that's clearly set forth in this psalm. I want to talk about the message of the sovereignty of God, and I had hoped to talk about the mystery of the sovereignty of God as it relates to sin, as it relates to the scriptures, as it relates to saving faith.

But I'll have to save that for maybe next Sunday, the mystery of it. Because it's not bad when we just talk about the sovereignty of God. We don't have so much trouble.

It's when we start to relate that to the responsibility of man and things that go on in our lives. That's where the rubber hits the road. That's where the water hits the wheel.

And that's not the part I'm dealing with tonight. Maybe next Sunday night. So I want to just do two things tonight, use it to show the meaning, and I'll ask you to keep it in your head.

Take your Bible open and hold it there. The meaning is found in the first two verses. The first two verses.

In these three words. The Lord reigneth. Or if we had some verses, it would only be two words.

Jehovah reigneth. Jehovah reigneth. Now when that truth is applied by the spirit and experience, when that is applied to the heart and to the life and experience, I wouldn't exchange the assurance and comfort for those words, for all the wisdom combined with all the power in the world.

Revealed in the heart, these words, they are a solution to the difficulties and the perplexities with individuals, with families, with nations, with the church and the world. When you believe that God reigns, that conviction, this must carry us. The conviction of that will carry you far above your fears and your cares.

A personal God. A living God. A reigning God.

That does something for you. That does something for you in the dark hours. A reigning God who reigns in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

God, that God is our heavenly Father. And He's the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. You know, there's some questions that we should ask.

And you should ask yourself sometimes. When we get perfunctory in our worship, when our religious routine becomes perfunctory, it would be well to ask, who is this God that I'm trying to serve? Where is He when I need Him most? Where is He when there's so many... in my life? Why do these crises, trials, and afflictions, what do they accomplish? What do they accomplish? How can I hope in the midst of these trials and afflictions and pain and sorrow? Well, my dear, to know that Jehovah reigns will soften that pillow that you put those questions on. One commentator said, he said this is the eternal reign of the Lord.

Well, verse 1 and 2 is a description of our King, both in His office and His kingdom. And I want you to get a picture of this description of Him, both in His office as King and His kingdom. Verse 1. He reigns.

He is great. He is the great chief monarch. He's not an idle spectator of things on earth, sitting off there some time and wound us up and left us go.

No, but He's wise and just and powerfully administering the things that are going on tonight to Him, through Him, unto Him. He's a King that reigns. Secondly, in verse 1, you also see, He's a glorious thing.

It says He's clothed with majesty. That's a glorious King. And then, He's a potent King.

Notice in verse 1 again. The Lord is clothed with strength. A potent King.

That's also in verse 1. But He's also a warlike King. Notice it. He girded Himself.

You see that expression, He girded Himself? What that really means is, He buckled His sword upon His armor for the offense of His enemies and the defense of His kingdom. Well, so much for the King's office. But a word about His kingdom.

We see a little description of His kingdom. Every king has a kingdom. He wouldn't be a king if He didn't have a kingdom.

Well, what about that? What can we learn from this psalm about that? Well, first of all, we learn that it is a universal kingdom. Verse 1. The world. The world.

Not the United States. Not some little isolated spot. The world, it says in verse 1. It's a universal kingdom.

Secondly, it's a fixed, firm, and stable kingdom. You notice that in these words. The world established and it cannot be moved.

That's the kind of kingdom He has. Three, it's an everlasting kingdom. From everlasting to everlasting, thy throne is established of old, for thou art from everlasting.

Verse 2. Is there any wondrous version called it? A psalm of omnipotent sovereignty? In just these two verses. In those two verses alone, we have what one man called a royal proclamation of divine sovereignty. I can see why Calvin said it's his favorite psalm.

Let you understand that a little better. Now, that's not only the only place where this expression that we have in verse 1 is used. If you just look, turn a page or two to Psalm 96, verse 10, you'll see it's used there.

Would it say among the heathen? Would it say this among the heathen? That the Lord reigns. The Lord reigns. Look at it again.

In Psalm 97, verse 1. Psalm 97, verse 1. You have the same thing. The Lord reigneth. What should that produce? Let the earth rejoice.

Let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Look again at chapter 99, verse 1. The Lord reigneth. The what? Let the people tremble.

He smiteth between the cherubim. He sitteth between the cherubim. Let the earth be moved.

Well, that's not the only place. In verse 3 and 4, that I'm not going to say a lot about in the psalm, certainly they're symbolic. And all the best commentators agree that they're symbolic.

They don't all agree what the symbols mean, but they all agree that they're symbolic. And I've studied Spurgeon and Plummer and Carroll and Luther and Hestenberg on these two verses this week, and I'm certainly not part of my subject so much. It comes more in with the mystery of the eternal, and I'm not going to do that tonight.

But let me just say a word about these verses. By taking the conclusion of all these good and competent and capable and respected men, really the conclusion is that the floods, the waters, the waves, they're symbolic. And they're symbolic of power.

And it's a power that has to be opposite of the Lord, because in verse 4 he reminds them that his power is more mighty. And all these men conclude mostly, by taking all of them and putting them together, they conclude that it's symbolic of a great show of power. A great show of power.

Evil power. Now, I won't ask you to turn, but we have those expressions where we have that connected with the floods of ungodly men. The Bible uses the expression, the floods of ungodly men, Psalm 18.4. And in Isaiah chapter 8, verse 7 and 8. And Isaiah chapter 17, verse 12 to 14.

And Jeremiah 46. I was going to turn to those verses, but I won't. But they all set forth to confirm the idea that this symbolic was symbolic of mighty foes of God.

But the point I want to leave you with now is to show the sovereignty of the text is this. And regardless of what you do with the symbols, the sovereignty of the text is this. He is mightier.

Verse 4. He is mightier than the noise of many waters. He is mightier than all the powers against him. Commenting on this, verse 3. Voice of floods and voice.

One commentator leaned to the point that it was the voice of nature. And nature is the voice of God. And the voice of God is the voice of nature.

And what does nature teach us? Well, it teaches us that God is sovereign. Again, whether you take that view or the other view, you wind up with seeing that the God of nature is sovereign. Things that man cannot control, he can't control.

The waters men cannot control. You ought to know that by reading your papers, seeing your TV this week. When those waves put that great big ship in that lady's swimming pool, almost, in the swimming pool up in West Palm.

Well, that was all. They had plenty of sailors. They had plenty of ships.

They had plenty of everything. But they couldn't control the waves. When I was in the war, I had an experience almost as bad as some of my war experiences.

I was in a typhoon off of Okinawa. And I don't know if you've ever been in a typhoon or not, but I'd suggest you try to bypass it if you could. Because that night, the ship beside us went down.

Our mail was lost. We were meant to get mail. We hadn't had mail for months.

We were meant to go to Okinawa to get mail. The mail ship was sunk. It was a terrible thing.

It didn't have fleets. It wasn't just one ship. We had Marines on.

But they had some of the best manpower and intelligence that Annapolis could ever produce. They had all kinds of everything, all the equipment, all the sophisticated equipment for sea and radio and everything they needed. But all that put together couldn't control the waves.

It couldn't control the waves. The noise of the mighty water. And I believe that's what you see in this passage.

I believe it's showing that God is mightier than men. He's mightier than the waves. He's mightier than the mighty waves.

Many waters. That again, that's why the psalm is such a good psalm to set forth the sovereignty of God. I want to say a little bit about the last verse, verse 5. Because here we have the message of God's sovereignty.

And I believe it's two things. A message about belief, believing in his sure testimony. It talks about his sure testimony.

Believing in his sure testimony. And a message about behavior. That's the message of sovereignty as we have it in this verse.

A sure belief in his sure testimony. And a message about behavior. Holy behavior is the rule of his house.

That's what it tells you there. Holy behavior is the rule of his house. Holiness is fitting for his house.

Holiness is suitable for his house. Holiness is the only thing for his house. That's what the message is.

We can paraphrase that verse by saying the royal decrees cannot be changed. He is the Lord and his word is true and to be trusted. There are some things to be believed.

Yes, believed and trusted. A person who trusts in the sovereignty of God should have no trouble with the trustworthiness of his word. One of the things I want to touch on when we deal with the mystery of sovereignty in respect to sin, in respect to the scriptures, in respect to saving faith.

But we should not have trouble if we have a grasp of his sovereignty. We should not have any problem with the trustworthiness of his testimony. That I take to be his word.

Not questioning anything we find written in the Bible. Not a word of one who is sovereign. Not a word of question about one who reigns.

Not a word about the God who is on a throne. The promises of divine scripture can really be trusted. And the priesthood should be obeyed.

God's statue, the verse says, stands firm. They are trustworthy. The reign of God.

The fact that God is in charge. I mean what I said before. Not in charge just a little bit.

I mean a God who does anything he wants to do. A God who does it any time he wants to do it. Anywhere he wants to do it.

For any purpose for which he wants to do it. To accomplish. God on a throne.

God on a throne is a basis for confidence in the holy scripture. God on a throne is a basis for confidence for holy living. It's also the basis of evangelism.

And I won't go into that tonight though I had planned it. Let me just give a brief run down on that whole psalm again. So you get it fixed in your mind.

And then I'll tell you why I want it fixed in your mind. God reigns. That's sovereignty.

His power is self, clothed with strength. The world is established by his strength. That's the meaning of sovereignty.

The meaning of sovereignty. He is the king. And as a king he establishes his kingdom.

And he has a throne. That's the meaning of sovereignty. Opposition is overcome.

Whatever you call verse 3 and 4. Opposition is overcome. He is mightier than the elements. And if it's symbolic of his enemies, he's mightier than his enemies.

That's the meaning. His word is valued, verse 5, and trusted because it's the word of a sovereign. It's a sure word.

Only sovereignty of God can cultivate true holiness. Now this doctrine of the sovereignty of God really has to do with our vision of God. That's what's wrong with me.

That's what's wrong with you. When we let those things overpower us, we lose our vision of God. The God that we believe in.

And we've had that vision. We lose that vision of God. And when we have a right vision of God, it'll always be God on the throne.

Isaiah, in that chapter 6, verse 1, talks about, In the year the king, Isaiah, died, I saw the Lord. Where'd you see him? Sitting upon a throne. Sitting upon a throne.

High and lifted up. And he's praying to the temple. I could go to all those prophets almost and bring forth similar testimonies.

Let me just bring one from the blessed John. A vision he had of God on the Isle of Patmos. There he was.

On the Isle of Patmos for his testimony of Jesus. Certainly suffering. Exiled.

Chapter 4, Revelation, says this. What's the first thing he mentions? Behold a throne. A throne was set in heaven.

And one that sat upon the throne. You see, my dear Christian friends, the purpose of Scripture in revealing a God in the Bible that's sovereign is meant, it's meant to inspire hope and comfort. Yes, the joy in the people of God.

And it's meant to bring lost people to seek God for His mercy and grace. And only a sovereign God can accomplish either. Only a sovereign God can inspire hope and joy and comfort.

Only a sovereign God can grant mercy and grace. And accomplish those two things for which the Scripture is written. Oh, oh how I pray that the Lord would appear in His church in our day.

In His majesty. In His sovereign might saving sinners. Slaying the error that plows us under sometimes.

Vindicating His people. Honoring His name. Oh my dear, it should be a constant, it should be a constant theme of our prayers.

That He would come like that. In manifest majesty. And in sovereign might.

And pray that in the day of the reign of the Lord, there would be a conspicuous, His power, His reign would be conspicuous. His power displayed in His church. And in individual lives.

We should pray, Thy kingdom come. That's why we pray, Thy kingdom come. Well, a hymn writer put it like this.

I've asked Mr. Carnes to sing tonight a special song. I phoned him on the phone this week and asked him if he'd sing a song for me. I don't think he sings enough.

But that's, I did ask him to sing a song tonight. And I want to read you a great song. I wish I could sing it.

Maybe he'll sing this next week. Whatever my God ordains is right. Holy His will abideth.

I will be still wherever He does, whatever He does. And follow where He guideth. He is my God, though dark my road.

He holds me, that I shall not fall. Wherefore to Him, whatever my God ordains is right. He will never deceive me, never will deceive me.

He leads me by the proper path. I know He will not leave me. I take content what He hath sent.

His hand can turn my griefs away. Believe it, friend. His hand can turn my griefs away.

And patiently I wait His day. Whatever my God ordains is right. Though now this cup in drinking may bitter seem to my faint heart, I take it all on shrinking.

My God is true. Each morn anew, sweet comfort shall fill my heart. And pain and sorrow shall depart.

Whatever my God ordains is right. He shall my stand be taken. Here shall my stand be taken.

Though sorrow, need, or death, or pain, I am not forsaken. My Father's care is all around me there. He holds me, that I will not fall.

And so on Him I leave it all. And that's why I bring you this message tonight on the sovereignty of God, because of its controlling benefits, because of its hopeful benefits, because it brings joy to our hearts, even though our problems bring tears to our eyes.

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