

The Sovereignty of God

by Thomas Reade

The sermon explores the sovereignty of God as a source of comfort and guidance for believers amidst life's trials.

Scripture: Psalm 32:8, Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 46:10, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Gods Sovereignty", "Christian Faith"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches about the sovereignty of God, emphasizing the calming assurance of divine guidance in every circumstance for the Christian pilgrim. He highlights the importance of recognizing God's hand in all events of life, from the minor to the greater movements of Providence, leading to thankfulness for mercies and patience under trials. Reade stresses the need for faith, humility, and hope, urging believers to submit their will to God's sovereign will, even in a world of change and trial. He warns against resisting the Spirit and emphasizes the consequences of sin, while pointing to the mercy and intercession of Jesus as a refuge in times of trouble.

Transcript

48. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

"My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." Isaiah 46:10

Nothing is so calming and comforting to the Christian pilgrim, as the assurance of Divine Guidance in every, even the most minute circumstances which befall him. Without this perception of his heavenly Father's care, a thousand intricacies must beset his path. He must be staggered at almost every step. But when he beholds, by faith, the unerring hand of infinite wisdom, wielding the stupendous machine of human events, and causing everything to promote the spiritual good of his people; then he quiets himself as a little child, and can say with cheerful resignation; "Father, not my will, but yours be done." Like the cabin-boy during the storm, he is kept in peace, while all is terror around him; and if asked why? his reply is that of the artless boy, "Because my father is at the helm."

In such a world of change and trial, how inestimable is a calm reliance on the wisdom, power, and love of God. It fully compensates for the lack of temporal ease and wealth. While destitute of this holy frame, riches is poverty, and honor an empty sound. That man is poor indeed, though surrounded with affluence, whose heart is a stranger to the blessings of true religion.

Lord be pleased to impart unto me, your unworthy servant, this spirit of confidence in you. May I see your hand in all the events of life; ordering the bounds of my habitation, and the duration of my earthly pilgrimage. May I recognize your hand in the minor as well as in the greater movements of your Providence. This watching and waiting for the manifestations of your guardian care, will fill me with thankfulness for all my mercies, and make me patient under all my trials. Oh! for more faith, humility, and hope. Pour out of your fullness these heavenly blessings, that my soul may daily ripen for the enjoyment of the Paradise above.

If, without our heavenly Father not even a sparrow can fall to the ground; if the very hairs of our head are all numbered, how composed should we be. We have nothing to fear but sin. While acting faith upon the promises, we have everything to hope for; yes, every thing to enjoy. The reins of universal nature are in the hands of Infinite Love. This vast complex machine is guided by Infinite Wisdom and Power. The Almighty Ruler of the sky cannot be taken by surprise. Nothing unforeseen can happen to cross his purposes or thwart his designs. All worlds are open to his view. All hearts he naked before him. All the busy thoughts of men, with all their multiplied perplexities, ever in restless motion, are to him distinctly known. He knows every motive, the cause of every action. Thoughts deeply buried in the heart, are clearly recognized by his all-searching eye. By him actions are weighed. He tests the spirits. He searches the imaginations, and the heart, that, as the Righteous Judge of all, he may render unto every man according to his work. Nothing is too great for his power, nothing too secret for his omniscience. Hence he could declare, that "Every imagination of the thoughts," remarkable expression; every outline, or sketch, or first formation of the thoughts, is "only evil continually."

And again; "The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I know! I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives." If this Great and Glorious Being be our Father and our Friend, through his own sovereign grace, enabling us to believe in his beloved Son; then our privilege is to rejoice at all times, and in everything to give thanks.

Are we tried? We may be sure that there is a needs-be for it, that it is sent in love, and that the whole process of affliction is under the direction of a loving Father. This assurance, if truly felt in the heart, will cause the soul to fall with childlike acquiescence, into the hand of God. This David felt when he said, under a perplexing choice, "Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, (for his mercies are great,) and let me not fall into the hand of man." It will still the rising murmurs of impatient nature, and mold our will into a conformity to the will of God. Oh! blessed Lord, how much, how very much, do I need this simple, humble, submission of the heart to You.

While journeying heavenward, we are called to the exercise of faith and patience. The children of Israel had much of this lesson to learn in the wilderness. Their history is indeed instructive. "In this way, they traveled at the Lord's command and stopped wherever he told them to. Then they remained where they were as long as the cloud stayed over the Tabernacle. If the cloud remained over the Tabernacle for a long time, the Israelites stayed for a long time, just as the Lord commanded. Sometimes the cloud would stay over the Tabernacle for only a few days, so the people would stay for only a few days. Then at the Lord's command they would break camp. Sometimes the cloud stayed only overnight and moved on the next morning. But day or night, when the cloud lifted, the people broke camp and followed. Whether the cloud stayed above the Tabernacle for two days, a month, or a year, the people of Israel stayed in camp and did not move on. But as soon as it lifted, they broke camp and moved on. So they camped or traveled at the Lord's command, and they did whatever the Lord told them through Moses."

Thus, it is evident that the Israelites were not to exercise their own will. They were to wait for, and to follow the will of God, as manifested to them by the resting and moving of the cloud. This subjugation of our will to the will of God is contrary to our natural independence and hastiness of spirit. We want to be moving, when God would have us rest; and we wish to remain, when he bids us to depart. Truly our heavenly Father has to bear with wayward children.

Though we have not, like the Israelites, a visible token of the divine will respecting our earthly movements; yet we must watch the movements of his Providence, and pray to be directed by his Sovereign Will. How many precious promises are scattered throughout his word to encourage our faith and hope, our patience and reliance, on the divine guidance and care! "I will instruct you, and teach you in the way which you shall go; I will guide you with my eye." "This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain you." "Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you." "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths."

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," were the words of Christ to his Apostles, before he ascended to the throne of his glory. How consoling and encouraging is the assurance that the blessed Redeemer of my soul is the Great Sovereign of the Universe. Without his permission nothing can happen in the vast dominion over which he sways his scepter. To his will every creature must bow, either in willing obedience or in just and endless punishment.

When I survey the earth on which I live, and contemplate the millions of human beings which cover its surface, what an imposing scene presents itself before me. Each, among these millions, is occupied with his own individual concerns, while the Lord of creation watches over the concerns of all his creatures. Each is planning schemes of future happiness, while the Lord may be preparing events for future trials. Each is losing the present opportunity in the future prospect; building for tomorrow, and depriving himself of the benefit of today, when the sentence may have gone forth; "You fool! this night your soul shall be required of you."

Felix thus put off the favored period for seeking repentance; trembling under the terrors of a judgment to come, he said to his intrepid prisoner "Go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you." This convenient season never returned- a season for breaking off his sins by repentance.

It is dangerous to resist the motions of the Spirit. What we feel today, if slighted, may never revisit us more. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." "Because I have called, and you refused, I will mock when your fear comes." The Sovereign Jehovah speaks as a sovereign; "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." He "works all things after the counsel of His Own Will!"

Among the busy tribes of men, a thousand arts are employed to gain their purpose, either for ambition, gain, or pleasure. Hence all the corrupt affections and passions of the depraved heart are brought into continual exercise; spreading misery and confusion, bloodshed and distress, over every part of the habitable globe.

In the midst of all these schemes for aggrandizement, or pleasure, the Almighty Sovereign is forgotten; his will is neglected, his laws are broken, his threatenings are slighted, his mercy is despised, his power is dared by open rebellion, and infidels attack his Majesty and Glory.

In the midst of this universal degeneracy, the Great Sovereign displays his dreadful judgments, by deluging a world of rebels; burning up wicked and polluted cities; pouring plagues of desolating varieties upon a persecuting kingdom; destroying entire nations of vile and abominable offenders; punishing his own professing people with multiplied and varied judgments; chastising individuals in their bodies, properties, and families; permitting wars to devastate, and pestilences to desolate, the regions of the earth. And all this on account of SIN.

These, and a thousand other evils receive their commission from that Almighty Ruler of heaven and earth, whose Power none can withstand, whose Counsel none can defeat, whose Will none can thwart. And yet, rebellious man dares to lift his puny arm against Omnipotence, as if he could command events, and make the future to crown his wishes.

Those who have perused with attention the pages of history, or studied the page of their own experience, must have learned how little human wisdom can depend upon its own foresight, or human power upon its own achievement. The fairest plans are often blasted, when nearest their accomplishment. And many, who, with laboring steps have reached the summit of their expectations, have been hurled from their eminence, just when stretching out the hand to grasp the golden prize. Well may we exclaim with Solomon; "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Haman, in the Book of Esther, affords a striking instance. He erected a gallows- for himself!

"Be still, and know that I am God" is the soothing accent of mercy to the believers in Jesus. If we know God in all his adorable perfections, in the greatness of his power, and in the fullness of his love, as manifested in the gift of his Son, we shall be still, calm, and composed, amid the agitations of a restless world. "For only when you come to judge the earth will people turn from wickedness and do what is right."

Oh! my soul, look now unto your God. Dark, indeed, is the cloud which covers our political horizon, and fearful the storm which is ready to burst upon our favored island. Popery, Infidelity, and Anarchy are forming a bomb-mine which may involve thousands in ruin. Our national sins are great, and so are our national mercies. This aggravates our ingratitude and increases our guilt. The divine bow of wrath is bent, the arrow is on the string, ready to fly in vengeance, and what withholds it? the arm of mercy, the intercession of Jesus.

Oh! my soul, do not forget that your sins form a part of the nation's guilt; sins, as numerous as the stars of heaven. How inconceivable, then, must be the sum of human guilt, when multiplied by millions of men in succeeding generations, all born in sin, all living in iniquity, until renewed by the Spirit of grace? Surely nothing can so strikingly display the forbearance of God. This David felt when he sang- "God is a judge who is perfectly fair. He is angry with the wicked every day."

Lord impart unto me, your very sinful creature, the grace of true repentance. Give me an genuine abhorrence of all sin, and an entire cleaving of my heart to you. Oh! do mercifully withhold our deserved judgments, and pour out upon us a flood of undeserved mercy. For the sake of your beloved Son, hear the supplications of your people, who would now approach your mercy-seat with deep humiliation. Be, O Lord, entreated for our land, and pity your people. We are, indeed, O Lord, a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children who are corrupters. But, oh! pour out upon us a spirit of true repentance, faith, and love. Give not your heritage to reproach. You are righteous, and we are wicked. Your rod is the rod of judgment; but Oh! let it become a scepter of mercy, ruling our hearts by love. Draw all hearts to yourself, subdue every rebellious will. Great, indeed, and frightful is the iniquity which

abounds. Your holy word is blasphemed; your Gospel is rejected; your beloved Son is disowned; and what will the end be? I hear you say; "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Lord! may I and mine be safe under your feathers; shielded by your power; and comforted by your love. Whatever storms may blow upon our land, be you to us "as a little sanctuary," a place of refuge, a tower of strength. Spread your wing over us, until the storm is past. But should it be your will, that any of us should fall under the devouring sword, still may we be safely lodged in your arms; and, like Elijah, be carried from the discords of earth to the harmonies of heaven!

How soothing in this world of woe,

Where tempests rage, and wild winds blow,

To know that He who guides the storm

Is God In Christ- in human form;

All power to Jesus Christ is given,

O'er all on earth, and all in heaven

He can create a storm at will;

Or speak the word- and all is still!

The rolling orbs obey his law

As round the sun their paths they draw;

The little insect of an hour,

Obeys the same Almighty Power.

The stony heart his word can break;

His grace support the poor and meek;

Ah! who can all his wonders tell?

Our Jesus, He does all things well.

My soul! repose beneath the wing

Of Israel's Shepherd, Lord, and King,

No harm can reach you, sheltered there,

While safe beneath the Shepherd's care.

But, should you see th' uplifted rod,

Be still and know that Christ is God

The cloud which guilty sinners dread,
Shall break in blessings on your head.
Yet, should you feel his chastening hand,
Which sweeps across a sinful land,
Still all is sanctified to thee,
If you the friend of Jesus be.
Soon will the mighty Judge descend,
The trumpet sound- and time shall end.
His Wrath, each foe, shall then destroy;
His Love, each saint, receive with joy.

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