

Broomfield



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Our Security

Kingdom Living Part 7

Throughout Scripture the idea of reward has been that which has compelled God's people unto all sorts of sacrifice in and for the kingdom of God. Consider the example of Moses:

Hebrews 11:24-26, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

Truly it is the mercies of God, which someday will be realized when Christ returns, that should motivate and move us.¹

And yet, we must consider some very important questions. How certain are God's mercies? Is their a reward? Though God has promised us a future and a hope, how certain is it?

Hebrews 4:1 speaks of a people longing for the promises of God and yet they fell short. 1 Thessalonians 2:18 tells us of Satan thwarting the spread of the gospel. Time and time again throughout redemptive history we read of apparent set backs and failures when it comes to God's plan.²

It is this question that Paul addresses in Philippians 2:21. Paul has just finished exhorting the Philippians unto kingdom living by prompting them to long for Christ and to endeavor to be holy and pure. He gives them the motivation for this by telling them that we shall be like Christ. We shall see Him face to face. We shall be conformed to His image and thus shall forever be with the Lord! And we shall enter into the joy of our Master.³ This is such an incredible reward. Yet Paul could not end his exhortation to the

¹ Compare Romans 12:1-2

² Compare Job 1-2 and Acts 12:1-2

³ Compare Matthew 25:21

Philippians without assuring them of the certainty of their reward. Our text is that assurance.

Our Security

Philippians 3:21, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, **according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.**”

What an incredible comfort this passage is. Paul is saying that all the trial and difficulty that one goes through in order to know Christ, walk with Christ, and serve Christ will be worth it! Because God's promises are certain! Now as we consider this, we need to begin by familiarizing ourselves with the background of this text.

Paul wrote in light of this background. The Philippians would have received this epistle in light of this background. And to properly understand Paul's exhortation we too must be familiar with this background.

God is King

Psalm 93:1-2, “The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.”

These words were penned as an incredible attack against the notion that a king is worthy to be feared. Truly, the only one who ought to be feared is God — for He alone reigns!

Psalm 99:1-3, “The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved. The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people. Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.”

Our earthly ideas of monarchs and kings and kingdoms flow from God. Every king that has ever existed has ruled as a pale reflection of our Lord. Truly, THE Government of this creation is a monarchy over which God reigns supreme — Paul knew this and so must we!

God is Sovereign

God is a King who has subjected all things to Himself.

Psalm 103:19, “The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.”

Psalm 135:5-6, “For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”

The emphasis in these two passages and throughout Scripture is that as a king, God is sovereign. As King, God rules over all. As King, God does what He pleases! Truly, no one and no thing can stand in His way. By His providence He oversees both the universe and all things in it.⁴ He causes ALL things to work together for good for those who love Him.⁵ From Him and through Him and to Him are ALL

⁴ Compare Ephesians 1:11

⁵ Compare Romans 8:28

things.⁶ From the raising up and deposing of earthly kings to the flight and fall of a sparrow, God is in control of all things.⁷ From the setting of the times and boundaries of the earth's nations to the number of hairs on a man's head, God knows and thus determines ALL things.⁸

Now at the risk of overkill, I want us to consider the enormous testimony contained in Scripture as to God's sovereignty.

1. All of the main characters of Genesis (Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph) God chose according to His gracious purpose unto their positions of blessing.⁹
2. Joseph declared that the wicked treatment that he received at the hands of his brothers had been an essential part of the divine plan to save the people of God. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20).¹⁰
3. Job affirms God's sovereignty over men and all of life in his response to his friends.¹¹
4. During the events leading up to the exodus from Egypt God represented Himself as the one who makes man "dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind."¹² He also informed Moses that He would harden Pharaoh's heart in order that He might have ample opportunity to display His power to deliver Israel.¹³
5. God declared that He would so control the hearts of men that none would desire an Israeli's land when the latter left their property to worship in Jerusalem.¹⁴
6. During the conquest, Moses again represented God as the hardener of kings' hearts.¹⁵
7. On the eve of Canaan's conquest, Moses informed Israel that God had chosen them to be a people for His own possession by an election¹⁶ based not upon Israel's merit but upon God's love and grace.¹⁷
8. During the conquest, the hardness of men's hearts is traced to the Lord's providence.¹⁸
9. During the period in Israel's history when the Judges ruled the land, Samson's lustful infatuation with the Philistine woman of Timnah, "was from the Lord" (Judges 14:4).
10. Eli's wicked sons did not listen to their father's advice, which would have saved them "for the Lord desired to put them to death" (1 Samuel 2:25).
11. During Absalom's rebellion against David, although Ahithophel's counsel to Absalom was militarily superior to Hushai's, Absalom nonetheless decided to follow Hushai's advice "For the Lord had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, in order that the Lord might bring calamity on Absalom" (2

⁶ Compare Romans 11:36 and 1 Corinthians 8:6

⁷ Compare Daniel 4:31-32 and Matthew 10:29

⁸ Compare Acts 17:26 and Matthew 10:30

⁹ Compare Genesis 6:8; 12:1-3; 17:9-21; 21:12-13; 25:23; 45:7-8; and Nehemiah 9:6-7.

¹⁰ Compare also Genesis 45:7-8

¹¹ Compare Job 12:10-25

¹² Compare Exodus 4:11

¹³ Compare Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17; and also Psalm 105:25

¹⁴ Compare Exodus 34:24

¹⁵ Compare Deuteronomy 2:30

¹⁶ Compare Hosea 13:5; Amos 3:2

¹⁷ Compare Deuteronomy 4:37; 7:6-8; 8:18; 9:4-6; 10:15.

¹⁸ Compare Joshua 11:19-20

Samuel 17:14).

12. Rehoboam's failure to heed the people's plea for relief from the yoke of heavy taxation and oppressive labor, which resulted in the division of the United Kingdom, "was a turn of events from the Lord" (1 Kings 12:15).
13. Later in Israel's history King Amaziah did not heed the warning issued to him by Joash, "for it was from God, that He might deliver them into the hand of Joash because they had sought the gods of Edom" (2 Chronicles 25:20). It is passages like these that illustrate the truth "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1).¹⁹
14. The Psalmist declared that the number of a man's days is ordained by God when as yet there is none of them.²⁰ He traces the blessings of salvation to divine election when he sings "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts" (Psalm 65:4). He further exclaims, "our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psalm 115:3).
15. The wise man of Proverbs declared God's sovereign rule over men when he said, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD" (Proverbs 16:1). He further declares "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Proverbs 16:4). Then he states, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). He concludes, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD" (Proverbs 16:33).²¹
16. Isaiah wrote that under God's sovereign governance Assyria would come against Israel because of the latter's transgressions, even though Assyria "does not intend nor does it plan so in its heart" (Isaiah 10:6-7). He further declared that all things happen in accordance with God's eternal and irresistible decree when he wrote "The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, 'Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand'" (Isaiah 14:24).²² "I am the Lord, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these" (Isaiah 45:6b-7).
17. Echoing the same theme, Amos rhetorically queried, "When a calamity comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?" (Amos 3:6).
18. Through Habakkuk God revealed to Judah that He was going to bring the Babylonians into the land to chasten Judah for her sins.²³
19. Daniel confessed God's ultimate and complete sovereignty over this earth.²⁴
20. Perhaps no declaration sums up the attitude of the Old Testament witness to God's awesome sovereignty over men and nations more majestically than this: "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust... All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless... It is He who sits above the vault of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, who makes the judges of the earth meaningless" (Isaiah 40:15, 17, 22, 23)

¹⁹ Compare also Judges 7:22; 9:23; 1 Samuel 18:10-11; 19:9-10; 2 Chronicles 18:20-22; Ezra 1:1-2; 7:27

²⁰ Compare Psalm 31:15; 39:5; 139:16

²¹ Compare similar statements in Proverbs 19:21; 20:24; 21:30-31

²² Compare also Isaiah 14:27; 46:10, 11

²³ Compare Habakkuk 1:5-6

²⁴ Compare Daniel 4:17, 31-32 and 34-35

Now that is just the Old Testament witness. When we turn to the New Testament we discover these things:

1. Immediately after being rejected by certain cities in Galilee, Jesus prayed, “I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight” (Matthew 11:25-26).
2. Christ also said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up” (Matthew 15:13).
3. On another occasion Jesus expressly taught that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him,²⁵ teaches him to come,²⁶ and engifts him with a saving approach to Jesus.²⁷
4. John traced Israel's rejection of Jesus to God's work of blinding and hardening.²⁸
5. Again Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit- fruit that will last” (John 15:16). And in the same vein, on another occasion He said, “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14).
6. Before Pilate Jesus declared, “You could have no authority against Me, except it were given you from above” (John 19:11).
7. Peter declared that the treatment and death of Christ by godless men were in accordance with the “predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23).²⁹
8. The entire church in Jerusalem gladly affirmed God's sovereignty over all of life, and specifically reaffirmed that all that Herod, Pilate, the Roman soldiers, and the Jewish religious leaders had done to Jesus was in accordance with “whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur” (Acts 4:24-28).
9. Three times in the book of Acts Luke explicitly traces the salvation of Gentiles to the election of God.³⁰
10. In Romans 8:28-29 Paul traces all redemptive blessing to God's sovereign foreknowledge and predestination.
11. In Romans 9, Paul addresses Israel's official rejection of their Messiah. In essence Paul argues that God's promises to Israel have not failed because God never promised to save every Israelite; rather, God promised to save the elect (the true) “Israel” within Israel.³¹
12. In another context Paul wrote, “By [God's] doing you are in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:30).
13. In Ephesians 1:3-14, Paul enunciated God's sovereignty over and predestination of men unto adoption as sons.
14. Paul insists still further that “God has chosen [the Christian] from the beginning for salvation” (2 Thessalonians 2:13), and that God saved the Christian “not according to works, but according to His own

²⁵ Compare John 6:44

²⁶ Compare John 6:45

²⁷ Compare John 6:65 also compare John 17:2, 6, 9, 11, 12

²⁸ Compare John 12:37-40. Compare also Isaiah 6:9-10; Mark 4:11-12; Romans 9:18-24; 11:32

²⁹ Compare also Matthew 18:7; 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 17:1; 22:22

³⁰ Compare Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27.

³¹ Compare Romans 9:6

purpose and grace which was granted in Christ Jesus from all eternity” (2 Timothy 1:9).

15. Peter contrasts those who disobey, “unto which disobedience they were appointed,” with those who believe, whose faith he traces to the fact that they are “a chosen generation” (1 Peter 2:8-9).

From all of these passages from both the Old Testament and New Testament I hope you see that God rules over all things. That He “upholds all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3). Indeed, ALL things in this world are according to the predetermined plan of our Sovereign King!

“From” vs. “According to”

Philippians 3:21, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, **according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.**”

Now in light of the context we just considered, do you realize how amazing this passage is? Do you understand the statement that Paul is making here? If a millionaire said that he would give you some money *from* his wealth, he could give you a dollar and you would say, “Thank you.” But if a millionaire said that he would give you *according to* his wealth that would mean he was going to give you as much as he himself owned!

And so it is here. That which God will exert to conform us to Christ will be in *accordance with* the power He someday will exercise to submit all things to Himself. This power is described as available—expressed by the word *working*, effective — expressed by the word *able*, and invincible — expressed by the word *subdue*.³²

And thus, the day is going to come when God will bring to pass His final plan for this world. In that day, the power by which God upholds all things will be exercised unto our conformity to Christ. Neither can Caesar, death, weakness, volition, nor power will be able to stop God’s plan. This is the point of our text. Truly, in Christ OUR GLORIFICATION IS CERTAIN! OUR FUTURE IS SECURE!

Dr. John MacArthur wrote this:

“Paul's point is that if Christ can subject the entire universe to His sovereign control³³, He has the power to transform believers' bodies into His image.”³⁴

Gordon Fee put it this way:

“This passage reminds us that, despite appearances often to the contrary, God is in control, that our salvation is not just for today but forever, that Christ is coming again, and that at His coming we inherit the final glory that belongs to Christ alone- and to those who are his.”³⁵

Our Response

How do you respond to such a truth as this?

³² The classic version of the New American Standard Bible uses the terms *exertion, power, and subject*. “Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, **by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.**”

³³ Compare 1 Corinthians 15:4-7

³⁴ Dr. John MacArthur, Commentary on Philippians, page 263

³⁵ Gordon Fee, NICNT, Philippians, page 384

Thankfully we do not need to guess, for there is an implied exhortation in this verse that I have yet to bring out. It is found in the clear parallel that Paul is drawing between God's grace being worked out in our life³⁶ and that of Christ's.³⁷

In these two passages (Philippians 2 and Philippians 3) there are seven words or phrases that are duplicated. The obvious implication is that as it was with Christ, so it will be with us!

Philippians 2:6-11	Philippians 3:20-21
Form (verses 6, 8)	Conformity (verse 21)
Being υπαρχω huparcho (verse 6)	Is υπαρχω huparcho (verse 20)
Likeness (verse 7)	Change (verse 21)
Humbled (verse 8)	Humble State (verse 21)
Every knee . . . bow (verse 10)	Subject all things (verse 21)
Jesus Christ is Lord (verse 11)	The Lord Jesus Christ (verse 21)
Glory (verse 11)	Body of His Glory (verse 21)

As Christ's future will be, so also will be ours — glorious and unthinkable! But this also implies that as Christ's life was on earth, so also will be ours!

John 15:20, “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”

Do you understand the implication?

To a church struggling with persecution and trial, or an apostle encountering life-threatening difficulties and opposition, the assuring words resound. God's kingdom is being worked out! If God has ordained the greatest to the smallest, then where you are today, what you are doing, the plenty and the want are all a part of God's sovereign plan.

Our glorification also is a part of God's plan!

Just as we profess that what God ordains will come to pass so also we must know that no thing can thwart God's plan for our future — a plan that includes our being conformed to Christ!

In 1 Corinthians 15:29-57, Paul addresses the question of the resurrection of the dead. He begins by admitting that if the dead are not raised, then everything we are doing and stand for is folly.³⁸ However, he then proceeds to defend the doctrine, showing that it is part of God's plan.³⁹ Accordingly, he climaxes with one of the most glorious passages in all of Scripture⁴⁰ in which he says awaiting the end of creation — at the consummation of all things — is a glorified body. In this body, we never again will know sin, sickness, sorrow, or death.

³⁶ Compare Philippians 3:17-20

³⁷ Compare Philippians 2:6-11

³⁸ Compare 1 Corinthians 15:32

³⁹ Compare 1 Corinthians 15:33-49

⁴⁰ Compare 1 Corinthians 15:5-57

1 Corinthians 15:55-57, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now from such heights, Paul brings the argument down to earth with this closing exhortation — an exhortation we would do well to remember — “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast⁴¹, unmoveable⁴², always abounding⁴³ in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

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About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on October 5, 2003. Greg is the preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.

⁴¹ Literally seated εδραιος hedraios

⁴² Literally motionless αμετακινητος ametakinetos

⁴³ Literally carries the idea of exceeding the limits περισσευω perisseuo