

The Sovereignty of God”
Exodus 3:16 – 4:1-9; 19-23
(Preached at Trinity, August 27, 2006)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. It had been 40 years since Moses had lived in Egypt. Moses spent 40 years as a lowly shepherd tending the flock of his father-in-law. It had been largely a quiet time with his family and time alone with his flock. Now God was about to turn his life upside-down. He was about to go from a shepherd of sheep to the ruler of God’s people.
2. Shepherds move around a lot in search of good pastureland for their sheep. He had led his flock to the far side of the desert to Mount Horeb also known as Mount Sinai where Moses would later receive the Ten Commandments.
It was there at Horeb that Moses came upon a burning bush that was not being consumed by the fire. God spoke to Moses from out of the midst of the bush.
 - A. He told Moses that He was not ignorant of the afflictions of His people. God knows and cares about the trials of His people. He knows and cares about you.
Exodus 3:7 – “And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;”
 - B. He told Moses that He had come down to deliver them.
Exodus 3:8 – “And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians”
 - C. He told Moses that he would be the deliverer.
Exodus 3:10 – “Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”
3. Moses, of course, was filled with many doubts and fears. These were all sinful because they were all the result of doubting God.
 - A. God told Moses, “I will be with you.”
Exodus 3:12 – “And he said, Certainly I will be with thee”
 - B. God told Moses that He would teach him what to say
Exodus 4:12 – “Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”
4. The ultimate reason we trust God in all things is because He is God. He is the Great I Am. He is the source of all things and He rules all things.
5. Tonight I want to pause for a moment to look at this text in that light – that God rules all things. The independent rule of God is also known as His sovereignty. God rules and overrules all things. This passage illustrates this clearly and will set the stage for what is to come.
6. This passage contains many of the things some find it hard to accept concerning the sovereignty of God.

- I. God is sovereign over all of nature
- A. God ordered the existence of all things, spiritual and material and then rules over it
1. All of nature has a certain defined order – we call it the laws of nature
 - a. There have always been four seasons: S, W, S, F
 - b. The moon has always orbited around the earth
 - c. A day has always been 24 hours
 - d. Gravity upon the earth remains consistent – things consistently weigh the same
 - e. Every animal behaves according to its God appointed nature
 2. We expect these things and assume them
 - a. Farmers know there will be springtime and harvest
 - b. Merchants know the weight of an object will be constant
 - c. Ranchers know the various behaviors of their animals
 3. Picture a world without order
 - a. Could there be a hurricane or tornado with enough strength to sweep across the nation? How could we control it?
 - b. What would stop thunderstorms from causing major floods
 - c. What would stop snow from covering the earth?
 - d. What would stop the earth's rotation from slowing bringing the end to life?
 - e. What would stop the animals of the earth from suddenly banding together to invade our cities?
 - f. What would stop a disease from sweeping across the earth destroying all life?
 4. The lost man insists that nature maintains the balance – imagine such a perfect balance maintaining itself for thousands of years.
- B. The God who ordered the absolutes of nature can also suspend them
1. Exodus 4:2-3 – wooden rods do not normally change into snakes – you would never expect this.
 2. Exodus 4:6-7 – Leprosy does not normally occur instantly and then disappear instantly
 3. Exodus 4:9 – River water does not normally become blood when you pour it out upon the ground.
 4. Every miracle is the suspension of the natural order but God often demonstrates His power in ways only His people can appreciate. God is the Author of every action upon this earth. We see God's hand in it all.
- C. This should cause us to live with absolute confidence
1. Who orders and disposes of hurricanes?
 2. Who is able to cure every disease? Why are doctors sometimes baffled at a sudden end to an illness or disease? They don't expect these things but they happen.
 3. God works His good pleasure
 Psalm 135:6 – “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”
 Psalm 115:3 – “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

What have we to fear?

II. God is sovereign over the hearts of men

A. God rules over the wills of men

1. Many have this mistaken notion that it would not be right for God to impose His will upon our wills
 - a. They believe man is sovereign over his own will
 - b. To impose Himself upon our wills would be to infringe upon our rights. The truth is we have no rights before God.
 - c. The truth is God moves men according to His good pleasure – God has always imposed His will upon our will
2. God told Moses that Israel would listen to him – Their response was never in doubt. God is able to give us favor among men. He turns men’s wills at His will.
Exodus 3:18 – “And they shall hearken to thy voice”
3. God also demonstrated His sovereignty in the hearts of the Egyptians. God told Moses that he would overrule the wills of the Egyptian people to favor the Israelites.
Exodus 3:21 – “And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty:”
 - a. The Egyptians did what they wanted to do – but their wills were in the hand of God.
 - b. The free will of the Egyptians was to hate Israel
 - (1) They hated the vocation of the Israelites – they were shepherds
Genesis 46:34 – “For every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.”
 - (2) The Egyptians also looked down upon slaves – a slave was no better than an animal
 - (3) God can overrule our wills
4. God also told Moses that Pharaoh would not listen to him
Exodus 3:19-20 – “And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.”
5. The reason Pharaoh would not listen is because God hardened his heart
Exodus 4:21 – “And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.”
6. Does this seem unfair?
Joshua 11:20 – “For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses.”
 - a. God does not take righteous men and make them wicked

- b. God leaves wicked men to their own devices. Our hearts are already hard.
Exodus 8:32 – “And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.”
 - 7. In the end Pharaoh did precisely what God ordered that he would do. God raised up this wicked king for his own glory.
Romans 9:16-18 – “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”
 - B. Again, many despise the thought that God interferes with our wills – but it is a great act of mercy that He does
 - 1. Man is corrupt by nature – few understand the depth of our depravity
Romans 3:13-16 – “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways:”
Destruction - su,ntrimma - that which is broken or shattered, a calamity, ruin, destruction
 - 2. Our very nature is to destroy all that is good. Our very nature is to destroy ourselves. It is only by God’s restraining rule that we don’t destroy ourselves
 - 3. For 60 years we have had the ability to bring terrible destruction with nuclear bombs. What has stopped this from happening?
We have the capability to produce viruses which in the hands of terrorists could unleash terrible disease upon the earth that would kill millions.
What stops this from happening?
 - 4. God rules the wills of men
Proverbs 19:21 – “There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.”
- III. God is sovereign over the lives of men - God determines the length of our lives
 - A. God has often shortened the lives of men because of sin
 - 1. Paul gives this aspect to the Fifth Commandment
Ephesians 6:2-3 – “Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”
 - 2. Coming to the Lord’s Table unworthily had resulted in the untimely deaths of some
1 Corinthians 11:29-30 – “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”
 - 3. God reveals this truth to Moses
Exodus 4:19 – “And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.”

- a. It has been 40 years. We don't know how many were involved in seeking the life of Moses but they were all dead – including Pharaoh
- b. We will see this again in the wilderness. An entire generation of people would die during a 40 year period. Besides the family of Moses and Joshua and Caleb, the oldest person in Israel was Numbers 14:29 – “Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,”
- 4. Again, we see it in the death of all the first born
Exodus 4:23 – “And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.”
- B. God is sovereign over our lives
 - 1. We must not conclude that everyone who dies at a young age was taken because of sin. Ultimately all death is the result of sin.
Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death”
 - 2. There have been many Godly men die at an early age – David Brainerd
 - 3. God is sovereign over our days

Conclusion:

1. God rules all things. There is an ongoing belief by some today that God does not know the future—that He limits His knowledge of future events.
(Read Bruce Ware's book, God's Lesser Glory, for an argument against this view)
This passage proves that God not only knows future events, He determines them.
Exodus 3:21-22 – “And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.”
 - a. This is precisely what God promised Abraham
Genesis 15:14 – “And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.”
 - b. God has determined your entire life
2. Moses was fearful. Fearful of his own weakness, fearful that Israel would not receive him, fearful that Pharaoh would dismiss him or worse. But God is Almighty. He is sovereign over all things. He is sovereign over nature; He is sovereign over all men.
3. God commands us to serve Him. We have no excuses. We have His Spirit within us—His abiding presence. He says, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”
Our failure to follow Him completely is nothing more than our own sin.
Jesus says,
John 12:26 – “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”