

The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination - Lesson #5, The Sovereignty of God

I. Stating the obvious - God is sovereign!

Sovereign - adj., possessing supreme or ultimate power

Every thinking person readily sees that some sovereignty rules his life.

...nothing can come to pass apart from [God's] sovereign will; and when we dwell upon this truth we find that it involves considerations which establish the Calvinistic and disprove the Arminian position.

Dan 4:35 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?"

Isa 14:24,27 The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, "Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, And as I have purposed, so it shall stand: For the Lord of hosts has purposed, And who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, And who will turn it back?"

Isa 46:9-11 Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure, 11 ...Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.

By virtue of the fact that God has created everything which exists, He is the absolute Owner and final Disposer of all that He has made. He exerts not merely a general influence, but actually rules in the world which He has created....Amid all the apparent defeats and inconsistencies of life God actually moves on in undisturbed majesty. Even the sinful actions of men can occur only by His permission. And since he permits not unwillingly but willingly, all that comes to pass—including the actions and ultimate destiny of men—must be, in some sense, in accordance with what He has desired and purposed.

II. God is sovereign over sin

WCF 5.4 - Of Providence

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

III. God does not act contrary to His nature

In the Scriptures He is represented to us as God ALMIGHTY (emphasis Boettner), who sits upon the throne of universal dominion. He knows the end from the beginning and the means to be used in attaining that end... The category of the impossible has no existence for Him "with whom all things are possible,". This, however, does not mean that God has power to do that which is contrary to His nature, or to work contradictions. It is impossible for God to lie, or to do anything which is morally wrong. He cannot make two and two equal five, nor can He make a wheel turn around and stand still at the same time. His omnipotence is as sure a guarantee that the course of the world will conform to His plan as is His holiness a guarantee that all His works will be right.

Gen 18:14 Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Ps 115:3 But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

IV. God is sovereign over both prosperity and adversity

All things without exception, indeed, are disposed by Him, and His will is the ultimate account of all that occurs. Heaven and earth and all that is in them are the instruments through which He works His ends. Nature, nations, and the fortunes of the individual alike present in all their changes the transcript of His purpose. The winds are His messengers, the flaming fire His servant: every natural occurrence is His act; prosperity is His gift, and if calamity falls upon man it is the Lord that has done it.

Amos 3:5-6 Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? 6 If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?

Lamentations 3:37-38 Who is he who speaks and it comes to pass, When the Lord has not commanded it? 38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that woe and well-being proceed?

Ecc 7:14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, But in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, So that man can find out nothing that will come after him.

V. Alternatives to God's sovereignty

Although the sovereignty of God is universal and absolute, it is not the sovereignty of blind power. It is coupled with infinite wisdom, holiness and love. And this doctrine, when properly understood, is a most comforting and reassuring one. Who would not prefer to have his affairs in the hands of a God of infinite power, wisdom, holiness and love, rather than to have them left to fate, or chance, or irrevocable natural law, or to short-sighted and perverted self? Those who reject God's sovereignty should consider what alternatives they have left.

Alternatives to God's sovereignty - Would you prefer to have your affairs governed by:

1. Random chance
2. Natural law
3. Sinful self

VI. God must be sovereign in order to be God

The affairs of the universe, then, are controlled and guided, how? "According to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will." The present day tendency is to set aside the doctrines of Divine Sovereignty and Predestination in order to make room for the autocracy of the human will. The pride and presumption of man, on the one hand, and his ignorance and depravity on the other, lead him to exclude God and to exalt himself so far as he is able; and both of these tendencies combine to lead the great majority of mankind away from Calvinism.

The Arminian idea which assumes that the serious intentions of God may in some cases at least be defeated, and that man, who is not only a creature but a sinful creature, can exercise veto power over the plans of Almighty God, is in striking contrast with the Biblical idea of His immeasurable exaltation by which He is removed from all the weaknesses of humanity. That the plans of men are not always executed is due to a lack of power, or a lack of wisdom; but since God is unlimited in these and all other resources, no unforeseen emergencies can arise, and to Him the causes for change have no existence. To suppose that His plans fail and that He strives to no effect, is to reduce Him to the level of His creatures.

If God is not the supreme being, by definition, He is no longer God.

Job 42:2 I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.

Rom 9:20-21 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

God has lost none of His power, and it is highly dishonoring to Him to suppose that He is struggling along with the human race doing the best He can but unable to accomplish His purposes.