

The Practical Implications of God's Sovereignty

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Introduction Isaiah 46:8-11

- Theology drives practice. While theologians are often times rightly accused of being “out of touch with reality,” the fact of the matter is that they are studying the very One who, by His very being, defines reality. We cannot escape the fact that our understanding of God and His attributes will formulate the very core of all of our actions, regardless of whether you are a believer or unbeliever. As Christians, our goal should be to A) Love and know God to the limit of our finite abilities, B) Develop a worldview that is built upon His nature and attributes, and then C) To live a life consistent with what we believe.

Describing The Sovereignty Of God

- God's foreordination of “*whatsoever* comes to pass” is unconditional, eternal, immutable, and infinite. It rests upon His pleasure and the counsel of His will, and not upon anything that the creation or the creatures might have done in time and space. If that were the case, then His foreordination would be neither unconditional or eternal. Rather than looking down the corridor of time and then foreordaining what He saw, God autonomously and independently decreed that which would occur. God did not enter time, He created it as a providential act of His foreordination. Everything outside of God is included in His all-embracing decree.
- God's providence is His manifestation of His decree in time and space as He preserves and governs all creation and all creatures. Each and every event that occurs, occurs providentially. If only the “big” events were decreed, then the world would be a capricious patchwork of divine reactions to chaos and anarchy. Instead, all things are following a predetermined course in exact precision, for nowhere is God's purpose thwarted or interrupted. Amid apparent defeats and inconsistencies from the human perspective, our God moves on in undisturbed majesty, carrying out all that He has foreordained.
- From the divine viewpoint, every event in all ages has it's exact place in the development of the eternal plan. Each occurrence in time and space is a link in the chain of cause and effect: Every event having had certain definite causes, every event having certain definite effects. The universe is the theater in which God displays His glorious perfection's, where all things are hastening to the end of God's determining. And our reaction to the infinite, eternal mind of God being revealed in time and space? Doxology, awe, and adoration. When we come to terms with the doctrines of foreordination and providence as laid out in the Scriptures, we soon are struck with the fact that He is God and we are not.

Humility (Dan 4:28-37)

- Nebuchadnezzar had a rather insane view of the world, so it was only fitting that insanity be the outcome of that belief system which held that he was the ultimate source of his exaltation. Only when he looked up in humility did understanding and reason return to him. He recognized God as the Sovereign One who does as *He* chooses, and that He does according to *His* will, and not our own. And, ultimately, he understood that “God is able,” regardless of anyone's strength or power.
- Living in the Seattle metro area, living in one of the most affluent areas in the most affluent society in the most affluent time since the beginning of time, the command to us is: Remember. Our God has seen fit to bless us physically, financially, and materially. Our sin will be if we *forget* and commit the sin of Israel (Deut. 8:11-20). If we forget, then we will see ourselves autonomous (like the Israelites) and the sin of forgetfulness will quickly run to the sins of pride, arrogance, and vanity. While pride says to God “You can't,” humility recognizes that “God is able,” and so remembers the hand from which all blessings flow.

Courage (2 Chronicles 20:1-30)

- Contrary to the “No Fear” delusion/propaganda going around, God designed us to fear. The issue is not *if* we will fear, but *whom*. Jehoshaphat did not sin in initially fearing the oncoming enemy horde, but actually sets for us an example of how we're to respond to our fears. Rather than dropping to the ground in a heap of fretting, anxiety, and worry, Jehoshaphat immediately turns to God and reflects upon His sovereignty and His covenantal faithfulness. While he naturally feared the approaching masses, His fear of God was far greater.
- Note the transfer of fear in this passage. First we see the people of God fearing the enemies of God, then we see God's people ceasing to fear their enemies (bringing about great singing and praise before the actual deliverance), and finally we see the enemies of God fearing God. We should expect and long for the day when the Church of God truly fears and trembles before the presence of

their God. When this occurs, we will see it manifested in the way we worship when we corporately gather on the Lord's Day. We should expect to see fear strike those who currently hate God when they accurately report about the Church, "God is truly among you."

Cultural and Institutional Transformation (Colossians 1:15-18)

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- Christ not only is the source and Lord of all things (mental, physical, spiritual, verbal, conceptual) that have or will come into existence, but He also is the cohesion point for their existence. The Church, in rejecting the doctrines of foreordination and providence, has theologically been left with a Gnostic theism that truncates the full extent of Christ's lordship, creating false secular/spiritual compartments. Nothing in all of creation operates apart from His lordship, and so it is our duty to determine how we are to live in our culture accordingly. If there is something to know, do, appreciate, touch, smell, see, or taste: He is Lord of it!!
- Once we comprehend a Lordship of Christ that defies the traditions of men, we will begin to see the fruit of reformation: Cultural and institutional transformation. For instance, education will be reformed when we see that every body of knowledge is to be understood in light of His lordship, and that each thought is to be brought in subjection to Him. Our vocations will be reformed when we understand that there are no inherent spiritual demarcation between a missionary and a welder. Our marriages will be reformed when we comprehend the breadth and depth of Christ's headship over the Church, with husbands subsequently embracing their marital responsibilities to the same degree. And then finally, we will see our culture reformed when we see *all* that has been created (including the theater, food, dancing, alcohol, art, literature, music, etc.) subjected to Christ; seeking truth, beauty, and goodness in all things.

Gratitude (Psalm 105:1-4)

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- The providence's of God should create in us gratitude towards Him and the earnest desire to seek Him all the more. Unfortunately, we often use the events and people in our life to do just the opposite. Once we have established in our minds the source (God's pleasure) of all that has been foreordained and brought to pass in time, then we'll see complaining for what it is: Our displeasure with God's pleasure.
- While there are many reasons why we complain, there are two times when we may be more prone to do so. First, when we identify inequality between ourselves and others, and lust after what God has ordained for another. This was the sin of Israel (Numbers 11:1-6), who desired the bondage of Egypt so that they could enjoy their leeks and onions, rather than the freedom and manna God had provided them in the desert. The second area has to do with assigning the providence of God to man (Exodus 16:1-8). It is a delusion to think that a horizontal complaint is not a vertical complaint. If God truly is providential in all things, then the people and events that occur in and around our lives ultimately come from Him.

Conclusion

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- We need to meditate upon the sovereignty of God, letting it permeate our minds, shape our beliefs, and ultimately change our lives. Apart from a full and complete embracing of this doctrine on the part of the Church, we will never witness reformation. Instead, we will find ourselves remaining in the impotent and insane state we find ourselves in today.

I am the Lord, that is my name; And my glory I will not give to another. Isaiah 42:8

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