

Title: LIVING IN LIGHT OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Text: 1 CHRONICLES 29:10-20

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on March 25, 2007

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We are going to look at a truth that can change your life: The Sovereignty of God. It changed my life and it really revolutionized everything when I began to fully apprehend and grasp just *how* sovereign God is from start to finish, in life, in suffering, in salvation and sanctification, and that He is ruling and governing and actively involved in both big and little details in this world.

R.C. Sproul says the truth of the sovereignty of God is God's favorite doctrine. It would be your favorite doctrine if you were God. It means that God is large and in charge; He is in control of all things. He is the King who actually rules over and in all things.

Jonathan Edwards: "Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God ... It has often been my delight to approach God, and adore Him as a sovereign God." (As cited by Steve Lawson, *Psalms 76-150*, Holman OT Commentary, p. 128)

King David was one who also loved to ascribe absolute sovereignty to God, and who delighted in approaching and adoring His supreme and Sovereign Lord (we see this in many of his psalms). In our passage we have one of the greatest prayers of the Old Testament, if not the Bible that does this. This is a God-centered, God-exalting, soul-thrilling, man-humbling, perspective-altering, worship-inspiring praise by the man after God's own heart.

1 Chronicles 29:10-20: *"So David blessed the Lord in the sight of all the assembly; and David said, "Blessed are You, O Lord God of Israel our father, forever and ever. "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O Lord, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. "Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. "Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name. "But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You. "For we are sojourners before You, and tenants, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope. "O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided to build You a house for Your holy name, it is from Your hand, and all is Yours. "Since I know, O my God, that You try the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You. "O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, our fathers, preserve this forever in the intentions of the heart of Your people, and direct their heart to You; and give to my son Solomon a perfect heart to keep Your commandments, Your testimonies and Your statutes, and to do them all, and to build the temple, for which I have made provision." Then David said to all the assembly, "Now bless the Lord your God." And all the assembly blessed the Lord, the God of their fathers, and bowed low and did homage to the Lord and to the king."*

CONTEXT:

The context is Israel's building program for the great temple for God. If you read verses 1-9, you will see that this is perhaps the greatest offering recorded in biblical (if not human) history. Depending on how the value is translated, there were over 100 tons of gold, hundreds of tons of silver and bronze, thousands of tons of iron, with a value in dollars perhaps in the hundreds of millions, if not a value in the billions.

Notice that David's response in verse 10 to all the human willing and human giving is to bless God not to thank man.

I. **God is Sovereign in Ruling All, v. 10-12**

The contrast is between human rulers and the Real Ruler. The credit for this tremendous offering is not due to the human king, but is ultimately due to the King of Kings.

This prayer is a prelude to Solomon's reign, which was one of the most magnificent in Israel's history, and its grandeur and wealth would carry significant temptations for Solomon.

David's prayer keeps everything in perspective. The word-order of v. 11 puts the emphasis on God, i.e., "It is THOU, O Lord, who are great and not I, nor even Solomon."

This is not just something Israel needed to be reminded of 3,000 years ago – surely this is a message desperately needed by 21st century man who is obsessed with his own great achievement and progress!

VERSE 11

"Yours O LORD is the greatness" -> it's not us or the temple

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. Great is Thy faithfulness. Only God is truly great, man is not. The Hebrew word refers to greatness in size, and importance. Do you have a BIG God? The bigger your view of God, the smaller all other things become.

"Yours is the power" -> it's not our power, it's only yours

God has unlimited strength, matchless omnipotence

The end of v. 12 says any strength we have is from God

The word for power here means "mighty" and was often used of a warrior-king

"and the glory" -> it's all about you, not about us. Not the usual word for glory (*kabod*) it's the word for beautiful, emphasis on the visual splendor of God, a reminder not to be enamored with temple

Verse 10 is the first time in the Bible that God is directly addressed as "our Father" and that is how Jesus taught His disciples to begin their prayers with "Our Father" and then recognize His high position, the importance of His name, and His Kingdom, etc. (very similar to David's prayer). Verse 11 also sounds very much like the ending of the Lord's prayer "for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen."

"and the victory" -> God always wins. God is not a thwarted deity. This word emphasizes pre-eminence, enduring, lasting

“*and the majesty*” -> this word includes the ideas of honor, majestic authority. All these are due God and not man.

Someone has said David’s prayer “ransacks the theological dictionary” – he is piling term upon term, praise upon praise, attribute upon attribute, using the full extent of vocabulary to exalt the supreme and sovereign majestic magnificent God.

David’s prayer is among his final words to his people, which ancient people rightly put great importance on.

Matthew Henry wrote: ‘David was now old and looked upon himself as near his end; and it well becomes aged saints, and dying saints, to have their hearts much enlarged in praise and thanksgiving ... His is the *greatness*; his greatness is immense and incomprehensible; and all others are little, are nothing, in comparison of him. His is the *power*, and it is almighty and irresistible; power belongs to him, and all the power of all the creatures is derived from him and depends upon him. His is the *glory*; for his glory is his own end and the end of the whole creation. All the glory we can give him with our hearts, lips, and lives, comes infinitely short of what is his due. His is the *victory*; he transcends and surpasses all, and is able to conquer and subdue all things to himself; and his victories are incontestable and uncontrollable. And his is the *majesty*, real and personal; with him is terrible majesty, inexpressible and inconceivable.’

“*Yours is the dominion O LORD*” - Dominion or “kingdom” (NKJV) – some translate it “sovereignty.” It refers to the royal reign of a king over his subjects under him

In ancient times, no one was more sovereign than a king. But David recognized that Yours is the true dominion, O Lord, and so did his son Solomon in Proverbs 21:1, which says even a “*king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.*”

v. 11b-12 “*and You exalt Yourself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You and You rule over all*”

Note: The word “all” appears all over the place in this chapter (10x in some translations)

Unfortunately many churchgoers are not sure whether God really rules over all or not, whether man’s will trumps God’s

Steve Lawson writes: ‘In the minds of so many people today, even some in the body of Christ, the user-friendly god has voluntarily limited his control and given free reign to the actions of people in order to give them unconditional liberty. This restricted ruler [God] is *slightly* sovereign – enthroned, but not empowered; presiding but not prevailing; trying but not triumphing.

In the views of many, God is always pacing back and forth in heaven, wringing His hands over unfolding events on earth, rubbing His furrowed brow, and losing sleep over His plans, which are repeatedly frustrated by men. They see him as continually going into an emergency session with other members of the Trinity, strategizing His next move, always reacting to the next hand dealt to Him by man, Satan, or circumstances.

Some believe that divine sovereignty is a sort of coregency – a cosmic stalemate between God and Satan in which man has the swing vote. These well-meaning people spout catchy idioms like, “God votes for you; the devil votes against you; and you cast the deciding vote.” This implies that God and Satan are somehow equal and man’s will is superior to both, since he is able to cast the tie-breaking vote for heaven or hell.

God is too often perceived as a codependent deity who is always rigging solutions to earthly problems, but who, quite frankly, lacks the clout to pull it off. This is the user-friendly god. But is *this* God? Has He really chosen to limit the free reign of His sovereignty? Is He limited by the choices of man? Or is God really the supreme ruler of the universe, exercising total control over the works of His hand?

Rest assured, God is in complete control!’ (*Made in Our Image*, 93)

What does it mean when our text says that “God rules over all?”

TURN TO DANIEL 4 – Read v. 1-6, v. 24-35

Arthur Pink, in his excellent book *The Attributes of God*, writes:

‘The sovereignty of God may be defined as the *exercise* of His supremacy ... Being infinitely elevated above the highest creature, He is the Most High, Lord of heaven and earth. Subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent; God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. None can thwart Him, none can hinder Him. So His own Word expressly declares: “My counsel shall stand, and I *will do* all My pleasure” (Isa. 46:10); [or as Psalm 115:3 says “Our God is in the heavens, He does whatever He pleases.”] Divine sovereignty means that God is God in fact, as well as in name, that He is on the Throne of the universe, directing all things, working all things “after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11).’ [p. 32]

This is the sovereign will of God, or the decreed will of God, everything that happens is ultimately due to this will of God.

It might be helpful to distinguish God’s *revealed* will from His sovereign or secret will. The Bible gives us God’s revealed will, and people unfortunately can and do disobey that revelation often, but Ephesians 1:11 says God effectually and actively is working in all things (even sin) according to His will, the ultimate purpose of God can never be thwarted by Satan or sin.

Job 42:2 “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”

Nothing can thwart God’s sovereign, providential, decreed will – God uses circumstances, seemingly random events, sinful choices, and even Satan to accomplish His purpose and ultimate will. God is never on Plan B. We certainly should do our best to obey His *revealed will* in the commands of Scripture, and there are consequences when we disobey which we are responsible for and can only blame ourselves. But as Christians even when we fall short, God uses our mistakes to grow us, sanctify, humble us, or whatever His purpose may be. And next week we’ll study how even our sin and suffering is sovereignly used by God for good, as Romans 8:28 says because He works in all things, even our calling.

II. God is Sovereign as Owner and Giver of All, v. 12-16

v. 11 “... *indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth is Yours*”

God already owns everything. We cannot give him anything that he doesn't own. How can we give to the One who is giver of all?

C.S. Lewis compared it to a small child going to his father and asking for money so he can buy that same father a birthday present.

v. 12 “*Both riches and honor come from you ... in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone*”

This is not just true for believers. The Apostle Paul told the unbelievers in Athens in Acts 17:25 that God is not “served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things”

Paul also asked a question in 1 Corinthians 4:7 that should deflate any puffed up Christian: “what do you have that you did not receive?” The answer is nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing we have was not received from God.

Someone might say, “But I worked hard with all my might.”

Just notice that David says here in v. 12 that might is in God's hand, He is the one who strengthens everyone. The strength you have to get out of bed, to work hard, to even breathe and live and move and have your being, is an undeserved grace of God.

v. 14b “... *For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given you*”

The truth that ‘everything’ we have ‘comes from’ God is the foundation for the doctrine of stewardship. Its basis is this: since our property is his (Ps 24:1), and since we hold it only temporarily and in trust (1 Chron 29:15-16), it should therefore be used for him (Luke 17:10). – *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 438

If God already owns everything, why do we give? Part of the answer is we want to show our obedience, our gratitude, and also our trust in Him that He will provide. Verse 17 says God delights in uprightness, God loves heart obedience and sincere faith

v. 16 “*O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided to build You a house for Your holy name, it is from Your hand, and all is Yours.*”

One writer has said well “David's prayer that they would recognize who was their true King and the source of all they had, by honest devotion to him (v. 17), applies to the modern Church as much as to those who first heard his words.” (*Daily Study Bible Series*, 104)

The way Paul concluded the doctrinal section of the book of Romans (end of chapter 11) is a good way to conclude this point: *For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to God be the glory. Amen!*

III. God is Sovereign over the hearts of all men, v. 17-20

17 *“Since I know, O my God, that You try the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You.*

18 *“O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, our fathers, preserve this forever in the intentions of the heart of Your people, and direct their heart to You;*

19 *and give to my son Solomon a perfect heart to keep Your commandments, Your testimonies and Your statutes, and to do them all, and to build the temple, for which I have made provision.”*

Some people believe God’s sovereignty ends with the will of man. They are ok with God being in sovereign charge of other stuff, but man’s heart and will and decisions must be off-limits, because they think if God intervenes into man’s autonomous free choice, then love and obedience isn’t genuine. The problem with that is that left to ourselves, we do not have the will or the desire to love God or do anything to please God, these things must be given to us by our sovereign God – God must intervene, and He would not genuinely love His children if He left them to themselves. And the Bible writers are not shy to pray for God to intervene and change hearts and wills, like David does here.

In verse 18 of our passage, David prays that God would “preserve the intentions of their heart” and he asks God to “direct their hearts” and in v. 19 he asks God to give Solomon a “perfect heart”

He recognizes in v. 17 that the wills of God’s people were involved, and he is joyful for their free generosity, but he also knows that even that is dependent on God and is a grace from God.

In 1 Kings 8, Solomon dedicates the temple when it was completed in a speech that also recognizes this truth:

57 *“May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us,*

58 *that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, which He commanded our fathers.*

... 61 *“Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day.”*

Notice both human responsibility (“let your heart be wholly devoted”) and divine sovereignty (imploring God to “incline our hearts to Himself”) are presented side by side as Scripture often does recognize both equally (ex: Phil. 2:12-13)

Charles Spurgeon was once asked, “How do you reconcile divine sovereignty with human responsibility?”

His reply, “I never have to reconcile friends. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility have never had a falling out with each other. I do not need to reconcile what God has joined together.” Neither do we. Both are taught in Scripture, and we must live with the tension. (Lawson, 105)

In the Jewish *bar mitzvah* service, when a thirteen-year-old boy takes on himself the yoke of the Torah, one of the prayers is: “I pray humbly and hopefully before Thee to grant me Thy gracious help, so that I have the will and understanding to walk firmly in Thy ways all the days of my life. Implant [literally “create”] in me a spirit of sincere devotion to Thy service.” The Christian too is called to trust and obey, in the sense of trusting in God’s enabling even as he obeys. We can pray “create in me a clean heart” like David did in Psalm 51 (*Preacher’s Commentary*, 10:175)

In verse 17, David recognizes that the attitude of one’s heart is the most important thing, more even than the amount or percentage given.

The only time the word “freewill” appears in the Bible is in relation to offering / giving. It just means willing or from the heart, not under coercion or pressure for the Lord loves a cheerful giver – but notice even here with the will of believers, that all credit goes to God for what the people gave willingly. Only believers have a will that can obey God from the heart with proper motive, but even that is only by God’s grace.

I don’t often speak of “free will” because of how most use it, and especially not in the context of unbelievers, because the Bible says man is in bondage to sin (John 8:34), needing to be set free (John 8:32), *unwilling* to be gathered to the Lord (Jesus to Jerusalem), *do not* come to the light because they love their sin (John 3:19-20), no one seeking God, not one (Romans 3:11).

It is true that man sins *responsibly* and deliberately and willfully under no coercion, so in that sense he is free, he freely chooses his particular sin, but man does not have a free will in the sense of being neutral (Pelagian heresy) nor is he inherently good (humanism). In order for lost sinners to be saved, the Scripture says it is by God’s will and free grace rescuing men from their sinful will and choices, effectually calling and regenerating; the formerly unwilling is now willing to believe. And the believer now *does* desire to willingly follow God, and is now able by the help of the Holy Spirit to live after God’s Word, and he is now wanting to give cheerfully like in our passage and to obey God from the heart.

As we saw in Ephesians 2 last time, that’s WHY grace is amazing.

We were totally lost, but He found us, blind but now we see by His grace. *It’s grace that taught my heart to fear ... It’s grace that’s brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home*

But we need to not only give God all credit and glory for our conversion, every day and step and act of obedience is only due to His enabling grace. *From Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to God be the glory forever. Amen.*

IV. Application

Humility – v. 14 “who am I?”

This is the right question to ask when you study God’s attributes

v. 15 says we are “sojourners before you and tenants” (NASB)
or “aliens and pilgrims” (NKJV)
or “strangers” in other translations

These terms spoke of persons without property and therefore without security of their own who lived in an area only by the good graces of its citizens. Like widows and orphans, they were in need of protection.

Giving – see v. 9

Generously and freely (2 Cor. 9:7-8), trusting that God will provide all our needs

Prayer – see v. 18-19

Not just pray about external issues, but about the heart issues,

Praise – see v. 20

Bow before God's sovereignty and worship our great and matchless God

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