

God's Sovereignty, Man's Volition and the Problem of Evil  
Selected Scriptures

### Introduction

I started teaching the course on systematic theology a week ago this past Thursday. I have lost track how many times I have taught such a course over the decades. I know I have used three different systematic theology books in teaching the course and I have used the current one for at least two decades. Every time I teach it I am reminded of both the strengths and weakness of systematic theology which is why the first class defines it and gives an overview while also putting great emphasis on the need for humility in the theologian and the importance of proper hermeneutics in examining the claims of any theological system.

The great strength of systematic theology is organizing and grouping together what is taught in the Scriptures about particular subjects so that the various passages on that topic can be understood in conjunction with and in comparison to one another. This allows for the development of theological systems which can then help in understanding how the various topics interlink with one another. That process then helps refine our understanding about what God has revealed about Himself and His will.

The strength of systematic theology is also its weakness for unless you are very careful the major unifying ideas within the system can force interpretations upon Biblical passages that stretch or even violate the rules of hermeneutics. That can be bad, but what is worse is that it can give a wrong understanding about God because it can easily push Him into a theological box instead of letting God be God, and that He is something other than man and outside of the time space continuum that man is trapped in.

What do I mean by all of that? Simply put, we must be very careful not to let any theological system reduce God into something that reflects human characteristics. You do not want to be guilty of the adage that *"God created man in His image, and man has been trying to return the favor ever since."* Yet every theological system can fall into this trap if you are not very careful. When man interprets what God has revealed about Himself in His word by human logic and wisdom, he is always in danger of eisegesis - reading meaning into the Biblical text - instead of doing the proper work of exegesis - figuring out the meaning that comes from out of the Biblical text.

The sovereignty of God and the responsibility of Man as a volitional being is one of if not the most debated areas of theology because theological systems clash due to the particular emphasis each one makes on the unifying ideas of that system. I gave a sermon on this subject on January 19, 2019 entitled, *Theological Conundrums: God's Sovereignty & Man's Volition*. I do not intend to repeat that sermon here since my emphasis today will be different from that sermon, though I do need to briefly emphasize some major points made in it.

### God is Sovereign

The first point is that God is sovereign. He has the *"undisputed right to make decisions and act accordingly,"* to be *"unlimited, absolute,"* to be *"the person supreme in a state."* He can do anything He wants in anyway He wants at anytime He wants in keeping with His own character and promises. This truth arises out of all of His infinite attributes. He is the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, Creator and therefore supreme over everything. Paul expressed this in summary fashion in his doxology in 1 Timothy 6:15-16 stating God is *"the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen."*

God's sovereignty in the affairs of men is expressed in His providence which blesses the righteous in His provision, protection and preservation. Because God is sovereign, Paul could confidently proclaim God's provision in Philippians 4:19, "*And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*" Because God is sovereign, the Psalmist could declare God to be his helper, keeper, protector, & guardian (Psalm 121). Because God is sovereign, He declares His preservation of His people in Isaiah 41:10, "*Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*" Because God is sovereign, we can trust that God will fulfill everyone of His promises to us in the present time, in the future and for eternity. Nothing can thwart His will (Psalm 135:6). Nothing can separate us from His love which is in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:38-39)

### **Man is Volitional**

The second point is that God made man in His image endowing him with the attributes of personhood which includes volition. Man has the ability to choose based on rational thought, emotion and will. There is little debate that man can choose. The Scriptures are clear that God not only allows man to make choices, He demands that he does as seen in every commandment that He has given going all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were given a choice of either obeying or disobeying God's command, and tragically they exercised their volition in choosing to disobey and plummeting all of their descendants into sin.

References to man making choices occur throughout the Scriptures about all sorts of subjects. Proverbs 1:29 warns about those who "*did not choose the fear of the LORD.*" Proverbs 3:31 warns about choosing the ways of a man of violence while Proverbs 16:16 teaches that "*to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.*" Isaiah 7:15-16 references the age of a young boy as to whether he "*knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.*" Judges must decide cases - make a choice between contending parties (Deuteronomy 17:8-9). 2 Chronicles 2:1, "*Solomon decided to build a house for the name of the Lord and a royal palace for himself.*" 2 Chronicles 24:4, "*Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD.*" Acts 16:4, Paul and Silas delivered the decrees "*which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.*" Acts 20:3, Paul "*decided to return through Macedonia*" and also "*decided to spend the winter [in Nicopolis].*" We make so many decisions about so many things that we take the ability God has given us to choose for granted.

The debate concerning man's volition is the extent of man's ability to choose. The phrase "free will" is a fallacy from the start because man is limited and not autonomous. Man does not have "free will" to do anything he wants simply because his ability to choose is limited to the boundary of his capabilities. Man is entrapped within the time-space continuum, so he cannot choose to do anything outside that box. Fiction writers love to explore the possibilities of what could happen if man could time travel either forward to the future or backward into history, but man is always limited to the present. Man is limited to being in one physical place at any point in time, so he cannot choose to violate that limit.

Man is also limited in knowledge and power and therefore cannot do what his imagination dreams up. Man can figure out and fashion many things from what God has created, but man cannot create something from nothing. He can investigate, figure out and know many things, but he is not omniscient and he cannot know what he cannot investigate, and man's limitations in time, space and mental capacity limit what can be investigated. In regards to space, we do not even know something as simple as the number of stars in our own galaxy much less those at the far side of the universe and their size, composition and power. In regards to time, we only know bits and pieces of history, and the future is an educated guess at best - listen to any weather forecast. In regards to mental capacity, it is hard enough for some of us to figure out the remote control much less a "smart" phone which make us feel dumb, and then there are the matters of the heart. Men, do you really understand the ways of a woman or vice versa? Jeremiah 17:9 states "*The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can*

*understand it?*” And with mankind’s penchant for lying, is what you think you know because you were told so really true? Only God knows the whole truth.

My point here is simple. Man is not autonomous and therefore does not have free will to decide to do whatever he wants. His will and choices are limited by the boundaries of time and space, his own mental and emotional capacities, and his nature. I have spoken many times about that last limitation of human nature because ever since the fall of Adam & Eve into sin, every human has been born with a sin nature so pervasive that as Romans 3:10–12 cites it, <sup>10</sup> *“There is none righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup> There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; <sup>12</sup> All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one.”* That is why it takes the work of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, righteousness and judgment, (John 16:8-11) then to quicken - make alive - the soul of the sinner to know, understand and believe the good news of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:5-9). That is why that despite the universal command to all people to repent and believe (Acts 17:30), and the universal call to come to Jesus Christ for salvation (John 3:16; Matthew 11:28), it must be God that draws the individual to Christ (John 6:44). Without God’s intervention, the choice of every unregenerate human is sin.

### **Man is Responsible**

The Scriptures are also clear that man is responsible for the choices he makes. God will judge in righteousness each individual based on the very things they have done, and there will be no excuses for the sins that have been done.

Revelation 20:11–15 describes the final judgment of man. <sup>11</sup> *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”*

The only hope of any human to escape condemnation and eternal punishment is to have your name written in the book of life by faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, for there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). There will not be any weighing of balances to see if you have done more good than evil, for it only takes one sin, one transgression of God’s law, to bring condemnation. James 2:10 emphasizes that point saying, *“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.”* God will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31) for He Himself is righteous in all His ways (Psalm 145:17) and has no partiality (Romans 2:11). There will be no excuses that can be given in God’s courtroom. Having evil done to you is never an excuse for acting in sin yourself. Each person will give an account of himself to God (Romans 2:10-12) and every unrepentant sinner will die for his own iniquity (Jeremiah 31:30). God has provided the means of forgiveness and salvation for man’s sin through Jesus Christ. Those who reject God in favor of the speculations of their own depraved minds (Romans 1:18-32), and those that refuse to obey the commands to repent and believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9) bear the responsibility for their own condemnation at the hands of the righteous judge.

While Diane and I were raising our sons, we made sure that our sons understood what was expected from them and what would happen if they did not obey. When an act of disobedience occurred, we asked if they knew what they did was wrong and what the consequences would be, and receiving an affirmative answer, we would ask who then was making the decision about the punishment they would receive. The

answer is the disobedient child made that decision by their sin since Diane and I would be unjust and liars if we did not carry out the promised consequences. God would be unjust if He did not carry out the promised consequences against those that sin. That is why Jesus paid the price of sin which satisfied God's justice while also extending His love and mercy to the sinner.

Those that would argue that their sin is God's fault because He made them that way or because He is sovereign and therefore caused it are following a lie and foolishly blaspheming their Creator. Why? Several reasons.

1) There is no injustice with God (Romans 3:5-6; 9:14) for He is upright and there is no unrighteousness in Him. Deuteronomy 32:4 expressed this truth in this way, *"The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He."* Paul calls Him *"the Lord, the righteous judge"* in 2 Timothy 4:8 and the multitude in heaven declare in Revelation 19:1-2, *"Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belongs to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous."*

2) God did not create you as a sinner. You inherited your sin nature from your forefathers extending all the way back to Adam, and the sin nature is confirmed by your own actions of sin. As Romans 5:12 explains, *"through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."* God made Adam without sin and placed him in a perfect environment. Unlike Eve who was deceived (1 Timothy 2:14), Adam had received God's commands directly and choose to disobey the prohibition on eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam tried to blame the woman and then God for giving her to him. Blaming others and God for your own sin did not work as an excuse then and it still does not work now.

3) Paul addressed this very argument in Romans 9:14-29 giving two reasons it is fallacious. First, even if God did make you that way, as Creator, He can do what He wants with you, so who are you to answer back to God? (vs. 20). Second, the truth is that God endures with patience "vessels of wrath." He would be just to destroy them immediately, but instead He is longsuffering with them because He demonstrates His wrath and makes His power known upon them and they are a contrast to the riches of His glory demonstrated in "vessels of mercy" (vs. 22-23). Pharaoh is the example given which I also talked about a few weeks ago (vs. 17).

Man is responsible for the consequences of his own sin, and the condemnation and punishment meted out by God upon unrepentant sinners is just.

### **The Clash of Two Truths**

God is sovereign and Man is volitional and will be held accountable for his choices. These two truths clash as several points. The apparent conflicts between them are contradictions for us, but not for God. Keep in mind the statement of Isaiah 55:9 that God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts than our own. God knows exactly how His sovereignty and man's volition harmonize so that His will is done without violation of man's ability to choose. We do not understand that, but God does. What God wants from us is to believe what He has revealed. He does not need theologians to apply human wisdom and logic in efforts to rescue Him from false accusations. He is quite capable of defending Himself and taking care of those that blaspheme. God's word does not return void (Isaiah 55:11) and He uses the foolishness of the message preached to not only save those who believe, but to also destroy the wisdom of the wise and the cleverness of the clever (1 Corinthians 1:19-21).

To the degree that a theologian emphasizes either the sovereignty of God or the volition of man to the detriment of what God has Himself declared about both, is the degree to which that theologian is stepping into error. At the extreme ends you will find those that have gone into aberration in not being accurate with the word of truth, and some fall into heresy by teaching things about God that are not true and means of salvation that are contrary to what God has said. You are not saved from sin because you walked the aisle, knelt at the mourners bench, raised your hand for the evangelist, or signed your name

on a gospel tract. It is not prayer that saves you, it the one to whom you pray that saves you. You are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

You are also not saved passively. God calls you to repentance and belief which necessitates actions on your part in keeping with the change of mind and new faith. That is why James 2:14-26 makes such an emphasis upon faith having works that demonstrates the genuineness of that faith. Faith without works is dead. Or to state this from a slightly different angle that I have been emphasizing the last few weeks, God redeems man to be holy and blameless before Him (Eph. 1:4) and conform him to the image of His son (Rom. 8:29). That being true, can anyone honestly believe that God would not immediately begin the process of changing someone that He redeemed? Tragically, there are those that do claim that salvation does not have to result in conversion. I had an email exchange this week with a fellow whose pastor was teaching that you can continue to live however you want after salvation. A true convert to Christ will want to live for Christ just as Paul described in Galatians 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."*

### **The Problem of Evil**

But there is another area in which conflict arises between the sovereignty of God and the volition of man, and that is the problem of evil. At one extreme is blaming God for evil because He is sovereign, at the other extreme is failure to recognize that God is so powerful that he even uses the evil choices of men to accomplish His will. One extreme blasphemes God by attributing evil to Him either in ignorance or on purpose. The other blasphemes God by removing His omniscience and omnipotence - He either does not know what is going to happen and is reacting to mitigate the damage as it happens, or He is unable to stop evil.

This problem of evil is often used by the unregenerate atheists and agnostics as an argument to reject belief in God. They reason that because evil exists then God is either not powerful enough to stop it or He is not good because He does not stop it. It is a ridiculous argument because man's assessment of God's character or ability has nothing to do with the fact of His existence. The atheist and agnostic should be even more afraid if God is not good because He is still more powerful than any of them individually or collectively and He is a jealous God who is a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Hebrews 12:29) who takes vengeance on His enemies (Nahum 1:2). Hebrews 10:31 warns, *"It is a terrifying fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

Underlying this problem is the question of the origin of evil, and perhaps because God has not revealed a definitive answer to that question people think they can then speculate and treat their logical constructions as final answers. Like many other thing that God has not chosen to reveal to us, Deuteronomy 29:29 applies, *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."* We must state and believe what God has revealed. We must be very careful about going beyond that in making conclusions.

What do we know about the origin of evil? First, Genesis 1:31 states that *"God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good."* That statement excludes the presence of any evil. Second, Genesis 3:4 records that the serpent blasphemed God in contradicting Him by stating *"You surely will not die!"* and then slandered God and lied stating *"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* Blasphemy and slander are both evil, so evil had already entered into the universe by this time. Third, we know from 2 Corinthians 11:3-4; Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 that the power within the serpent of Genesis 3 was Satan, the devil. The description in Ezekiel 28:11-17 lets us know what Satan was like originally as the *"anointed cherub that covers"* that was *"in Eden, the garden of God"* and was *"full of wisdom and perfect in beauty."* It also describes the cause of evil within him stating *"you were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you"* because *"your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You*

*corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.*” Fourth, evil entered into humanity when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command and ate the forbidden fruit bringing a curse upon themselves and all of creation (Genesis 3:6-19).

From this we know when entered into creation and into mankind and that the cause was pride in Satan and the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life in Adam and Eve (1 John 2:16). We do not know how pride and lust sprang up within beings that were without sin other than God created them with the ability to make choices, and with Adam & Eve that is clearly evident in the prohibition which they could obey or disobey.

We also know that none of this caught God by surprise. 1 Peter 1:20 states that the redemptive work of Christ was *“foreordained before the foundation of the world, but manifest in these last times for you,”* and God also *“chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.”* There would be no need of plan of redemption if God did not know sin would enter into the world, and God did know that since He is omniscient not only knowing but also declaring the end from the beginning (Isaiah 44:7; 46:10). That is why fulfilled prophecy is a proof of deity.

Those that conclude from this that God is the author of evil may be following a certain logic, but it is not true, and it is blasphemy to assert it. Why? First, logical projection does not equal truth, and God has only revealed Himself to have ordained a plan to deal with evil though both redemption from it and condemnation and punishment of it. Second, there is no evil within God from which it could arise. God’s revelation of Himself is consistent that He is good, just, righteous, pure, loving, kind, merciful, gracious and holy. Consider these declarations about God’s character. Several negate any evil being within God.

Psalm 92:15, *“... the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”*

Psalm 5:4–5, 4 *“For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You. 5 The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity.”*

Psalm 145:17, *“The Lord is righteous in all His ways And kind in all His deeds.”*

Zephaniah 3:5, *“The Lord is righteous within her; He will do no injustice. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He does not fail. But the unjust knows no shame.”*

Jesus declared of Himself in John 7:18 that *“He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”*

James 1:13, *Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.*

1 Peter 1:15, *“but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; <sup>16</sup> because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

Be very careful of stating anything in such a way that it attributes evil to God for that would be blasphemy. That does not mean that the interplay of God’s sovereignty and evil is easy to understand for it has been a question even among the godly. I pointed this out in the sermon on Habakkuk 1 in which the prophet laments in verse 13, *“Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?”* The prophet was not accusing God of evil, but he was confused about why God was not stopping it. If you have studied Habakkuk, you know that the eventual answer was that God was going to use an evil nation to chastise His own people just as He had warned that He would do to refine them to be holy. And a few weeks ago I pointed out how God used Pharaoh and the evil he did to glorify Himself. In neither of these examples or any other within Scripture or that you can come up with is God the cause of the evil being done. The evil is the result of the choices people make and for which they are responsible and will be held accountable. God punished both Egypt and Assyria for their evil.

Here is the point I want you to remember. Do not stick God in a box and limit Him on His ability of what He can do to accomplish His will. Do not think of God as a puppet master who manipulates people to do His bidding. That idea is the linear thought of human logic because we can’t imagine how the end

can be determined before hand unless every detail is planned and executed. God is much, much greater and more powerful than that. He can use the actions of even those that are defiant of His will to accomplish His sovereign purposes. Consider these two verses.

Romans 8:28. *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* Genesis 50:19–21,<sup>19</sup> *“But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place?”*<sup>20</sup> *“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”*<sup>21</sup> *“So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”*

That is the principle and the example. Notice that Romans 8:28 is unlimited. It is all things which encompasses both good and evil. It includes my sin, your sin and the consequences that are part of living in this sin cursed world. God does not cause that sin, but He is so powerful that He can still use it to accomplish His will. This principle is beautifully demonstrated in the life of Joseph. His brothers intended evil against him and he was sold into slavery. Potipher’s wife intended evil against him, and he was put into jail. The cup bearer was negligent resulting in him staying in jail though Joseph had interpreted his dream. Each evil that came upon Joseph was due to the sinful choices humans made in defiance of God’s stated moral will. Yet, God orchestrated each action to bring about the final result of Joseph being in the right place at the right time with the right skills and the right endorsement to instantly rise to the position by which God would enable him to preserve the lives of his extended family.

Again, do not put limits on God and put him in box you can comprehend reducing His sovereignty to being a cosmic puppet master. He is infinitely greater than that. Do not fall into the trap of what I call Christian fatalism that whatever happens is God’s will. That causes both complacency and confuses His moral will and His sovereign will. It is not God’s will that people sin and be condemned to hell for 2 Peter 3:9 states that God *does not desire for any to perish but for all to come to repentance*. Jesus said in Matthew 25:41 that the *everlasting fire was prepared for the devil and his angels*. Those are reasons God commands us to proclaim the gospel and that we are serious about evangelism. People will be cast into Hell because they have defied God’s will and refused to repent by their own choice resulting in God executing His righteous judgment against them.

The evil that is going on all around us and any sin that you might do is not according to God’s stated will. We are to resist what is not according to His stated will while promoting what is according to the commands and precepts of His word. Yet we also take heart that God in His sovereignty will use even evil to accomplish His eternal purposes. That is why we as Christians have hope even while those around us fall into despair. God is working out His eternal plan and He has already revealed the final conclusion of blessings on the redeemed and curses on the unrepentant.

## **Conclusions**

God is sovereign. Man has volition and is responsible for the choices He makes. God has not revealed the details of how these two truths intersect, so our understanding of how they harmonize is severely limited. We must be careful not to emphasize one truth to the detriment of the other lest we stray into an aberration such as complacency in evangelism or fall into a heresy such as decisional regeneration. While the origin of evil is unclear, God is not its author nor was He surprised by it having already preordained a plan to deal with it. God is more powerful and His sovereignty more pervasive than can be imagined because though He is neither the cause or author of the evil that people do, yet He can still use it to accomplish His sovereign purposes. So do not be complacent. Fight against evil while promoting righteousness trusting God is at work and will accomplish His eternal goals no matter what the immediate circumstances or results may be. As Christians, we always have hope because we can trust our sovereign God.

Sermon Notes - September 26, 2021  
God's Sovereignty, Man's Volition and the Problem of Evil - Selected Scriptures

**Introduction**

Strengths & Weaknesses of Systematic Theology

**God is Sovereign**

The Nature

Sovereignty in the affairs of men

**Man is Volitional**

Making choices

“Free will”

Man's limits

**Man is Responsible**

No Excuses

Bearing responsibility

- 1) No injustice with God
- 2) God did not create you as a sinner
- 3) Romans 9:14-29

Who are you to question God?

God patiently endures vessels of wrath

**The Clash of Two Truths**

A conflict for us, but not for God who harmonizes them

Emphasis on one truth to the detriment of another truth leads to aberration and heresy

You are not saved by your own choice - the unregenerate choose sin

You are not saved passively - James 2:14-26

## The Problem of Evil

The blasphemy of the extremes

God's existence & the problem of evil are not related

The origin of evil - Deut. 29:29

1) At Creation everything was very good - Gen. 1:31

2) Evil was present by the time the serpent blasphemed - Gen. 3:4-5

3) Satan empowered the serpent (2 Cor. 11:3-4; Rev. 12:9; 20:2) who had fallen (Ezek. 28:11-17)

4) Evil entered humanity the world was cursed when Adam & Eve sinned - Gen. 3:6-19

God was not surprised & foreordained redemption before the foundations of the world- 1 Pet. 1:20, Eph. 1:4

God is not the author of evil - Psalm 5:4-5; 92:15; 145:17; Zeph. 3:5; John 7:18; James 1:13; 1 Pet. 1:15-16

Attributing evil to God is blasphemy

Do not stick God in a box limiting Him to what you can understand

Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:19-21

God uses even the evil of those who defy His stated moral will to accomplish His sovereign will

Do not be complacent: Resist evil, promote good

**KIDS KORNER** – Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. Young Children – draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. Older Children – count how many times the word "sovereign" is mentioned. Talk to your parents about what it means that God is sovereign.

**THINK ABOUT IT** – Questions to consider in understanding the sermon and its application. What are the strengths & weaknesses of systematic theology? What does it mean that God is sovereign? Are there any limits on God's sovereignty? Explain. How do we know that is true? What does it mean that man is volitional? How do we know that is true? What are the limits on man's ability to choose? Does man have "free will"? Explain. What is the basis upon which God will judge man? What is man's only hope? Who determines whether an individual will be punished by God or not? Why is it blasphemy to argue that God is at fault for a person's sin? What is the problem with using logic to go beyond what God has revealed? What is the problem with emphasizing one truth to the detriment of another revealed truth? Are you saved by your own decision? Why or why not? Can you be saved passively? Explain. Why can't the problem of evil be used to explain away the existence of God? Why should the atheist or agnostic be afraid of God? Why is it blasphemy to claim that God is the author of evil? What do we know about the origin of evil? What do we not know? Was God surprised by evil entering the world? Why or why not? Why is it blasphemy to in anyway attribute evil to God? Can God use evil people and the evil they do to accomplish His sovereign will without violation of human volition and responsibility? Explain. Why is it wrong to think of God as a cosmic puppet master? Explain the application of Romans 8:28 and Genesis 50:19-20 in helping to understand the interaction of God's sovereignty and man's volition. What is Christian fatalism and how do you void it? What should be your response to the evil that occurs around you. Why does the Christian have hope despite the evil that occurs in the world?