

## **THE 7 EXPRESSIONS OF THE WILL OF GOD #2**

### **Introduction**

Tonight we continue our teaching on “The 7 Expressions of the Will of God”

### **Theme**

**I can tell you that many of the great questions of the Christian life can be resolved if we can learn to distinguish the 7 ways God’s will is expressed in the Bible and in the world.**

This is not a simple subject.

### **R.C. Sproul**

**“Few concepts in theology generate more confusion than the will of God. The problem we face is rooted in the multifaceted way in which the term functions in biblical expressions.”**

He is referring to our failure to discern the many facets of God’s will in the way it is expressed in the Bible; we have looked at 7.

*God does not have 7 “wills”!*

But He does express His will in 7 different ways.

In our 1<sup>st</sup> message we gave you an overview of each how each functions...

### **The 7 Expressions of God’s Will**

- Sovereign/Decretive will (when God speaks by decree)
- Preceptive will (when God expresses His will in commandments
  - Secret will-that which God keeps to Himself
- Revealed will-that which He has chosen to reveal (esp. scriptures)
- Active will/Passive/Permissive will-when God acts/or chooses not to act
- Dispositional will-that which we know of God’s nature and character

Tonight I want to focus on the 1<sup>st</sup> and most important in the list; the expression of His will based upon His sovereignty.

### **The message has 3 parts:**

1. Present the premise-I will define the doctrine.
2. Address the problems posed by the premise-because there are some
3. Show how to apply the premise to the problems in your life.

## I. The Sovereignty of God

### A. Presenting the Premise

1. The classic Christian book on the subject was written by British theologian and Pastor Arthur W. Pink:

#### A.W. Pink

**“The sovereignty of God is an expression that once was generally understood. It was a phrase commonly used in religious literature...a theme frequently expounded in the pulpit. It was a truth which brought comfort to many hearts. But today, to make mention of God’s sovereignty is, in many quarters, to speak in an unknown tongue.”**

#### A.W. Pink

**“Alas it should be so! That the doctrine which is the key to history, the interpreter of Providence, the warp and woof of Scripture, and the foundation of Christian theology, should be so sadly neglected and so little understood.”**

a. **“Warp and woof” refers to the underlying structure or foundation**”; it refers to how threads of cloth are interwoven to make a garment; so here he means that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is woven into Bible as a foundational revelation of Who He is.

2. What is the definition of “sovereign”? The dictionary says...

#### “sovereign”

**Possessing supreme or ultimate power.**

a. Earthly Kings are “sovereign”; but only God is truly sovereign. Various Bible dictionaries define it this way:

#### Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary

**A theological term which refers to the unlimited power of God, who has sovereign control over the affairs of nature and history.**

Unger’s Dictionary tells us that this is a foundational doctrine:

#### The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary

**The possession of the most complete sovereignty is a necessary part of the proper conception of God and is abundantly declared in the Scriptures. (Psalm 50:1; 66:7; 93:1; Isaiah 40:15, 17; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 11:17)**

b. If we have no conception of God as Sovereign, our definition of God will be deficient.

**A.W. Pink**

**“What do we mean by the sovereignty of God? We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the Godhood of God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that God *is* God...the most High, doing according to His will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay His hand or say to him, ‘What doest thou?’ (Daniel 4:35)**

**Chip Ingram**

**“God’s sovereignty simply means “God is in control. There is absolutely nothing that happens in the universe that is outside of God’s influence and authority.”**

**R.C. Sproul**

**“If there is one renegade molecule running loose anywhere in the universe, God is not sovereign.”**

3. But the scriptures clearly tell us that God is in total control of the universe.

a. This is how God describes Himself to Israel:

**Deuteronomy 32:39**

**'Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.**

b. King David said it this way:

**Psalms 115:3**

**Our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.**

c. In the midst of great suffering, the Prophet Job proclaimed the sovereignty of God:

**Job 42:1-2**

**Then Job answered the Lord and said: "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You."**

d. In the Book of Daniel, God humbled the mighty King Nebuchadnezzar reducing him to the condition of a wild beast eating grass in the field. Daniel explains why...

**Daniel 4:17**

**'''The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.'**

And then, when God restored the King to his throne, he gave God the glory.

**Daniel 4:34-35**

**34 And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. 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?"**

e. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul affirms that God is at work in all things according to His sovereign will:

**Ephesians 1:11**

**In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will...**

f. "All things" means—"all things"! The biblical revelation of God declares His sovereignty over all the events of history! As He spoke through the prophet Isaiah:

**Isaiah 46:9-10**

**Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 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,'**

4. This means that God is in control of all the events of history; He perfectly foresaw the end from the beginning; even things that are not done yet!

5. The biblical doctrine of the sovereignty of God declares that He is in control of all events, past present and future. Nothing has happened or ever will happen that falls outside of His sovereign will; at least in the sense that He ALLOWED it to happen.

### **PAUSE TO REVIEW**

So I have presented the premise: The Bible tells us that God is sovereign.

Absolutely in control of all things that happen.

But this immediately creates a problem! A big problem. The problem of how we explain evil in the world.'

### **R.C. Sproul**

**Saint Augustine once remarked, "In some sense, God wills everything that happens." The immediate question raised by this comment is, In what sense? How does God "will" the presence of evil and suffering? Is He the immediate cause of evil? Does He do evil? God forbid. Yet evil is a part of His creation. If He is sovereign over the whole of His creation, we must face the conundrum: How is evil related to the divine will?**

### **B. The Problem with the Precept: How Can There Be Evil in God's World?**

1. Is God sovereign? Yes! Is God all powerful? Yes! Is God good? Yes! Does He allow evil? Yes.

2. The problem we have here is an example of something called "theological tension".

### **"Theological tension"**

**The intellectual stress resulting from holding two or more facts as true when those facts seem contradictory.**

a. There are many teachings in the Bible that require us to balance 2 truths;

- **Is Jesus human or divine?**
- **Is God one or three?**
- **Is God sovereign or are human beings free?**

3. The answer to all the above is YES! Jesus is man and He is God; God is one God in 3 persons; Yes God is sovereign; but man has the ability to choose.

### **Pastor Steve Weaver**

**One of the most alarming trends in contemporary evangelicalism is the seeming inability for Christian pastors/teachers/leaders to be able to hold biblical truths in tension. As a pastor-historian, I believe this is a symptom of our generation's failure to know and learn from the past. Almost every theological error in the past or present has, at its core, been a failure to recognize and affirm tension in the biblical teaching on a particular issue. Our fallen tendency is to affirm one area of God's truth over against another.**

- Are we sanctified by grace or by works? The answer is both. We are saved by grace with a salvation confirmed by our works. Leave either out and you end up in error.
- Paul told the Romans to “consider the goodness and the severity of God” (11:22) Hold these truths in tension or fall into error.

4. On the subject of the will of God, some emphasize the sovereignty of God and end up in fatalism. Others emphasize the free will of man and end up in legalism.

5. God is sovereign; but within His sovereignty He allows evil in His creation; God is sovereign; His will ultimately WILL be done; but within His sovereign will He has appointed that man has a choice.

### **Unger's Bible Dictionary**

**God is the Supreme Dispenser of all events. All forms of existence are within the scope of His dominion. And yet this is not to be viewed in any such way as to abridge the reality of the moral freedom of God's responsible creatures or to make men anything else than the arbiters of their own eternal destinies.**

6. The clearest description of the sovereignty of God is found in the famous Westminster Confession of Faith, convened by the Church of England in 1643.

### **Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter 3 Article 1)**

**God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass...**

a. Then the writers immediately move to protect us from 3 great errors that may come from misunderstanding the statement.

### **Westminster Confession of Faith**

**...yet so as thereby God is neither the Author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of His creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather, established.”**

- The fact that God is sovereign does NOT mean that God is the author of sin; nor responsible for it!
- God’s sovereignty in no way does “violence” to the will of His creatures; we are not robots; we are responsible for our choices!
- The fact that God is sovereign (the 1<sup>st</sup> cause) does not take away the effects of “second causes”; it actually establishes them.

*God’s sovereign will includes all things, causes and effects!*

7. The theological tension is that God is sovereign-but God will hold man responsible for his choices! Let me give a most powerful example:

### **C. The Crucifixion of Christ**

1. **Revelation 13:8** speaks of Jesus Christ as “the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.”

a. This speaks of the sovereign will of God; before the foundation of the world, God decreed that His son would be sacrificed for the sins of the world!

b. This presupposes the foreknowledge of God; He knew that man would need a Savior *not after man sinned* but *before man was even created!*

2. It was the sovereign will of God that Christ would be slain; and yet He would hold guilty those who did the deed! Look at this from Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost:

### **Acts 2:22-24 ESV**

**22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the**

**hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.**

a. It was the sovereign will of God that Christ be crucified; but He will hold accountable those who killed Him.

3. In the end, out of the wickedest sin in human history, the crucifixion of the innocent Lamb, God brought forth the salvation of the world!

4. So what's the worst thing that has ever happened to you? What's the worst thing that is happening? A bigger question is, "Do you believe that the sovereign will of God is still at work?"

### **STOP AND REVIEW**

- We have presented the premise-the sovereignty of God
- We had addressed the problems the premise creates
- Now let me conclude with how to apply the premise to your problem

## **III. Conclusion**

### **A. Applying the Premise**

1. There is no doctrine in the Bible that will bring more peace to your heart than to have a revelation of the absolute sovereignty of God; to know, to really know that He is in control of everything and at all times; and that nothing has happened or ever will happen that is outside His control.

**Arthur W. Pink**

**“Ah, dear reader, there can be no real rest for your poor heart until you learn to see the hand of God in everything. But for that, faith must be in constant exercise...knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God.”**

2. Of course he is quoting the Apostle Paul's letter to the Church at Rome:

**Romans 8:27-28**

**Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.**



**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**

3. Here we have the Holy Spirit praying for us according to the will of God; so we are to “know” that “all things” work together for our good.

**Arthur W. Pink**

**“But how do we know all things work together for good? The answer is, because all things are under the control of, and are being regulated by the Supreme Sovereign, and because He has naught but thoughts of love toward His own, then all things are ordered by Him that they are made to minister to our ultimate good.”**

a. He does not say we know that all things that happen are good!

**R.C. Sproul**

**“God may allow wicked things to transpire, even though He is by no means pleased by them.”**

b. But He still works all things together for our good.

4. The more we know the sovereignty of God the more confidence we can see His hand in everything; even negative things; even when our plans are different than His!

**There are many plans in a man’s heart; nevertheless the Lord’s counsel—that will stand.**

**Proverbs 19:21 NLT**

5. The “Lord’s counsel” refers to His sovereign will; which is great enough to cover even our most stupid mistakes! What a comfort!

### **SUMMARY**

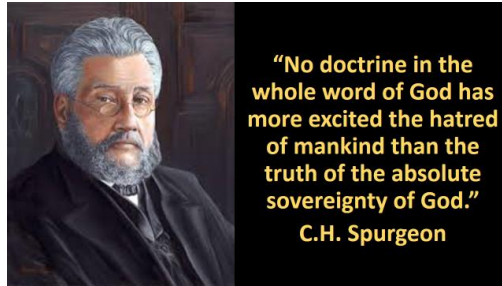
God is sovereign

Faith that God is in control answers all questions

**Charles H. Spurgeon**

**“The sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which the Christian rests his head.”**

## WORKSHOP QUESTION



**Why do you suppose this is so?**