

The Sovereignty of God – Pt. 1 – God's Sovereignty vs. Human Responsibility

Important background

1. Paradox describes the indescribable
 - a. There is mystery, we must sit in that mystery not try and Lord over it - otherwise you will err in a way that tries to make you god, not Him.
 - b. You will err in either making God too small to act *intentionally*,
 - c. Or you will err in making Him monstrous and incapable of true relationship (and therefore incapable of true love by default)
2. Mystery in God's Sovereignty vs. Human Responsibility
 - a. Sovereignty = God's reign over all, his will is never thwarted
 - i. So can anything ever be beyond His will??
 - b. Differences between fatalism, freewill, and free-agency
 - i. Thesis: Fatalism - puppet or computer program
 - ii. Antithesis: Free-will - a slave! Is the will in a neutral state?
 - iii. Synthesis: Free agency - If my dog and I hike up mountain, he may take paths he thinks show his freewill, but whether he sits down, heads back down, if I have to carry him myself - he is going up the mountain.
 - c. Destiny! This has theological consequence for issues of election, predestination, suffering, etc. (all topics we will cover in this section)
3. Our culture is adverse to this...why?
 - a. Heavy focus on freedom, self-determination, and ability to reason
 - b. Eastern vs. Western view – neti, neti (answer lies in the mystery between realities). Being comfortable with mystery.
 - i. Occidental vs. oriental worldview (individual freedom is more pronounced in occidental worldview, as is enlightenment influence on causality and approach to truth)
4. Can those in time fully understand something beyond time?
 - a. And we could hypothetically ask if the One who is above time can fully know those who are in it.
 - b. The answer is “yes”, and perhaps even know them at a greater level, but more on that below.

Sovereignty of God in and over Creation/History

Premise: He speaks, history unfolds. He can be beyond space and time, and yet act in it...because He is its Creator. He is the only one who can fully know

- 1 Cor 13:12

Time

- Metaphorical “Line of transcendence”
 - Above=beyond space & time,
 - Below =space & time
- Rev 13:8 (look at NIV & NASB)
 - Cross reference 17:8. Important word study tool!

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- Either way it makes a statement about destiny (if we are saved before the foundation of the world, then Christ who is our salvation must have been slain before the foundation of the world)
- Col 3:1-4 (is it an unfolding, or a reality already present in God, or both)
 - The Eternal Now (eternal present).
 - In God there only “is”, everything stems from Him, there is not past or future – there is His mind, His being & His will (which is unthwartable). Everything is present in God
 - The one who creates time cannot be subject to time. Time = worldly construct
 - He is the Alpha and Omega and He is always fully realized, but He also projects and acts in history
- The deeper mystery here, is that HE IS STILL FULLY RELATIONAL with us who are in time.
 - He breaks through line of transcendence

Biblical support for the Sovereignty of God

- He is omniscient – knows all the variables (Job 28:24, 37:16, Ps 147:5, 1 John 3:19-20)
- He is omnipotent – has controlling power of every act (nothing beyond His control) (Job 42:2, Jer 32:17, Matt 19:26)
- He is all good - God who is love (Mark 10:18, James 1:17, 1 John 4:8)
 - In the Theodicy section (sovereignty of God in light of suffering), we will ask how all three of these can remain true simultaneously)

Why God works in history – in time, in space? Purposes of His work?

- For His glory ultimately (remember definition of glory: the revealing of His nature)
 - God’s work in Egypt (hardens Pharaoh’s heart) FOR the glory of the Sinai revelation
 - God purposes so as to further reveal Himself to His creation in a way that brings about His glory.
- Why? Is this selfish on God’s part? -
 - His Glory reveals Him as Love. Revelation brings His creation closer to Him (Jesus glorifies God on the cross - demonstration of love that draws)
 - His Glory reveals Him as Truth. The two are intrinsically related. There is no love w/out truth, or truth w/out love
 - John 12:23-24, 13:30-32
 - This eventually culminates with us being glorified – His greatest demonstration of love towards us as His children
 - Romans 8:28-30)
 - The end result is the greatest of loves given to us through the greatest of sacrifice...even if we don’t fully understand the mystery in-between!

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- You must hang on to God is all knowing, all powerful, and all good (embodiment of love)...even when we can't reconcile it from this side of the mystery!

Summary so far...

- Ultimate reality IS above time in the eternal now, in God, the Alpha and Omega, the creator of all who set all into motion
- He knows all the variables of every action he sets into motion.
 - AND HE IS THE FIRST CAUSE OF THE DOMINOS!
- All of this reveals His glory – the truth of who He is as the God of love

TENSION BETWEEN DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY & HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

- Again, if He is Sovereign, can anything ever exist outside His will? No!
- He not only knows all outcomes, but set into motion course that leads there.
 - Exodus 9:34,10:20 - Did Pharaoh harden his heart, or God? Who's responsible?
 - Matt 27:9 - If Christ was the chosen Lamb before the foundations of the world, could Judas have done otherwise? If Jesus says, "not my will, but yours be done", than the cross was God's will. So did Judas obey or disobey God when he betrayed Christ?
 - Gen 3 - Could Adam & Eve have done otherwise? Did he just prepare salvation in advance because he knew what they would do, or did he create them with their weakness & put the variables in the garden that would tempt their weakness? If he knows all outcomes & allows the variables in place to set it into motion, can it be outside His will? Was there something to learn in the process that was important to final destiny?
- Romans 9:10-23 - note purpose to show his mercy (reveal himself, glory)
 - How do we understand this? WAIT until "sovereignty in election" lecture!
 - The point, for now, is that something is revealed about God's mercy and glory.
 - Do we trust that God knows what He is doing? ("Fully" knows, even as we see in a mirror dimly)

Question to ask throughout Sovereignty lectures

1. Does this make God author of evil?
 - He is not the doer of evil, BUT HE IS SOVEREIGN OVER SIN! (and therefore Sovereign over its outcomes - death, suffering, brokenness)
 - Because He is sovereign over it - He has the power to redeem it! YOU CANNOT REDEEM SOMETHING YOU AREN'T SOVEREIGN OVER!
2. Can God be all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving/good?
 - Illustration of a child walking into traffic, someone has knowledge of it and power to stop it – if they don't was it their will to let the accident happen?
 - What does this say about God as all-good (loving)?
 - If we did it, it would be evil – BECAUSE we do not have the power to bring redemption to it and work it into a larger plan for glory (love)!!

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- The empty tomb is glory of God over all sin & suffering
- Without the cross - there is no empty tomb

Assignment

1. *Read Job 1-14*