

ADAM, JOSEPH, JOB, AND JESUS, PART 2

(SUNDAY, JULY 28, 2019)

Scripture Reading: Job 1:1-12 and Acts 2:22-33

INTRODUCTION

I mentioned last week that we don't have to have exhaustive knowledge on a subject in order to act appropriately in light of the knowledge that we do have.

It is also the case that just because we have some knowledge we don't make the mistake of thinking we have all knowledge.

We believe strongly in the doctrine of God's sovereignty and in the doctrine of predestination because they are clearly taught in Scripture.

But we still must handle this deep subject with appropriate care.

The final point in the Westminster Confession of Faith in Chapter 3 which deals with God's Decree reads this way.

3.8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.

Last week we looked at the origin of sin in the fall of Satan and the fall of Adam and Eve.

We also gave attention to the account of Joseph and the many facets of his life which together so powerfully show God's sovereign purpose in his life and beyond his life.

Today we are going to focus on the account of Job and two passages from Acts dealing with the crucifixion.

Lord willing our study of these passages will help us as we reflect on the precious doctrine of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

1) JOB 1 AND 2

When we deal with the doctrine that God is absolutely sovereign and yet men and women are also responsible, some claim that this is not possible.

This is where some resort to other explanations that they believe are more understandable.

But when we deal with this doctrine we have to let Scripture speak first. We must submit our understanding to what we find in Scripture.

It is not contrary to logic to say that God is absolutely sovereign and men and women are responsible for their actions.

Now can I explain this doctrine in all the detail that some want?

No. We can only go so far. But there might be more in our explanation on this subject than we realize.

This is why a close reading and study of God's word are so important.

One point to consider on this subject is what is called concurrence.

Concurrence refers to the actions of two or more parties taking place at the same time.

The Christian doctrine relating God's sovereignty and human choice and actions is called the doctrine of concurrence.

Now as R. C. Sproul explains, this word concurrence does not explain how this all works, but it does describe the truth of what we see in Scripture.¹

Last week in looking at the life of Joseph we saw this principle of concurrence.

Joseph's brothers planned evil.

At the very same time, God was planning good.

Joseph's brothers were not forced in making their evil plans.

Above all the plans of Joseph's brothers stood the purpose of God.

We see the same thing in the life of Job as we look at the opening part of the story.

¹ Sproul, 56.

Now we know details in the story that Job certainly did not know at least at the beginning.

But consider from chapter 1 the different parties involved.

We have Satan who wanted to bring Job to the point of cursing God.

We have God giving permission to Job but also setting a limit on what Satan was allowed to accomplish.

Look at Job 1:12.

Job 1:12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has *is* in your power; only do not lay a hand on his *person*." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

As part of Satan's desire to attack Job, Satan incited different parties and forces of creation.

In verse 15 we have the Sabeans who raided some of Job's animals and killed some of Job's servants.

In verse 16, fire from heaven came and destroyed Job's sheep and also more of his servants.

In verse 17, the Chaldeans in three groups came and stole away Job's camels and also killed some of his servants.

In verses 18 and 19, Job hears a message about a great wind that came and destroyed the home where Job's children were feasting.

Were the Sabeans and Chaldeans forced into doing their wicked actions?

No. The evil that they committed was a reflection of their rebellion and the evil that was in their hearts.

Now did Satan encourage this evil?

From what we understand in Job 1, definitely.

Now notice Job's response at the end of chapter 1. It is one of the greatest testimonies of trust anywhere in Scripture.

21 And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. **The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.**”

And then we observe the words of the LORD to Satan at the start of Job 2.

Job 2:3 Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, **although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.**”

The words without cause at the end of verse 3 connect back to Job 1:9.

Satan asked the LORD, does Job fear you for nothing?

John MacArthur states here:

This is a crucial statement, because when Job’s friends tried to explain why all the disasters had befallen him, they always put the blame on Job. Grasping this assessment from God – that Job had not been punished for something, but suffered for nothing related to him personally – is a crucial key to the story.²

Satan responded by saying that Job still had not suffered enough. If he suffers physical pain then he will curse You to Your face!

Job 2:6 And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he *is* in your hand, but spare his life.”

After Job’s wife encouraged him to curse God and die, Job said.

Job 2:10 But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Lord willing next week, I want to share more from the book of Job, but here we also observe the principle of concurrence.

The LORD was in complete control.

² MacArthur Study Bible, s.v. Job 2:3.

Satan was seeking to destroy Job by getting him to curse God.

The other characters part of this dramatic account acted completely according to their own natures.

Sproul wrote:

God did not sin against Job. Righteousness did not require that God keep Job from ever losing his camels. Remember, Job was a sinner. He had no eternal claim to those camels. Any camels that Job possessed were gifts of God's grace, and God had every right under heaven to remove or to repeal that grace for His own holy purposes. So, in this drama, God acted rightly, but Satan and the Chaldeans did evil. One event, three agents, three different purposes.³

And Job by God's grace was able to persevere through an incredible time of testing.

In James 5 we have a brief summary of the life and story of Job.

James 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord – that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

2) ACTS 2 AND 4

What is the most wicked act ever conceived and executed that will never be repeated again?

Greater than any genocide, act of terrorism, or holocaust was the murder of Jesus Christ at the hand of the Romans through the instigation of our Lord's own people.

Two times the book of Acts talks about the death of Jesus Christ and those responsible for it.

The first passage comes from Peter's great sermon on the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2.

Acts 2:22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know – **23** Him, being delivered by the

³ Sproul, 59.

determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

Let us consider four key words from verse 23.

First the word **delivered**.

Him being delivered...

This word delivered is used only this one time in the NT.

Who delivered Jesus to the Romans? We can say this happened by the conspiracy of Judas and the religious leaders of Israel.

But ultimately all of this was according to the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God.

The word **determined** is used 8 times. The word here could also be translated as definite. This was all part of God's plan.

The word **purpose** here means a decision of God's will.

The same word is used in Acts 4 which we will consider in just a moment.

The final word from this verse to consider is the word **foreknowledge**.

The word foreknowledge is a direct translation of the Greek word which means to know before, but the word doesn't just speak of knowing something before it is going to happen.

The word might be better translated here as predetermination.⁴

Purpose and foreknowledge both speak of God's plan not merely God foreseeing or predicting the future.

And we must consider what is Peter's point in this chapter.

He is not just preaching a deep theological sermon. He was calling for the repentance and conversion of those who were responsible for the death of Jesus.

You are not just robots or pawns.

⁴ "πρόγνωσις," BDAG, 867.

You stand guilty before a holy God. And yet there is mercy shown to those who call on God.

Here is a very important point we can make. The preaching of God's sovereignty is not at all in conflict with the preaching of salvation.

The call for sinners to turn in faith and repentance is not in conflict with the message that God is sovereign in all affairs.

The second passage comes from Acts 4.

Here we have a record of one the most awesome prayer meetings ever. For when it was finished, there was an earthquake.

Here is how the apostles prayed.

Acts 4:27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together **28** to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. **29** Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,

Do you see again how perfectly God's control and human responsibility are brought together?

Let's again consider some of the key words in verse 28.

The word hand is a very common word in the NT.

It can be used to speak of a physical hand.

It can be used in the sense of power or authority.

John 3:35 The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

Notice that the word hand is also used in verse 30 - by stretching out your hand to heal.

God's power would be made manifest in great miracles.

God's power was made known in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word **purpose** is as I pointed out the same word used in Acts 2. It is the decision of God's will.

And the words **determined before** translate a verb in Greek that can be translated as ordained or predestined.

It is the same verb used in the beautiful passage Romans 8:29-30 and also Ephesians 1:5 and 11.

Rom. 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. **30** Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

God's decree does not make men robots, but it is revealed so that we will utterly humble ourselves before God.

Romans 9:16 So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

CONCLUSION

As I have tried to emphasize our understanding of God's sovereignty doesn't mean we have easy answers to all questions.

Even John Calvin wrote this about God's plan.

But how it was ordained by the foreknowledge and decree of God what man's future was without God being implicated as associate in the fault as the author and approver of transgression, is clearly a secret so much excelling the insight of the human mind that I am not ashamed to confess ignorance.⁵

This is a challenging issue.

This sermon is not meant to try to answer all the questions or discuss all the issues.

And throughout your life you will no doubt face many challenging situations.

We must rest in God's sovereignty, but that doesn't make the testing simply go away.

⁵ Quoted by John Frame, 296 from John Calvin, *Eternal Predestination*, 181.

But God's perfect, all-embracing plan means you can fully rest in Him.

We are not robots but those called to trust.

James 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord – that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

Matt. 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. **30** But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. **31** Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

May you be humbled and encouraged knowing that God is sovereign.

May you also come to know His mercy and grace to sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Closing Hymn: 174

Benediction: Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!

“For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?”

“Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?”

For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever.
Amen.