

Fully Accepting God'S Sovereignty (Part Three)

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 15-Dec-12; Sermon #1134

I am going to begin this sermon by reading John 17:3, and I will be reading this from *The Amplified Version* so that you know it is expanded out somewhat. Remember, this was part of Jesus' prayer on that last night with His disciples.

John 17:3 [Amplified Version] And this is eternal life: [it means] to know (to perceive, recognize, become acquainted with, and understand) You, the only true and real God, and [likewise] to know Him, Jesus [as the] Christ (the Anointed One, the Messiah), Whom You have sent.

Do not let the term “eternal” applied at the beginning of that verse mislead you. Jesus is not focusing on the length of life, but rather on the *quality* of life—actually the quality of life that God Himself lives. It is the only quality worth living forever.

It would be possible, let us say, for an angel to live forever, and yet as a demon, hate God, and yet they have long, long life. He is talking about a way of life—a quality of life, a way of thinking, and a way of acting. So eternal life indicates the best way of thinking and acting. It is the way that God lives.

This series of sermons on “Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty,” is built around the importance to you and me of John 17:3 in which Jesus states that eternal life is to know God. In other words, we really come to know God as we are living the same way, the same manner of thinking, the same way at acting that He does. The only way one can come to know God, as these verses intimate, is through a close personal relationship.

The overall purpose of the first sermon—the one given in at the Feast in Nashville—was simply to set the stage by making us somewhat aware that the God we worship and serve is fully capable of making judgments and exercising His powers in ways that we might find difficult to accept because we really do not know Him. Now can we live with that thought?

I have another scripture here that I want to read. It is one we are very familiar with, but it is important to our life. It is Hebrews 10:37-38.

Hebrews 10:37-38 “For yet a little while and He who is coming will come

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

The purpose in the second sermon in this series was first to establish that our overall responsibility to God, following our conversion and the establishing of a relationship with Him, is that we must live by faith—the only way we can come to know Him. Second, that the relationship must be intimately personal. Merely believing God exists will never promote closeness. It will never bring us to know Him and to understand Him. It will never promote a desire to love Him and submit to Him on the basis of His character and personality quality. Now why? Because unless the relationship is close, we will never come to know His character and personality quality. Only within a warm and loving relationship will it promote the growth of the very much-needed qualities that are the fruit of that close relationship.

During that second sermon we spent a deal of time on Isaiah 55, and I want us to go back there. We will just concentrate on three verses. In that second sermon we spent time on many other verses as well.

Isaiah 55:1-3 “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David.

In the second sermon we delved into what we must do on our part to feed the quality of the relationship. As shown in Isaiah 55, we must seek God in order to discover what He is like, and to imitate Him in His qualities. We must study His Word to learn His will, and to put into practice what we learn. If we do not do both of these activities—that is, live by faith and seek God—then we will never truly come to know Him because we will not be hearing Him.

By doing these activities we show Him that we truly desire to be His partner for all eternity, becoming like Him even though what we do may be awkward indeed in actual practice. That is the way learners are. We do not do well, and we need experience in order to smooth things out and to do them habitually.

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

It is clear that our part in this relationship is not costly in terms of money, but it is costly in terms of life and how we spend it as we live it. Paul described this cost in Romans 12 as becoming “a living sacrifice.” Being a living sacrifice is a life lived by faith in the One who redeemed us.

I want you to notice the symbolic terminology that is here in these first three verses in Isaiah 55: thirsts; eat; wine; milk; bread; satisfy; listen carefully; incline your ear and come to Me; hear; live. All of this symbolic terminology taken together within the context implies ingesting; that is, eating spiritually. It was a thing similar to this that Jesus was referring to in John 6.

John 6:47-51 Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

More symbolism there, but much of that symbolism explains, parallels right with the things that are written in Isaiah 55. Our part in seeking God is to symbolically eat the word of God so that it nourishes us spiritually.

We are now going to go to verse 63 as Jesus continues the same instruction.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

Words are symbols, and if they are believed and made use of in one's life, they have the awesome power, with God's help, to change one into becoming like Christ.

Now flipping back to Isaiah 55:3 again, it says here in this context that if we will do what He says—“And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—The sure mercies of David.”

Let us consider—“I will make an everlasting covenant with you.” Let us begin by saying that these people had already made the Old Covenant with God. This gives you a pretty good indication that what He says here in Isaiah 55 is not really necessarily only, solely directed to the people to whom it was being given to at that particular time. This is also

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

directed at those who will come later—meaning you and me. Now how do I know that? It is because of the word “everlasting.” The Old Covenant was not everlasting. Another covenant yet remains to be made forward from the time away from Isaiah 55 being preached, and that covenant He compares to “The sure mercies of David.”

I want to read just a little bit about “the sure mercies of David,” because He is talking about a covenant that is everlasting. It begins, and it never ends. Turn to Psalm 89.

Psalm 89:19-25 Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one, and said: “I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found My servant David; with My holy oil I have anointed him, with whom My hand shall be established; also My arm shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not outwit him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him. I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague those who hate him. “But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, and in My name his horn shall be exalted. Also I will set his hand over the sea, and his right hand over the rivers.

I think you can begin to see that we are blending here two things together. In the foreground is the one that this was originally said to—David—but in the background, and the main recipient of all of this, is Jesus Christ. But do not forget, we are part of what He is talking about here. This is the covenant that God made with David.

Psalm 89:26-29 He shall cry to Me, ‘You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.’ Also I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. [Jesus Christ is beginning to more clearly come through here.] My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven.

Psalm 89:33-35 Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David:

Let us connect this back again to Isaiah 55, because this promise of an everlasting covenant—the covenant that God gave to David—is being spoken of, proposed to you

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

and to me, and that we will be a part of it. So the covenant He is promising here lies yet in the future from the time that Isaiah said this, and thus this paragraph is truly aimed at the church, and in Isaiah 55 God is strongly urging us to seek Him. We live by faith, and all the while we are living what we already know, we are seeking more and more yet to be like Him, to know Him, to be doing things as He does. This is our responsibility.

It is helpful to understand that even though we have made the New Covenant with God, it is not a completely done-deal yet until we are in His Kingdom, and thus this paragraph here in Isaiah 55 is actually a stern warning to us to complete the agreement—the New Covenant. It depends upon whether we cooperate with Him by living by faith and allowing Him to be sovereign over our life.

This is exceedingly important because this is the only way that we will be created in the image of Jesus Christ. This is our part in this process. **We must seek Him.** It is not enough just to know that He is. We have to come to know Him, and the only way we can know Him is to live by faith and to seek to be like Him.

For those who have made the New Covenant, God has greatly increased our opportunity to be in His Kingdom as compared to those who made the Old Covenant with Him. He has done this by means of the gifts that He has provided whenever we make the New Covenant with Him, and these gifts are partly covered by the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 12; but there are things over and above that.

Are you aware that there is no promise within the Old Covenant for the forgiveness of sin? There is no promise under the Old Covenant to have access with God in prayer. I am not saying God did not do this. I am saying there is no promise. There is a difference between something being promised and something that He did simply as an act of His mercy. There is no promise attached to the Old Covenant for forgiveness of sin *after* justification, and there is no promise of the great gift of the Holy Spirit, and that is the continuous grace upon grace that we read of in John the first chapter that enables us to overcome.

All of these promises are given to help us come to know Him better. In each of the terms in those first three verses in Isaiah 55 are important symbols that have spiritual meaning, but I want to focus briefly on only two of them: the word “ear” and the word “hear” in verse 3. In verse 2 God adds to those terms “listen” and “eat.” Now understanding these terms is very important to our spiritual well-being.

When I gave that second sermon, in it we saw a specific aspect regarding hearing, in that “hearing” leads to understanding, but now we are going to see hearing’s *overall*

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)
importance to living by faith in this context. Here it is. We are going to go to a scripture you may know from memory.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

God makes things so simple and so clear, and what He says there, if anyone desires to be in God's Kingdom, "hearing" is absolutely essential, because such a one must live by faith as part of one's responsibility, and salvation is by grace through faith, and faith comes by hearing. Let us not forget understanding. Understanding comes through hearing. The two are attached.

Without hearing, without understanding in the biblical sense, one will never have faith in the first place, will never even get away from home plate. Salvation would be impossible. Recall that "hearing" in the biblical sense does not mean to hear the sound of, but rather to grasp an understanding of. Hearing is absolutely necessary to having faith that saves, and this is a reality.

I am going to tell you why we are going through this. How do we hear, brethren? How do we hear the Word of God? We either hear it through a sermon that is given by another human being, or angel, or whatever. That is how we hear. The second way we hear is by our own personal reading and study of God's Word. Without hearing received in those two ways we will never come to know God. This is why we *push, push, push* study!

Our mind has to have something to work with, and what that mind works with is the Word of God, and if we believe it, and if we put it into practice by faith in our life, then it begins to become a part of us. It is ingested into the mind, and it begins to help us conduct ourselves in the same way that Jesus Christ would. Faith comes by hearing. That is so simple, and it should be so easily understood, but it is why we have to discipline ourselves to study God's Word.

I want to give you a little additional thing here. Virtually every modern translation of Romans 10:17 now reads: "So then faith does come from hearing, and hearing through the word of *Christ*."

Many of these modern translations change only one word. You see, that is not the way the *King James Version* or the *New King James Version* translates it. It is alternately translated "the word concerning Christ." Let me hasten to tell you that the *King James*

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Version and the *New King James Version* are **not** wrong. That is a correct translation you see in the KJV and NKJV. Then why make the change from what the KJV says to what places the emphasis on Christ rather than on the broader term “God”? There is actually some interesting logic here.

The book of Romans is easily perceived—understood—as the most doctrinal book. The doctrinal foundation of the whole plan of God is in the book of Romans, and so the reason some translators have changed the word “God” to the word “Christ” in Romans 10:17 is because the entire context of the book of Romans presents us with the knowledge of the spiritual foundation for a life in Christ, and living by faith. There is some interesting logic here.

Why do they focus on Christ rather than the Father? Well, they have done it in the hope that people will get the point. Who is our Savior? Jesus Christ is. Who is our High Priest? Jesus Christ is. Who is the fundamental contact between the God family and ourselves right now? It is Jesus Christ, and thus the epistle to the Romans is telling us how to have a living and growing relationship with the Father and the Son *through* Christ

Now it is by this means of understanding the Word of God—and Christ is the *living* Word of God—but translations other than the KJV and the NKJV help us to understand that the focus in seeking salvation must be on Christ, on who Christ is as a person and Savior, and what He specifically taught. It is just really a gentle nudge to make us think about Christ.

Protestants have come up with this idea of “the centrality of Christ.” It is not wrong. It sounds kind of silly, but that is what they are doing, even by this translation. That is why I hasten to tell you that if your Bible says “God,” there is nothing wrong with that. Not at all.

One of the reasons I am going into this, at least a little bit, is that, believe it or not, one of the major criticisms that the Protestant world had against the Worldwide Church of God was that they did not focus on Christ. That is kind of interesting, and when I reflect on that I have to recognize that we do not bypass Him, but on the other hand we do not really focus on Him. I think they have gone overboard, to tell you the truth, and there needs to be some balance there.

But I want you to understand that God is doing everything through the Son, and we cannot leave Him out of our thinking. And really, in a sense, when it comes right down to it, our intimacy is with the Son. We are not going to meet the Father until the wedding of the Bridegroom and the Bride, and all of our contact with the God-family is going to be

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>) through Jesus Christ. Do we not even begin prayers here: "We come before you Father *through* Jesus Christ."

Let us put a little exclamation point on this. Turn to Matthew 17:5. This has the transfiguration of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 17:5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

That was very deliberately stated, and I am sure that it was stated by the Father in order to provide something for us to hang onto to really fully understand that our relationship even with the Father is through the Son. He is the Savior, and He is the Teacher to whom we primarily look.

Now we look at these books in the Bible and we see that they were authored by Moses. They were authored by Isaiah. They were authored by Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and on and on, but the Father wants us to understand that all things are being done through the Son, and it was the Son who brought the gospel. I think that this is the Father telling us, "I want you to focus on My Son. Hear Him."

You know very well from Richard's sermon just last week or so that the people in Corinth were dividing themselves up. "I am of Peter." "I am of Paul," "I am of this," "I am of that." **No! You hear Christ!** He is the One we have to answer to. We can look beyond that and understand that the One who became Jesus Christ is the same One who is urging us in Isaiah 55 to seek Him, and that the path for seeking Him is largely achieved by hearing Him. In addition, hearing Him is also the path to increasing faith, and therefore being enabled to live by faith. This pleases both the Father and the Son.

The first sentence of the first paragraph in *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, Page 223 in the article entitled "Ear, hearing" is this: "In the Bible the ear is synonymous with the heart and mind as an organ of cognition." Cognition means "the state of knowing." Where does understanding come from? It comes from hearing the Word of God. Synonyms of cognition are: understanding, grasping, getting.

I have reached the following conclusion: Since our responsibility is to come to know God, accomplishing "knowing God" requires effort. This is what I am primarily getting out of Isaiah 55. This is where we have to spend our time, our energies if we are going to know God. Accomplishing "knowing God" requires effort. It does not happen

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

accidentally. Biblically, the hearing involved in Isaiah 55 and Romans 10:17 requires concentrated focused listening and meditated understanding. If you will understand this in the right way, we have got to get rid of feelings regarding our personal salvation and base the way we live our lives on God's truth.

Let me ask you a question. Do you understand why I am giving these commentaries? I have a definite purpose that I am trying to accomplish in them. It is to help us grasp, little by little, that apart from God there is no hope. Mankind is doomed! Mankind has put itself into a hopeless bind from which it cannot extricate itself, and it is this overall picture that leads to living faith and grasps the importance of seeing the sovereignty of God in our lives. There is no salvation without Jesus Christ. There is no hope for mankind unless Jesus Christ returns and rescues us from the way we have lived. The best efforts of man keep leading us into traps because mankind is being led by a murderer.

When I began this series of sermons at the Feast with many descriptions regarding the greatness of our God and Savior, and sometimes the mysterious quality of His judgment, I did this in order to set the bar high so that we would have clarity to shoot for and our faith being increased because we know Him.

Now John 17:3 succinctly tells us why knowing Him is so very important, but I want you to turn now to Daniel 11 because coming to know God is becoming exceedingly more important for you and me. Daniel 11:32 describes things that happened during the time of Antiochus IV, but this prophecy extends right on up into the time of the end, and he is talking here about "the time of the end" now.

Daniel 11:32 Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.

Here is part of the aim, the goal that I am hoping to help us achieve. What we are looking for is what will help us endure the times we live in. Remember, Jesus said in Matthew 24, "He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." This ratchets things up here in Daniel 11:32, and so in order to have a clearest and most motivating vision of our invisible God to a degree of the way Moses did, to truly see Him, we must seek Him before we will truly come to know Him.

The occasion spoken of in Daniel 11:32 is gradually appearing on the horizon, and thus in this series we have explored the means that will work to produce the understanding

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

and traits that will prepare us for this eventuality should God choose us for this assignment. When the pressure is really on, do you want to do great exploits? Do you want to glorify God in the manner of your example of Him because you really know Him, you know what He is like, you know how He would want you to respond? This occasion in verse 32 is gradually appearing on the horizon, and so what we are exploring is what will help us to not merely endure the times we live in, but even be prepared to do more.

Now what will fully accepting God's sovereignty over our life produce? One thing is sure. We will come to know Him with an intimacy not otherwise possible; but at the same time God will add other positive qualities to our life that will bring us ever closer to the true image of Jesus Christ. Those who know Him, those who see Him, are those who so respect and reverence Him, that they never want to be far out of His presence, never want to disappoint Him. They are the ones that the Bible describes as "hearing Him."

"Hearing God" is a major fruit of fully accepting God into one's life. It is they who will do great exploits, whatever they happen to be, great or small. The only way to be in that position is to make the best use of the relationship He made available to us by seeking Him to always *be* in His spiritual presence.

In one way of selfishly putting this, is that God has all the goodies. Do we want to partake of life with Him? That is looking at it in a self-centered way, but it is also a truth. If we really want what God is, what He has, what He wants to give us, then we are going to make the effort to really hear Him, to know Him, and to please Him. It is those people who will have paid the cost of living by faith in the present while always looking to the future to the Kingdom of God and are humbly accepting His judgment regarding their life and making good daily use of His Word who are going to receive God's blessing and do exploits.

Let us look at this "fear of God," because it is very definitely a fruit of accepting fully the sovereignty of God.

Fear is generally defined as an unpleasant emotion that arises because of exposure to danger, or expectation of lack, or pain. Its synonyms in a given context might include dread, terror, panic, alarm, and fright. It is a powerful motivator of the fight-or-flight reaction. The fear of God though, contains some element of the mixture of these characteristics, is not dominated by them.

The fear of God is centered on worshipful admiration and appreciation. Its emotional mixture is of wonder, awe, delight, pleasure, warm approval of all that He is in His person. The fear of God esteems Him above all others because of the awesome loving

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)
mixture of His intelligence, creativity, generosity, wisdom, kindness, patience, and mercy all within an aura of overwhelming, and yet subdued, power. He can be trusted.

These are qualities that are not easily recognized, and only one who really knows Him is going to recognize those things in Him. I will tell you why in just a moment. The recognition of these qualities in Him can only form from within an abiding relationship as the result of experiences with Him. If you know just that God exists, and you have no relationship with Him, do you really know Him? Do you know these people who act on the silver screen? No. You know *of* these people, but you do not know *them*.

The only way one can know another person is to actually spend time with that person and see how he acts and reacts. You see his understanding. You see his intelligence or his lack of intelligence. You see his stupidity, or whatever, because you have contact with him, and that contact is intimate enough for you to easily recognize what that person really and truly is.

This is why, brethren, the relationship with God must be intimate. It must be there, because unless we are relating to Him closely, we will never know Him, and if we do not know Him, we will not receive gifts from Him. Jesus said, "Depart from Me. I never knew you."

If you are beginning to put this together with other things I have already said, this is one of the major reasons why we must seek God through study. We will get together with some other verses on this in just a little bit, but right now I want us to understand and know that we know that recognition of these qualities in Him can only come from within an abiding relationship and as a result of experiences with Him. When that begins to grow within us, His qualities are like a magnet drawing those who know Him toward Him rather than repelling one in cringing terror.

Let us learn something from David.

Psalm 34:11 Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is not natural to man. This fear of the Lord is not built into the carnal mind. It is a quality the carnal mind will reject, because the carnal mind is enmity against God. It is a quality that must be learned from within a relationship given to those called and converted. The fear of the Lord is a necessary foundation plank supporting a life lived by faith.

We are beginning to see things added here. We are to live by faith, but we cannot live by faith unless we have a little bit of fear of Him, and begin to draw near to Him, and things begin to be added to that little bit of faith that we began with. And so the fear of God is a strong influence impelling us toward God and His way, not pushing us toward fleeing from Him. It moves us toward submitting to His every wish, as expressed in His Word. But what if we do not have the Word of God in us? What if we do not study His Word? Then we cannot really draw close to Him.

Since we have the Spirit of God because of God's calling, in one sense the practical effects of this relationship begin with how we use the Bible after God reveals Himself.

We saw earlier in these sermons how important eating God's Word is to seeking Him. Now consider again the terms we are dealing with regarding coming to know Christ: hearing; listening. We must eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood. Christ *is* the living Word of God as distinguished from the written word. He said, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." Faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and there is a common linkage of all of these terms with the Bible.

II Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So understand that the Word of God is given that we might be well-equipped with knowledge, understanding, inspiration, and motivation to actually and practically live by faith. Yielding to God's sovereignty is not merely the rationale for divine government. Doctrine means teaching, and it is by these teachings contained in the Bible that the great realities of our God and Savior are made known to us. It is by doctrine that we are gradually spiritually nourished, and growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ is effected as we apply what they teach us.

It is impossible to be formed into the image of Jesus Christ without His Word in us, because we must voluntarily cooperate with God in His purpose in order for Him to do the forming. The forming must be accompanied by knowledge and understanding of His will.

We must never forget that Jesus said in John 8:32 that truth sets free. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." God's truth sets one free from ignorance of God and His purpose; free from the power of evil; free from the wiles of

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Satan; free from being chained by human nature; freed from self-centeredness.

The doctrine of God's sovereignty is foundational to Christian life because, as we move through life living by faith, we must firmly, even absolutely, know where we stand in relation to Him and His purpose or our human nature will rise up and resist conforming to His will. So we must know, and know that we know, that He is close, that He is love, that He is wisdom, that He has power over every circumstance in our life, and part of the accumulation of this knowing is contained within what we might call book-knowledge. Let us see where God Himself said this back in Deuteronomy 8.

Deuteronomy 8:3 So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

Now what if we do not study? What if His Word is not in us? What if it is in us only shallowly? See, God is setting something before us that is a major portion of our responsibility. I have divided this responsibility into two parts: (1) We must live by faith; that is, we live and act by believing what God says. (2) We have to seek God in order to come to know Him better each and every day so that His Word becomes part of us and begins to nourish us psychologically, spiritually.

Notice in Deuteronomy 8:3 how that manna—symbolically food, and therefore implying eating—is combined to show a spiritual need met in the wilderness. We can reach a conclusion: God's Word is just as essential to spiritual life as food is to physical life.

Now just as one must discipline oneself to provide and eat physical food, so must one exercise discipline to seek and ingest spiritual food. If one will not do this, then just as physical health will decline without adequate food, one's inadequate spiritual diet will lead to spiritual weakness and disease.

The Bible—God's Word—is given to promote righteous living. It is given to provide a foundation to motivate the subjugation of our carnal nature to God's will. Thus one of the major effects of seeking God and grasping His sovereignty is that even as it promotes the fear of God, it also promotes humility. Humility is the second fruit that comes from taking advantage of accepting totally the sovereignty of God. It promotes humility through admiration and appreciation gained from comparisons with our puny lives and character to that of God.

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Proverbs 23:7 says something very meaningful in regard to this sermon.

Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.

That is the way people are. It is not just the ones named in the context. That is the way we are. As we think in our heart, so are we.

If a divine truth is in our heart because of our exercising ourselves to seek God, then godly Christian character should be the result. The one follows the other *if* the word is put into practice.

The subject of God's sovereignty means much more than the exercise of His governmental power. It actually indicates His Godhood over all the creation in addition to His character and all His attributes. The Scriptures tell us that His appearance is so great and glorious that no one can look upon Him and live, and that glorious appearance is a visible demonstration of His sovereignty over all things.

Now some have experienced that awesome privilege and lived to report on it to us. There is no doubt that God can moderate His glory in some way, or nobody would ever live through the experience of laying eyes upon Him. A very clear example is when He showed up for a meal at Abraham's tent.

So God is able to moderate that, and He, from time to time, has given some the opportunity to see a measure of that glory. Remember what I just said, that the glory they saw—that appearance—is a demonstration, or it is a revealing of what He is in everything—His sovereignty over all things.

Now the rest of us have to pick up from what these others have written of the time that they came into, what we will call it, “face to face” contact with God. I want you to take a look at least three of these, beginning with Job. Job gives us this declaration. He said this to God.

Job 42:5-6 “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

That can be taken two ways. The word “see” can mean understand, grasp, get, have cognition of. It can also mean the possibility there that he actually saw Him, because it follows on a 2-chapter dissertation by God on His greatness before him. But what I want

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

you to see is Job's reaction. Job abased himself. He humbled himself before the Almighty. Why did he do this? He was pretty close to God at that time. It was because of his recognition of God's sovereignty over all creation and over all circumstances, and so he humbled himself.

Let us look at what Isaiah did. This one is a little bit better known.

Isaiah 6:5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

This tells of Isaiah seeing God on His throne with a seraphim above, crying out, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts." So what did Isaiah do? He cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" At the sight of God, Isaiah felt thoroughly filthy, and that he was nothingness in the presence of pure holiness.

Let us look at one more. God apparently gave Daniel a vision.

Daniel 10:6-9 His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

And then it appears that Daniel was given a vision of God, and he immediately fainted dead away, face down. Then in verse 10 he was awakened apparently by Gabriel and given a message from God.

What I am getting at is this: There is a lesson contained within this that is very important to our spiritual well-being. Every time that a human being actually saw God in a fairly large measure of His glory, what happened? The person either fainted dead away, or he felt filthy in the presence of holiness. What they were given that vision for is a lesson for you and me, and it pertains to this theme that I have been preaching on now for just about twenty years, asking the question—"Do you see God?"

Even when we begin to see Him truly as He really is in our mind's eye, even though we do not see Him with our own eyes, when we do begin to see Him, grasp Him, understand Him, we begin to be feeling toward Him as puny, as nothing, as vile, and as so meeting Him, we had better fall on our face before Him and humble ourselves.

Do you get it? When we begin to see Him in our mind's eye, it produces in us a humility that is not available any other way because we are coming to know Him for what He really is. Until we get to that place, we have a very strong drive within us to just push Him off to the side. So I am going to keep after you—Do you see God? It makes all the difference in the world to your life and your relationship with God.

It is absolutely essential brethren, that we get this vision of God out of two things: (1) by living by faith by the things according to the way we already know, and (2) studying into His Word and getting the mind of Jesus Christ in us so that it begins to feed us with understanding of what He is like in His character, in His attributes, of what He is in the sense of what He wants to do for us. When this begins to happen, the first thing that is produced is the fear of God which draws us toward Him; not away. We want to be *with* Him, and we do not want to displease Him in anything.

In order to draw close to Him, we begin to do the thing that we need to do almost naturally—that is, humble ourselves before Him. Two great fruits are produced from fully accepting the sovereignty of God. It is those things which draw us close to Him.

We will conclude with the thought in Proverbs 1:7 because there is something that begins to grow out of this that is really truly wonderful.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

Not just any knowledge, brethren. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of the knowledge of God, of who He is, what He is, what He is like and what He is doing. But it does not end there.

Proverbs 2:1-7 My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Three) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

He is a shield to those who walk uprightly;

Proverbs 2:10-12 When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things,

The fear of the Lord opens the pathway to understanding, to grasping God's sovereignty, and as God becomes greater in the eyes of our understanding, it paves the way and begins removing the barriers for growth of godly fear and humility. This is very good for knowing God, and so the Bible gives a vividly clear description of why things are the way they are on planet earth. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of the knowledge of God, and it is He that we must come to know.