

Fully Accepting God'S Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion)

Self-Government

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 02-Feb-13; Sermon #1141

In all of these sermons on God's sovereignty, the subject of government has, in some way and to some degree, been showing us that our responsibility to God within the new covenant is to yield to God sovereignty. We tend to think of the terms “govern” or “government” in the sense of a system or a body of people exercising rule over a state or a community; it is certainly used that way, and it is correct to use it that way, as such with our relationship with God.

I believe it would be better for us to think of that term more gently in relation to God. The term “govern” has a rather negative sense to it these days, and it might be more positive for us if we replace it with a correct synonym that has a more positive cast to it. I think it will be much easier to accept and at the same time be quite understandable as well.

The term “govern” is derived from a Latin term, *gubernare*, which means “to steer, to pilot, to guide, to regulate.” That is what we are striving to do under God in this way of life—to steer or to guide, or pilot ourselves according to God's will.

In God's operations of His family, the exercising-of-authority aspect is loose enough that we are free to sin. Our liberty is such that it is similar to driving a car on a busy, high-speed highway. It requires very careful attention, or we can quickly find ourselves in a difficult situation if we do not steer or govern ourselves correctly.

Romans, chapter 13, has been referred to quite frequently in the last couple of years because people are looking at it. By people, I mean people who feel that they are of the Christian faith. They wonder what their responsibility is to God in this situation where they are wondering, “Is our government really serving us in the way that it should?” So Christian people out there are divided in what their response ought to be.

There are some that feel that it is all right to overthrow the government. On the other hand, the other extreme is that there are those who might be critical of the government (and what it is doing), they do not like what the government is doing, but on the other hand, they will not lend any assistance whatever to those who are bent on rebelling.

Romans 13:1-7 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh
ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil, Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil be afraid. For he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due, taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

The subject of government in the Bible is indeed extensive. I would say very extensive. I want you to notice as we begin expounding on this a bit more that in verse 1, God states that there is no authority except from God. That is an absolute. There is no authority except from God. Though this statement appears in relation to a civil authority, God's operation of His sovereignty is broad and deep.

Even Satan, as God and ruler of this world's authority...all of his authority is assigned by God, and he is also restrained by God, exercising His authority on the other end of Satan's authority. Another example: Jesus told Pilate, in John 19:11,

John 19:11 You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.

Those in the church with a position of authority also receive it from God. All these people, all of these authorities, are given that authority in order to do their jobs. The matter of authority and power will enter this sermon a bit later, but Romans 13:1 is an all-important statement regarding God's sovereignty over all. There is no power but from God; it is all delegated from Him.

In verse 2, Paul uses the term "ordinance of God." Ordinance indicates law, and that ordinance clearly states God's will. Therefore when God delegates law or authority, it is His will that a person bear that rule. In these first seven verses, God clearly establishes civil government. We may have a little bit of trouble getting over the fact that God's rule is much more extensive than that, and He is involved in things far below the civil authority.

The point I want to get at is that obeying the authority, if it is ordained by God, also

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh

implies that it is also clearly our responsibility to respond by submitting. I am not telling you that these verses are implying that we must always obey it. We do not have to always obey it. The dividing line is: if those authorities ordained by God issue an edict that is against God's law, then we submit to God and not to those in authority.

Sometimes it is not easy to tell the difference between the two, but that is our responsibility—to discern. Other scriptures show that we are required to obey, as long as the state's authority does not contradict God's law. In verse 3 and 4, Paul comes very close to stating that the authority that God has delegated somewhat parallels the avenger of blood that we see mentioned in the Old Testament. He even uses the term "avenger."

In verses 5-7, God extends our responsibility to submit in order to keep our conscience clear, and pay taxes so the state can afford to employ these servants of God, but also even submitting to community customs regarding these people even to the point of honoring them, even though they may be behaving very disgracefully in their office.

It shows in these last seven verses that there are three general reasons why men must be governed.

First, to protect the law-abiding citizens. There is an example in Acts 21 when Paul's life was saved because Roman soldiers stepped in to save him from the murderous intentions of some angry Jews.

Second, they are established to punish evildoers (the avenger of blood inference).

Third, a government also promotes the general welfare by helping to establish peace. It is usually in peaceful conditions that a nation prospers, and everybody does better financially, economically.

I want you to see a scripture that we read on occasion. In I Timothy 2:1-3, Paul says,

I Timothy 2:1-3 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men [Sometimes that is a challenge. Can you give thanks for Barack Obama? Maybe we could say it would be better to give thanks for Barack Obama than to not have government at all. It would be anarchy. So there is some order because of that man being there. Here is God's word telling me to give thanks for him.], for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life [that was my third point: they tend to establish order in a

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh
nation and that promotes that general welfare.] in all godliness and
reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our savior.

We will review the formation of our government in the United States. The government that was established in this nation by the founders was developed in the late 1700s and built on a foundation of a combination of rebellion against what they considered oppression by England on the one hand, and on the other, a sincere desire for their concept of liberty.

These people, at the very core of the revolt against England, were unusually well-educated, especially in the history of English law and government. They established a constitution that even bears some resemblance to what God requires of us under Him. Given the opportunity by God, they assembled to establish a form of government that provided a great deal more liberty for the individual citizen than any other nation, as far as we know, that ever existed on earth before or since.

I will tell you why there was so much liberty in a bit. The citizens were given a government with very few regulations. We just heard about a book that demonstrates that there are so many laws now that the average citizen is breaking (a felony is committed) three times a day. When the constitution was formed, there were almost no regulations that were a part of it.

In regard to religion, the men who crafted the constitution were spiritually pretty much a cross-section of the more prosperous in the nation at the time. The nation had been colonized primarily by immigrants from England who were seeking a better life through religious freedom, and the families of those colonists produced quite a number of the men who framed our constitution.

Religiously they were products of the Protestant Reformation. Protestant doctrine dominated their spiritual thinking. These people desired freedom from the Catholic Church, which they associated with the corrupt governments in Europe. This was good for the individual citizens' liberty, thus they laid the foundations for what became known as the American dream, the Protestant work ethic, and personal prosperity. The framers of the constitution understood that the liberties that the constitution gave were not only historically unprecedented, but also very risky business.

Now, why? It is here that there is somewhat of a resemblance of our relationship with God. It is that for the American Constitution to work, it required the citizenry to so believe in it, who were also were religiously inclined, to voluntarily govern themselves

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh

according to its precepts. This was because that constitution did not give what we now call the federal government much authority to enforce the laws, and there were very few detailed regulations amongst its laws.

This is why John Adams, one of the foremost and outspoken of the framers, who became the second American president following George Washington, said, "Our constitution was made only for a moral a religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." He also said this (this is very interesting in light of what Martin said in his commentary), "The people have a right, an indisputable, inalienable, indefensible, divine right to the most dreaded and envied kind of knowledge. I mean," he went on, "of the character and conduct of their rulers." What he is saying is that the people were given the right to call their leaders into account and throw them out by force if necessary.

This is why the citizenry has to be self-governed. The founders expected that the people would really pay attention to what was going on. Unfortunately, today people—I think the overwhelming bulk of Americans are not paying attention to what is going on. Their attention is on themselves; they want to be taken care of rather than see the well-being of the nation.

I want you to understand that this has to be our mindset toward God and His family—that we do things for the well-being of the whole, not the well-being of the individual. We always keep God and His family in mind and its well-being, and we put it first, not ourselves.

In other words, if we put it into a national context, we really have to be patriotic regarding God and His family Kingdom, all for it and its well-being.

We know what has happened here in the United States. Our feelings for the nation have deteriorated tremendously. I am concerned about this regarding the church in its scattered condition. It is all over the place, and it is very easy for people to become so focused on what they are doing that they are not thinking about the well-being of the whole scattered church, and not praying for it and its well-being, and that the whole thing might be glorifying of God everywhere regardless of what group anybody is in. Please turn to I Thessalonians. Paul was concerned about this principle.

I Thessalonians 2:10-12 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe. As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would have a walk worthy of

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh
God who calls you into His own Kingdom and glory.

Christianity is not a part-time operation. God expects that it to be full-time, and that we be piloting ourselves, steering ourselves, governing ourselves, to go in the direction of God and His ordinances, of His will all the time, regardless of the circumstances that we are in.

I know that is a tall order, but that is what God's government requires of us. He gives us liberty to sin. It is up to us to steer and guide ourselves. That does not mean that He will not ever do anything, but that was the kind of Constitution that our founders put together. It was somewhat modeled along that same line. It would work only as long as the citizens took care to make sure that they were a moral and religious people. As that broke down, then the nation itself began to crumble.

What would happen if our submission to God breaks down? His Kingdom will not fall apart; we will just leave it, and we do not want to do that. It is no wonder to me, just looking at the scene here in the United States of America, that Paul tried so hard to stir them up to voluntary obedience through faith. Sometimes, when I think about how many failed in the wilderness after leaving Egypt, I wonder how we are going to make it ourselves.

There are reasons why so many failed in the wilderness. It was not only a lack of faith, which Paul directly mentioned in Hebrews 3, but that was the bottom line. We also know that God was not dealing with them regarding eternity. We also know that they were not given His spirit. Yes, they made the Old Covenant with God, and I am sure that they did it sincerely; however, we have something they most assuredly did not have. This something is a thing of so much value that it is without price; it far beyond our ability to pay. It is our relationship with Jesus Christ.

We heard a sermonette by Joe Baity that all of those gifts come from our savior—those gifts that He gives to us so that we can add our part to the body of Jesus Christ and to serve within that body, so that that body is glorifying God at all times. Those people are going to be in His Kingdom.

John 6:32-39 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and give life to the world.” Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh
comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up at the last day.”

Early in my conversion, I heard Mr. Armstrong say that over all the most important subject in the Bible is government. I do not remember what he specifically meant by the term "important," because I do not remember the exact context that he said it in or whether he later went on to explain it more fully. I only remember that he said it. It stuck in my mind—the thought would come back to me from time to time just like a song from the past, and I would meditate on it for a little while longer.

I think that what he meant by government is that the called converts into God's creative purpose would have great difficulty willingly, freely, joyfully, understandingly, sincerely, and purposely governing himself to live within God's will because it is more demanding than any other subject, because human nature is so persuasive.

Notice a little more closely what Jesus stated in these verses that we just read. He came to do God's will (verse 38); “I have come down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

We have been called of God to do God's will, and thus be prepared for God's Kingdom. Now should not doing God's will also be our purpose now that we are called, now that we are beginning to understand this calling with more depth and understanding? Have we not been called to follow in Christ's steps? Is that not following the same basic path as our responsibility in the New Covenant that also helps write God's law into our hearts and helps to form us into the image of Jesus Christ?

All of those thoughts are linked; they have a purpose. It is not just obeying God. It is obeying God to accomplish something—yielding to God so that we can be created in the image of Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to do the will of God. It was not exactly the same as it was for us; He was not preparing for God's Kingdom Himself, but He was preparing so that we would be in God's Kingdom. He was preparing to become our sacrifice.

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh

We will eventually get back to John 6 because there is a great deal more here, but I want to go to the book of Proverbs 29:18. I want to add this thought to what we just mentioned.

Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint. But happy is he who keeps the law.

Before I go on, I want to remind you what the Living Bible translates that verse as,

Proverbs 29:18 (Living Bible) Where there is ignorance of God, the people run wild...

Think of this in relation to us. What should be our will now? Our will should be to be to submit to God's will; and in order to do that, we have to restrain ourselves so that our human nature does not dominate the things that we think, say, and do. We do this because of the ignorance of God has been removed in the calling and we are now aware of Him in a way that we were never aware of Him before. Now we are free to choose to do the right and good thing.

To conform this better to the New King James version: We have the prophetic vision, and we do discipline ourselves to restrain human nature to keep it from exercising its will, rather than following God's will. Thus, we are governing ourselves as a normal part of our life now, and it has to be or we will not be prepared for God's Kingdom. We have to accomplish things according to our gifting, according to what we have been given by God. We must do in principle what Christ did. We have to do God's will for us.

This sermon is a continuation of the one that I gave two Sabbaths ago, and at the same time it is tied to the Bible study I gave in Fort Mill last Sabbath because that Bible study was concerned with the challenging responsibility of guiding ourselves to accomplish the awesome goal that God has opened up to us.

In that study, I was especially concerned with our worldview, which forms as a result of our calling and our relationship with Jesus Christ combined with the multitude of elements that are contained within the gospel. As we seek Him, which we have to do (Isaiah 55 tells us we have to seek while He may be found), and so we seek Him by learning what He is like—the way He thinks, what His actions are, what His reactions are—and they are revealed within His word, either by command or by example that He gives us there.

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh

A worldview—the way we look at things, the way we see things, the perspective we have on life, the perspective we have on events that happen within our power or whatever, the way we do these things—does not begin to form until God calls us and He really begins to become a part of our life.

The gospel adds to the calling because it tells us why we were born; it tells us detailed knowledge about how to prepare for that goal; and it is from the gospel that the vision forms and our life's goal is framed. You will recall that I used Hebrew 11, regarding how God states it within that chapter—that Abraham had a vision; he looked for a city. That is God's way of telling us that Abraham had a vision; that is God's way of telling us that this vision drove him to do what he did. By drive, I mean it motivated him to do what he did.

God tells us what happened with Moses. Moses saw Him “who is invisible.” He did not literally see him, but in his mind’s eye the things that he was learning about God began to form in his mind, and Moses began to look at things like God did. He wanted to be part of what God was doing, and it motivated him.

That is what that Bible study was about. There has to be a vision formed within us. I call it, “Do you see God?” It is the same basic thing. Do you see what God is doing with your life? With the Church of God? And that this has to provide motivation for us to yield to God, to pray, study, all those things that help to form an image of Jesus Christ.

The gospel is thrillingly good news. Abraham believed it. Moses believed it, and it provided them with motivation to submit their lives to God's will. I used the scripture in I Corinthians 9:23-27 which shows us Paul's example of how he disciplined himself. He did not beat the air, but he made sure that he kept himself under control.

My part right here now is this: Anybody who achieves a great purpose—it does not matter whether the church is involved or not; whether they are a football player, baseball player, actor, musician, or whatever—they achieve because they are focused on a goal, and they give themselves to the accomplishment of that to a degree as though it is virtually, if not the main, responsibility in their life. In order to do that, they must be determined, disciplined, and sacrificial enough to become exceptionally skilled at what they hope to achieve. We have to have a form of that, and the stronger that form is the better off we are going to be.

There is a “however” in this. Regarding what we hope to achieve in becoming part of the Kingdom of God, that is not enough. In fact, it is impossible without the help from Jesus Christ as we shall very soon see. We would never do it. I do not care how determined

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh

we would be. If He is not in us, it will not be accomplished. We cannot turn ourselves into God. Is that plain and clear? It takes power, goodness, mercy, kindness, vision—apart from us—for that to be achieved.

We will look at an example. I mentioned the people in the wilderness, and here is a parallel. We will go back in the book of Exodus, chapter 23. This happened in the wilderness; it is amazing that God would say this, this early in the book, and it has an impact on our lives here, many, many centuries later.

Exodus 23:20-23 Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way [The path to the promised land. Would they ever get there without that Angel there to keep them in the way? If that Angel was not there or they did not follow it, they would be scattered all over the wilderness] and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice. Do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions for My name is in Him. But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites and I will cut them off.

That is a forerunner of what I am talking about here; they of course chose not to follow Him, many of them.

John 15:1-5 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away. And every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without Me you cannot do nothing.

He means it! Without that relationship with Jesus Christ, we will never be in the Kingdom of God, because without Him working in us, we will never produce the fruit that God will accept so that we can be in the Kingdom. This is a relationship that is so valuable, it is beyond price. There is no way we can have it unless it is given. He gave us that relationship; we did not ask for it.

John 15:6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

Now we will look at this in a wider context. First of all, what occurred here in John 15 combined with what he teaches us in John 6—that they are very close in terms of the principle that is involved within them, but timewise the one in John 6, took place very close to the beginning of his ministry; and now, here in John 15, we are almost at the very end of the ministry, and it is one of the last things that He reminds them.

This teaching—exhortation—occurs because of what immediately preceeded it. Judas betrayed Him and left. What we are looking at, here, is a teaching that is partly in response to what Judas did. He is saying to them (and now also to us), *“Do not let happen to you what happened to Judas. He betrayed Me. He is gone; he has lost his salvation.”*

“You can do nothing without Me. You better do everything in your power to allow Me to be a part of your life and to submit to Me as your leader because without Me you can do nothing.” Almost the last piece of advice He gives them, *“Do not leave, submit,”* is what He is saying. Judas thought he had a better way of doing things.

Something else happened just before this. It was of course the Passover; in fact it happened probably less than an hour before they had taken the last Passover of His life. In that Passover, the one in which He changed some of the symbolism that occurs there, because He picked up on the Jewish Passover observation which had three main parts to it: The lamb. Who is the Lamb of God? Christ. They had bread and they also wine, the fruit of the vine.

All three of those are important to this instance that happened here in John 15 because every one of them was a figure or type of Jesus Christ. We will look at something that you know well, but we will read it, because we are getting close to the area of Passover once again.

I Corinthians 11:23-24 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you. That the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed [that puts the time element] took bread. And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat, this is My body which broken for you, do this in remembrance of Me.”

The bread that is being used here plays an important role as a metaphor for Jesus Christ; so we have bread being used there in John 13; we have bread being used here in I Corinthians 11 and in the book of Luke 7:8.

I Corinthians 11:25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

In Luke 22, we have the actual doing of that, that night at the Passover.

Luke 22:7-8 Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat."

It was there that He told them to drink the cup as well. So we have three figurative uses there: the lamb, the bread, and the blood. All three of those are of importance to correctly grasping what Christ teaches us, here in John 15.

The vine that He speaks of is the grape vine, and the point is clear. He clearly teaches that He is the vine and also clearly implies that we are the branches attached to Him. Just as grapes can only be produced by a shoot that remains attached to the vine, we can only produce spiritual fruit that pleases the Father and thus be in the Kingdom of God, if we remain attached to Jesus Christ. All nourishment from which fruit results comes from the vine.

I am giving a brief explanation of the point that He is getting to in John 15:1-6. The major point is: unless we are in the body of Jesus Christ, we will not be in the Kingdom of God. If fruit is going to be produced, it will be because Christ has given us the nourishment in order to produce the fruit.

This is why I am telling you that regardless of how disciplined we are, of how wonderful of a goal that we might have...if it is not in harmony with the will of God working through Jesus Christ, and Christ in turn to us, we will not be in the Kingdom of God. We have to protect our relationship with Him, above all things.

Now we are going to turn to John 6 and tie it in with John 15, because it is teaching us essentially the same thing. I mentioned the timing. Christ began His ministry (one of His

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh

major sermons is here in John 6), and He is talking there about how people are going to be saved by Him.

John 6:32 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven."

We always go through these verses during the Passover service, and I do not know if you are watching the calendar, but Passover is only a month and a half away. We are going to go over these verses more slowly and in more detail, because I think they are perhaps the most encouraging verses regarding our salvation that may exist in the whole New Testament. We will go over the eight verses or so and get this amazing statement.

Recall that in Hebrews 13:5 Jesus makes an iron-clad promise that He will never leave nor forsake us. The thought of a large portion of Jesus' preaching here is a comparison between food which satisfies one's hunger and at the same time provides strength and energy to carry out one's responsibility. This is important! The illustration is drawn from Israel's pilgrimage through the wilderness, when God mercifully and miraculously provided food in the form of manna. That daily miracle was produced physically for the Israelites benefit so that they could make it to the promise land.

In other words, what God provides, provides the strength and energy, to get us to the goal. He is beginning to build a case here so that we will understand. Jesus' concern for us is spiritual, and our accomplishing our pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God is the goal, not the promised land, and we are not really interested in what is physical. We are trying to get the spiritual lesson out of all this.

But, we have to understand that along the way we have to produce fruit that pleases the Father (John 15). We already saw that the fruit that is produced there is produced by Jesus Christ in and through us—without Him we do not produce any fruit.

We are putting the front-end of this solution to the problem, here in John 6. We have to eat, first, before energy and fruit can be produced. He is using the manna and so forth as the lesson. We have to get the spiritual lesson out of it—a spiritual fruit—rather than a physical one.

Jesus begins this section of the message in verse 32 by declaring that He is the true bread, not manna. **He** is the true bread. Again in John 13 and I Corinthians 11, we saw

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh

bread being used as a metaphor but in a slightly different circumstance. In this case, the figurative bread for spiritual nourishment, strength, and fruit is for those who are still making the pilgrimage. The manna is figuratively used as a type of Jesus Christ.

This is the key element: the manna is a type of Jesus Christ. The Israelites in the wilderness—they had to eat the manna; the Israelites who are going to the Kingdom of God—we have to eat Christ. If that nourishment gets into us and our body uses it, again figuratively, what are we going to produce? We are going to produce spiritual fruits.

So all along the way from beginning to end...God gives us the calling, you see, and then God is the one who feeds us along the way, but we have to seek Him and we have to eat Him. Here He is, right here in words—the Bible—we have to eat it and communicate with Him; as that comes in us, it begins to energize us spiritually and we begin to produce spiritual fruit. We see a physical and a spiritual parallel with one another—that one is tremendously more important than the other.

The manna is figuratively used as a type of Jesus Christ, and the manna descended from heaven. Where did He say He came down from? Heaven. The Father was the real giver of both; both were done through Jesus Christ. Thus in the wilderness, Moses did not literally provide the manna, which Jesus says. He only gave instruction for its use. The manna indeed satisfied their immediate need for nourishment, for physical strength and energy, and by way of contrast, Jesus, the true bread, gives *life* not merely nourishment. There is a big difference there.

In verse 34, it shows that the Jews (like virtually everything else that He taught) did not grasp what He was teaching. Thus in verse 35, Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life, He who comes to Me will never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." So in verse 35, Jesus explains His mysterious teaching more plainly, and what He is saying here, "I am the one that both imparts life and sustains life." Again, He is speaking spiritually, not physically. In verse 35, He completely identifies Himself with the bread. I am the bread of life, not the bread of nourishment, the bread of life. If you eat of Him, we acquire life.

We know that there are other things connected to this. The important thing for us at this time is this: He is saying that through faith, through an intimate spiritual union with Him—as a physical bread is assimilated physically, so assimilation with Him gives everlasting life.

In verse 35 again, He says, "I am the bread of life, and he who comes to Me..." That phrase means "he who believes in Me..." He uses the same phraseology in Luke

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh

15:25-27. So we come to Christ with nothing but sin and needing everything, and in no way will we go away spiritually hungry or thirsty.

In other words, He is saying we will be truly fed, unlike those in the wilderness, who as soon as that manna they ate one day was gone, they were hungry again. So what He is promising is that those who come to Him will get complete and enduring satisfaction.

In verse 36, as I mentioned in a previous sermon, God does not hold unconverted man guiltless. Jesus places the entire blame for their rejection of Him on them. In His judgment, they should have known what He was talking about and who He was. They were Israelites; they had the scriptures. He even said to them, "*You say that you have the scriptures and in them you have life, then how come you do not believe in Me?*" That is basically what He was saying. It was their fault that they were not taking what He said seriously enough to compare it against the scriptures to see whether or not He was telling the truth. Instead, they would accuse and reject.

Verse 37 really gets exciting here: "All that the Father gives Me, will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me, I will in no means cast out." Let me refresh you—just a little be later, in John 6:44, Jesus states:

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:37 "All that the Father give Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

So verse 37 is promising that all that the Father gives to the Son will in no way be rejected by Him and cast out. He will take them.

John 6:38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

In other words, this is a repetition of what He said a little bit earlier. If God sends someone to Him, it is God's will and He is going to take care of it. He said, "*I came to do the will of the Father; whether I have any feelings about this person that are negative, I will take care of them and I will do my Father's will, and I will submit Myself to His will.*"

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh

Do you know what that means? It means first of all, that the Father above is showing (and Jesus is doing it too) that the Father is really in command of what is going on. If the Father sends somebody to Christ to be converted, to be formed into the image of Jesus Christ—it did not happen accidentally. It was planned, predetermined.

The Father assured the Son, “*I want this person,*” and the Son accepts him—to work on that person. He will not be cast out. It is the Father's will that that person be saved. Do you think He is going to fail?

He said in John 17—He was talking about the twelve—I have not lost any yet, except the one who was foreordained to be lost. He meant Judas. If He can save them and they were people who were just like you and me, you think He cannot save you? We have our responsibilities to meet; we have to use, as we heard in the sermonette, the gifts that He has given to us, and He has given us a great deal.

It is God's will that you be saved, and the Son agrees. Who better could any of us have working in our behalf? That ought to make us feel so obligated to Him. It is beyond reason that He should do that for us, considering what we really are. Are we any better than Judas? Are we any better than Peter who denied Him three times, bragging about how good he was? It is His will to save us.

We have no excuse to allow this to slip away from us and sin with determined fore-council to do so. Not just once but repeatedly. The Father has appointed the Son as being largely responsible for our salvation, and He just vowed to us, “*I came here to do His will.*” And we just saw that it is the Father's will that we be saved. Who can resist Him? WOW!

We are just barely in a sense, touching the surface of what has been promised to us—things that God never gave to the Israelites in the wilderness, but which He has given to you and me. He did not really call them. They did not have any of the gifts to work with other than physical miracles that He did for them. And we saw the effect of those things wore off quickly. Their theme was, “What have you done for me lately?”—a typical Israelite approach. In this latest election, everybody was looking for what they were entitled to, rather than how much can I give you of my life, so that I can serve you.

There was another gift He gave to us; it is interesting; it is also in the book of John, and also in the same sermon that he preached to these men in John 14.

John 14:15-18 “If you love Me, keep My commandments, and I will pray the Father and He will give you another helper, that He may abide with you

Fully Accepting God's Sovereignty (Part Six, Conclusion) by John W. Ritenbaugh
forever, even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him, but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you.”

So this gift has within it a specific requirement. The gift is of course the Holy Spirit. The requirement is that we have to keep His commandments. There is something that in a way is somewhat hidden here—it is something more implied than directly stated: the Holy Spirit is something more than we have generally thought of it to be. We will go back to John 14:16.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.

The way this is stated in the Greek is this: it is implied that the spirit is more than a power. That spirit is also a person. And Who is it? It is not a third part of a trinity. It is the Father. If we went through the whole thing, He later on says, “**We** will come to you.” It is not just the Son, but the Father too that lives in us. The Son is there, the Father is there; and He says....**FOREVER!** What encouragement!

We need to think about that, of the value of what we are carrying around in our minds might be. It is frightening. It is given because we say to Him, “I believe you, and I will submit to you.”