

The Sovereignty Of God (Part Three)

Definition, cont.

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I'm going to begin this sermon in Daniel 11:32. I used this scripture in the first sermon, I believe. It takes place within the longest, single prophecy in the entire Bible.

Daniel 11:32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.

I want to take one more look at this as we begin the sermon this time, because the man who is spoken of here at the beginning where it says, "shall he corrupt," historically became the one known as Antiochus Epiphanes. Now we believe him to be the historical type of the end-time beast of the book of Revelation. This verse prophesies three things:

1) *The beast will be a flatterer, among other things.*

I take that to mean that he will not only be a person of great political wisdom and power, but he will also be a person who is persuasive and charming. Now it's good at this point to remember something that is said in Proverbs 31:30 (You can look at it later when you study) where we are given the warning that "charm" can be deceitful. Just remember that, because here we are seeing an example where charm is going to be very deceitful, and maybe to some, deadly.

What that verse in Proverbs is saying is that all too frequently charm is nothing more than a public relations skill that is used for personal gain. That is, it can be nothing more than dishonest flattery given to get another's cooperation in order to achieve an ulterior motive. What it is, is manipulation and control through flattery—making a person feel as though they want to

cooperate because they're being praised. But really the person who is doing the praising is manipulating the person to his own end. Now, in the political world, this is called "treachery." That's one thing that the verse shows.

2) *Those who have made the covenant with God can be corrupted* (or as some of the modern translations say, "seduced.") Of course that is related to the flatteries. Now if we put this verse into the end time, those who have made the covenant are "us." It's kind of interesting to look at the word "corrupt" or "corrupted." I did this in the *Reader's Digest Encyclopedic Dictionary* and it gives some of these usages that I think that you will find quite interesting. It means: "to pervert the fidelity of or integrity of, as by bribing."

It also means: "to destroy morally, to pervert, to ruin, to change from the original, to debase, to contaminate." When we put these first two factors together—the charm and the corruption—we ought to be able to see, mentally anyway, that God is waving a yellow caution flag at us showing an area of danger that we need to be careful of. It is highly unlikely, because of who we are, that we're going to be moving in the same political or social or economic or military circles as the Beast; thus, his personal charm, or his flatteries, are not going to be used in an intimate relationship like Proverbs 31:30 is implying. It's going to be exercised in his public policies.

This man is going to be of the world and he is going to be about as unconverted, but carnally skillful, as any human being can be. In fact there's every reason to believe that this man is going to be totally under the control of Satan, and there is nobody walking this earth who was slicker than Satan. He appears as an angel of light. So this man is going to appear as though he is going to be a benefactor to people; he's going to be politically skilled; he's going to be a powerful man carnally, but his political policies and strategies may very well ensnare us.

Now because of who he is and what he is, his strategies are going to be essentially appeals to the flesh. He's going to appeal to us to abandon our faith and to give our cooperation, trust and loyalty to him through submission to political programs and public policies by offering us physical

well-being, peace and safety under his umbrella. There will be glowing promises of preferment and reward. But just remember this: When flatteries fail, persecution follows.

3) *Those who know their God shall be strong.*

It means that they will stand firm. The flatteries, the apparent charm, is not going to sway them. They are going to see through the insincerity. They're going to see the traps that lie beyond the public posture of this individual. They're going to stand firm and they're going to do exploits.

This is given to show us how to not be deceived by his flatteries, and that is to know God. The key to this is being able to see through his political shenanigans because God gives truths that are eternal. The beast is going to deceive by means of a combination of outright lies, partial truths, and truths that are true temporally.

The people who see through his devious words, because they know God's truths, are going to be strong and that will give glory to God. These will be people who prefer to risk their lives rather than betray the honor of God. Preparation makes for strength because it firms resolve and our sense of purpose. So this series that I am going into here is designed to help us understand God's over-ruling sovereignty from the Bible's perspective.

Last week we saw that God's rulership reveals Him choosing to do, or not to do, on the basis of His own purpose and will. I gave you many, many examples. God knocks down the walls of Jericho and never again repeats the same miracle on Israel's behalf. He allows Stephen to be stoned to death, but chooses to allow John to be thrown into boiling oil, to escape it unscathed, and live and apparently die a peaceful death at somewhere near 100 [years old]. God heals Hezekiah, but He doesn't heal Paul. He chooses to heal a man, as we saw in John 5, who didn't even request it or didn't express one iota—not one drop—of faith, and passes by everybody else.

The point is—the thing we need to understand is—He's running the show. He is sovereign over His creation. Our faith in Him has to be with that understanding in mind, especially since we have accepted the blood of Jesus Christ and we became His slaves. He has every right to do with us as He sees

fit, and He is going to use us for his glory at all times. That's the condition that we accept when we are baptized. We vow our loyalty to this God who never changes. He is always going to be using His abilities, His powers, His wisdom to bring about His purpose, not only for us individually, but His entire purpose for all mankind. So the point is, He is running the show and He has the power and the right to do with us, or anybody else, as He pleases, when He pleases.

The question for us is, are we willing to live with this? We're not without plenty of evidence that He's manifested to us that He is deeply and intimately, with great concern, involved in our lives. Are we willing to trust His perspective, His power, His wisdom and His love? All the issues of our life revolve around the answer to this question. It's going to decide the extent and the enthusiasm of our cooperation with Him, and this in turn, the measure of our growth and whether we are really going to know God.

For the balance of this sermon, I'm going to continue showing more examples of how the Bible defines God's sovereignty, and then toward the end we're going to begin going into another aspect of this same subject—still God's sovereignty, but in another area that is very important to our understanding.

Let's read John 3:25-27. John 3 is the chapter that says, "you must be born again." This is the chapter that also says, "that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Now after that statement in verse 25, it says:

John 3:25-26 Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with you beyond Jordan, to whom you bare witness, behold, the same baptizes, and all men come to him.

John's answer is really interesting:

John 3:27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

Consider the situation here. Jesus Himself later testified that of all men born of women, none—not even one person—was greater than John the Baptist. I don't know if anybody ever living—any normal human being, ever received such high praise from our Creator. Nobody was greater. Maybe there were others who were on the same level, but the wording that was used was never quite the same as that given to Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist. So we're talking here about a really great human being!

Now, this man had attracted a great deal of attention. I'm talking about John the Baptist. Crowds followed him everywhere it seems, and they seemed to hang on his every word. You kind of get an impression of a man of very great zeal for God, but by the time we reach John the third chapter, his bewildered disciples are watching the fickle crowds leaving John to listen—and for some of them, to follow—a new voice. Then to compound the problem, it was John himself who extolled Jesus: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" A man so great, that this man who was among the greatest who ever lived, born of woman, said that he was not worthy to even tie His shoes.

So here he was, extolling his cousin, Jesus of Nazareth, and it looks like he himself played a very large part of setting off the exodus of his followers to Jesus. Some of these people, though, remained quite loyal to John the Baptist in their frustration of not wanting to see John taking second place. They entered into an argument with others around them. That's where this question of purifying came up, and the question was (if I can put it this way), "*This other fellow—this Jesus—is growing great and you're diminishing. How come? Have you lost your touch? What does this other fellow have that you don't?*"

Well, I tell you, John's response shows very much about his character, and why Jesus gave him such high praise. He truly was a humble man. He was neither jealous, presumptuous, envious, or bitter. We see no rancor in his reply. Instead what we see is a generous spirit. He **knew** who was running the show. He rejoiced in the role that he was able to play in being the forerunner to Christ. What he said in more common terminology is, "*I have to work and be content with what God gives me. He is the Boss. It's not as if*

Jesus was stealing disciples from me." (I'm paraphrasing here)—"He's growing because God is giving them to Him."

This thought is a major reason why the Church of the Great God operates on the policy that it does. We have **not** proselytized among the church of God. We haven't invited people who were with the Worldwide Church of God or any of the spin-off groups to come with us, presumptuously using the tactic that we and we only are the ones who are doing the work of God, or that we are the only Philadelphians, and therefore you had better come with us.

I can't say that I understood it as precisely or as humbly as John the Baptist did when the Church of the Great God began, but at least I understood that you don't go rustling sheep from your brother's corral. We have to remember Who owns us. It's the Father and the Son, not the minister. I think it's so interesting in Jeremiah 23 that God charges people who ran, but He says that He didn't send them.

So, if the Father wants to give us people to work with that we can help, or that can help us do what we're doing, then that's the way it has to be. We're very happy to receive them. Brethren, there is no other way within God's will that will successfully work to glorify God. We're to follow Him, not run out in front of Him, demanding that God do it our way.

Let's consider God's sovereignty in another area. He is sovereign in the exercise of His love. Some months ago I attempted in my feeble way to explain something that was rather radical to many, I think. It was rather radical to me. But things were beginning to dawn on me that I had never thought of before, or maybe was afraid to think of before, and that is that God does not love everyone equally. As a matter of fact, there are some pretty strong indications that there are some people that He doesn't love at all.

Let's begin with Satan. Do you think that God loves Satan and what he has done? Satan—creating all this misery; trashing peoples' lives; destroying a goodly portion of God's creation (so that it had to be restored so human life would be possible)? Can you name even one characteristic in Satan that is lovable? It's pretty hard to come up with something, knowing the character that is there. Now, we might begin to reason that, "Well, I can understand why God doesn't love Satan. I mean, look how evil he is."

Let's think about something for just a minute. We can begin to see that this might just be a justification—our vanity is beginning to puff us up as being better than Satan. If we are better than Satan, it's only a matter of degree. But wait a minute. God Himself says that the wages of sin is death. One sin. Now, if we're worthy of death after one sin, we might ask ourselves a question—how much better than Satan are we? It's a question to think about. Like I said, it's just a matter of degree.

I think that what David stated in Psalm 139 is quite interesting in this light. Now here this is, in the Bible. I'm pretty sure that when David wrote it he wasn't thinking, "Well, this is going to be in God's word." But David truly was a man of God and as we can understand now, it is in the Bible and he was writing this under the inspiration of God.

Psalm 139:21-22 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate you? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against you? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

Then he says, God search me to see if anything is wrong with this. The implication is very strong that God said there was nothing wrong with this. This is part of God's inspired word, so I therefore have to conclude that God, under certain circumstances, permits a flawed human being the right to hate. Now, if it's all right for a flawed human being to hate under certain circumstances, then it's certainly all right for the perfect Creator God to do so. Conclusion: God doesn't love everybody. In fact, it says in Psalm 5:5, "You [meaning God] hate the workers of iniquity."

Back in the New Testament, in Romans 9:13, He says: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." I want us to see that in the context, because it has bearing on us.

Romans 9:10-13 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calls;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

God chose the one over the other even before they were born—even before they had done anything—good, bad, indifferent. So therefore their works had nothing to do with God's choice. Paul is showing God exercising His sovereignty—to shed His love on one, and curse the other. God has every right to do completely, totally, according to His will, and He made this decision.

Do you know anything at all about the descendants of Esau? It says in the Bible that Esau is Edom. The Edomites—do you know where they are? Do you know where they reside? Do you know anything at all about their history? Now those of you who do, compare them with Jacob—Israel.

Whom has God blessed? Who lives in the fairest lands of earth? Who has been blessed with God's word—Jacob or Esau? Did He do this because Jacob was any better than Esau? Not according to the verse. He did it because He is God!

He did it because He exercised His sovereignty in our behalf, fellow Israelites, and those of you who may not be Israelites by birth have been blessed by living—being born, or emigrating into this land that God has favored. We didn't do anything to earn this. God poured out all these blessings, exercising His sovereignty to do so.

There's a very interesting statement made back in the book of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 For you are an holy people unto the LORD your God: the LORD your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: [Now here comes the reason why He chose Israel] **But because the LORD loved you.**

Did the Israelites (these slaves in captivity) really have anything to offer God? It's laughable to think. They hadn't done anything in God's behalf to make them lovable, but God exercised His sovereignty, and He said:

Deuteronomy 7:8 ...and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, has the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

So there it is—right in His word. Does that offend you, that He chooses one and not the other? It's a serious question. Mr. Armstrong got in trouble with people in the Worldwide Church of God because he taught this, and some thought it was racist. Mr. Armstrong couldn't do anything about that.

God is the one who did the choosing, but because he reported it—reported what God says—some began to feel an anger and enmity towards him. But there it is—in God's word. Before we get any further on this, let's really balance the scales here and make this very personal by going back to the book of Ephesians in the New Testament.

Ephesians 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us. [He's writing to a Gentile group here] with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

"In love." Just like He did with the Israelites under the Old Covenant, He predestinated us according to the good pleasure of His will. Does it say that He predestinated us according to what He foresaw that we would become? Does it say that He chose us because we were part of some particular ethnic group, or that He chose us according to some excellence of intelligence, character, looks, athletic ability, singing voice, or any other quality that we might have achieved? No. It was the good pleasure of **His** will.

And now you, regardless of who you are—we have been the recipients of His choice. This is the same principle as is stated in Deuteronomy 7. Well, this is not to say that we did not have good qualities or skills that had been developed and so forth when He did pluck us out and summoned us into His presence. But that's not the reason. That love was something that was

generated totally and completely within Himself. Salvation is by grace. You know what I Corinthians 1 says, "How that not many wise, not many mighty, not many great after the flesh are called." Do you know that he says there that we are the contemptible of the world?

Oh, you'd have gotten a chuckle out of the way Richard Plechet used to put it. He said that we're the "cream of the crud." Maybe we're not even the cream of the crud. We might be the crud. I don't know. Maybe that's puffing us up. That word "contemptible" means, "less than nothing." That is what Paul said there in I Corinthians, that we are less than nothing. That's pretty humiliating. But we have nothing really to recommend us to God anymore than the Israelites did. In mercy He exercised His dominion and decided to choose us.

Let's go back to the Old Testament, again to the book of Psalms, this time in Psalm 22. I want you to consider ourselves in comparison with a singular human being on the one hand, and then an entire nation as seen by God, on the other. Now here in Psalm 22 are some of the words that were uttered by Christ as He was dying on the stake. Now look what He says here.

Psalm 22:6-8 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD.

Now whether you want to consider this the words of David, or the words of Christ, both of them were great men—one a man after God's own heart, and the other so immensely greater that He said that if you had seen Him, you had seen the Father. Yet in their greatness they write that they were worms. That's something that we squish under our feet. In our vanity, it tends to just puff us up so that we think of ourselves as really being something great, and yet David and Christ considered themselves objects of contempt—something that others despised. Worms kind of make us cringe. They're slimy, so we don't really like to pick them up. Wonderful creation—but they're worms.

Isaiah 41:8-9 But you, Israel, [God is speaking] are my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from

the chief men thereof, and said unto you, You are my servant; I have chosen you, and not cast you away.

Notice how He emphasizes His sovereignty to do as He wishes. So He chose us, and even when Jacob, as the nation Israel, sinned grievously, God said "I have chosen you, and not cast you away," and we see attached to that, it was also partly because of Abraham, "My friend," He says. Well, they were going to be facing some fearsome things. He said:

Isaiah 41:10-11 Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: ["I will never leave you nor forsake you."] I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with you shall perish.

Think about this. Despite the conduct of Israel in playing the whore, as it were—the harlot with the other nations—and rejecting the God who rescued them from slavery because He loved them; despite that (their harlotry), He has set His will to save them, and He's going to go to battle for them anyway and He's going to be with them.

Isaiah 41:12 You shall seek them, and shall not find them, even them that contended with you: they that war against you shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.

Why? Because God interposed Himself in their behalf.

Isaiah 41:13-14 For I the LORD your God will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not; I will help you. Fear not, you worm Jacob.

Here we have Jesus Christ—the Creator God comes as a man, and there He is, hanging on the stake, and He says to God, "I am a worm." Now here in the Old Testament, this mighty God says to the whole nation of Israel that

they are a "worm." Now, where do we fit into this scenario here? If the whole nation is a worm from God's perspective, what are we as a singular human being?

Isaiah 41:14-15 ...and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the LORD, and your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff.

So, the whole nation of Israel is a worm before God. And surely we, as individuals, must be worms too. But you know what? We are worms that He loves, and that makes all the difference in the world. He is going to make powerful instruments of us worms. That means then that God, in the sovereign exercise of His grace, is going to persevere with us and save us, almost it seems, against our will, but it won't be.

He may apply a great deal of cooperation, but He has ways to get us to cooperate, and He will. He has ways of making us say, "Yes, Lord." Some of them might be pretty painful, but we're going to say it, because it says, "Every knee is going to bow before Him." Why not make it easier and cooperate willingly? That's our responsibility.

Grace, in its broadest biblical sense, is favor shown to the undeserving. Grace is the very antithesis—the opposite of justice. Justice demands the impartial enforcement of law. Justice requires that each and every person receive his legitimate due. Justice bestows no favor. It is absolutely not a respecter of persons. Therefore, justice knows neither pity nor mercy.

Let's look at something in the book of Romans that might have a great deal more meaning now. In Romans 5:20-21, right at the end of this very long explanation, Paul says:

Romans 5:20-21 Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound, [or made very clear] But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin has reigned unto death, even so [in like manner] might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

I'll put what Paul said into plainer language. He said that grace reigns supreme over sin, justice and death. Now, because God is gracious and God is supreme Sovereign over His creation, and He is supreme over law as its Giver, and He can resurrect whom He chooses, and grace is His to give freely as He pleases, and grace is supreme over the others because God has willed it, He then gives it to whomever He chooses. That's what He's done with you.

This great God exercised His grace when, if we wanted justice—if we just wanted to be treated fairly (You don't want that, in relation to God)—His grace is supreme over His justice because He's merciful. Don't ever get the idea that we somehow either earned it or deserve it because we're so good. Because grace is a gift, it cannot be demanded. It can be requested, though, and we should be requesting; but it cannot be demanded. There's a difference in attitude there. Therefore, salvation has to be—it *must* be—by grace. Because this is so, even the greatest sinner is not beyond the reach of God's mercy; because salvation is by grace. All boasting, all vanity, is excluded.

Some of the illustrations that I used last week in reference to God's love can also be used in this same area of His grace. For example, Isaac receives grace. Ishmael is cast out along with his mother. Jacob receives the inheritance **and** the blessing. Esau—for all intents and purposes, is cursed. Christ's birth is rather interesting in this area in regard to this. For some reason God chose to have Him born in the tiny little village of Bethlehem—not in the capital city, not near the temple. God could have sent angels to announce His birth in every capital on the face of the earth and roused these people up and told them to come and pay homage to His Son.

You would think that at least He would have announced it to the Sanhedrin there in Jerusalem—at least to the religious leaders of His own people. But instead, He chose to announce it to common shepherds **and** foreigners—the Magi. They were set apart for this particular honor. Why did God do that? I don't know. He does some things that are beyond our thinking, and ordinarily we would think, "Boy! This is the greatest event that hit the earth since

creation! God arrives on earth like a human being—and He's born in obscurity." Well, I'll tell you...when we have a kid born we practically blow the trumpets.

There's a very interesting conclusion to a parable in Matthew 20 that emphasizes this. The parable begins in the first verse:

Matthew 20:1-2 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

The rest of the parable continues this thought, as the householder kept attempting to hire people as the day went along. Now we'll pick it up in verse 11. He's going to pay them.

Matthew 20:11-12 And when they had received it [their penny], they murmured against the good man of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and you have made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

Now listen to this answer from God in the flesh.

Matthew 20:13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do you no wrong: did not you agree with me for a penny?

Apply this to yourself and your baptism. Did we make a deal with God—forgiveness of sin, and His Holy Spirit being put into His family, having the very guarantee of eternal life in exchange for the forgiveness of sin and the lifting of the death penalty? He said He didn't do anything wrong here.

Matthew 20:14-15 Take that yours is, and go your way: I will give unto this last, even as unto you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?

That's the issue in these sermons.

Matthew 20:15-16 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is your eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

I don't know whether I have put any new thoughts into your mind regarding this subject today, or perhaps even stirred your memory to some thoughts that you may have had in the past, but haven't thought on for quite a while. Regardless, this is a subject that must be thoroughly understood and practiced if we are going to have a right relationship with God. God is Creator. He is sovereign ruler, and we are His servants that He has chosen out of the goodness of His purpose according to the good pleasure of His will.

The position that this has put us into is both humbling on the one hand, and awesome honor on the other. It's something that we don't want in any way to slip from our grasp since God has so graciously tendered it. We're going to briefly consider, at least begin to consider anyway, how God displays His sovereignty in creation, and this in turn will lead to His administration of planet Earth.

This has more to do with things physical than it does spiritual, but it has an impact on our spirituality, once we begin to understand how deeply involved in the operation of His creation God is. Let's go back to the book of Revelation, in chapter 4. Again this is a verse that we have used in the past during this series, and I want to rehearse it as an introduction to this part of the series.

Revelation 4:11 You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for you have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created.

The *Living Bible* translates that verse this way: "O Lord, you are worthy to receive the glory, the honor and the power: for you have created all things. They were created and called into being by your act of will."

The *West Amplified Translation of the New Testament* (not a real common translation) translates this last phrase as: "And because you willed it, they existed and were created."

Think back to that time before anything that we call the creation came into existence, and the Father and the Son were planning. Even at that time the Father was Sovereign. He might create this way or that. I mean, He might create a million worlds, or He might create one. He might create one creature with absolute equality, or He might endow millions of creatures with great diversity. He might create an organism so tiny that nothing but the most powerful microscope can reveal its existence, or a universe so immense that we can never discover its limits, if it has them.

See, He was free to do anything He pleased, because He's created everything by the exercise of His will. Now, there's an interesting statement by Paul in I Corinthians 15 that you'll recognize immediately, but it kind of illustrates this principle.

I Corinthians 15:40-41 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differs from another star in glory.

Why is it this way? *Because God exercised His sovereignty to make them this way.* God chose to create in great diversity, and with great contrast with nature and function. Thus we have on the one hand, lions, and on the other hand we have lambs. How different can you get? We have dogs and cats. We have the huge elephant, and tiny mice. We have the ugly, foul-smelling and sometimes vicious pig that, according to people who study into these things, seems to be among the most intelligent of most animals—that ugly thing.

On the other hand there is the powerful, sleek and beautiful horse, which seems to be among the dumbest, least intelligent. The lion and the tiger roam the jungle with a great deal of freedom, while the poor burros, donkeys, mules—live lives of continuous drudgery as beasts of burden. There's one animal like the cheetah who's created swift of foot, and then there's another like the tortoise who's as slow as the 7-year itch, and yet it lives a very long time and has a body that's armor plated—practically impervious to any kind of enemy.

Why should it seem strange that God chooses to give one person five talents, and another one? That one is born black, and another Caucasian, and another Oriental, and others, blends? There is a wide variety of families into which one can be born. You see, God has exercised His sovereignty in great diversity.

Proverbs 16:4 The LORD [now get this] has made all things **for himself**.

It may be pleasant to us—I mean all this diversity He's created. It may be enjoyable for us to study into and to be a source of wonderment. That's the way it should be. But Proverbs 16:4 is amplifying Revelation 4:11—that He created these things for His pleasure, knowing that we would receive benefit and pleasure from His pleasure. The last phrase in that verse is very interesting.

Proverbs 16:4 ...yes, even the wicked for the day of evil.

This is a stunning statement! This is a basic truth of Christianity that we neither hear very much of anymore, nor consider very often because it's become very popular for man to glorify himself, thinking somehow he is running the show. It's interesting to read Psalm 2 about all the nations steaming in rage, and it says there about our Creator that He is going to laugh them to scorn.

All of mankind has to learn this lesson—that He is the most wonderful Boss anybody could have, the most wonderful Ruler, the most generous Father, the most giving being, the most gracious and merciful being that has ever lived. But the issue from the very beginning (from Adam and Eve) and before that (Satan) is that we are responsible to choose whether we want to live in what He has created under His sovereignty. When we choose to do that, our lives begin to go in the right direction.

It's awfully hard to adjust to this, brethren, and that's why God gives us so much time.

Psalm 135:1-6 Praise you the LORD, praise you the name of the LORD ; praise him, O you servants of the LORD. You that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God. Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant. For the LORD has chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure. For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

Who is the Boss? Who can challenge God's prerogative to do as He says? Is there anybody who could do a better job than He did? This is one of the reasons we are so critical of other people, one of the reasons that we murmur—something that almost seems to be engrained in us Israelites. We can find a million reasons to complain. Do you know that one of the major reasons that we complain is because we're forgetting God in our thinking? He's out of the picture. Do we realize that everything really is under His control? Jesus went so far as to say that not even a sparrow falls to the earth unless God passes on it. I'll tell you—that really is watchful care! I mean—that is stunning! My puny brain can't contain that, but I have to believe it.

So, you think He's not aware of your problems? Sure He is. They haven't escaped His notice. This is why the Bible looks upon murmuring as rank rebellion, because what we're doing is challenging God's providential care of His creation, as if somehow He didn't know what was going on. There is nothing wrong with questioning God about why. The difference is the attitude. If the attitude is critical, it's impugning His wisdom and His government of His creation. We never want to forget what Isaiah wrote there in Isaiah 40:17-18, where He said, "To whom will you liken Me?" There's nobody that can compare.

It's easy to see that God has created all of nature with great diversity, but are there not also what we usually call the laws of nature operating and keeping everything under control? Is it really necessary for God to actually actively manage or govern His creation? Well, this is a question that I'm going to leave us with, as I think it's something that needs to be considered thoroughly, and I'm at a place in my notes that if I go on, I'm going to go on

a lot longer than we really have time for. So I think that we've reached a pretty good stopping place, but you can consider that question—"Is it really necessary for God to actually actively manage or govern His creation since He has set laws in motion which we think keeps everything running uniformly?" Do they? We'll attempt to answer that the next time I speak.