



**And He Will Do It, Part II  
(The Sovereignty of God)**

**Isaiah 46:9-11; Ephesians 1:3-12**

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A couple of years ago, I had a conversation with someone about natural disasters, such as hurricanes and tornadoes. Why does God allow them to happen? I thought about Katrina, and gave an answer about building under sea level and building on deltas, which are natural hurricane barriers. It's not God's fault that it was so bad, I said. We are partly to blame.

My friend said that's not what I mean...I want to know why there are hurricanes/tornadoes/earthquakes in the first place. Why doesn't God just stop them? God is in control, why do they even exist at all?

The issue is the sovereignty of God.

We are starting a 6 week sermon series on what Christians believe, particularly Presbyterians. We Presbyterians acknowledge the sovereignty of God. So in our short time today, I am going to briefly answer the question what do we mean when we say God is Sovereign. And what does it mean for us today?

I have chosen two scripture passages that are often used to show God's sovereignty. I have asked Jeff Babcock to read them for us. Before he does, let us pray:

Stir in us now, Holy Spirit, a willingness to hear, the desire to know the truth and the courage to follow in joyful obedience, that we may be formed by your word into women and men of faith. Amen

Read Isaiah 46:9-11 and Ephesians 1:3-12

If I had to choose one passage that clearly describes God's sovereignty, it would be this Isaiah passage. God knows the beginning and God knows the end. God's purpose will stand. What God says will happen. What God has planned, God will do it.

Most Christians agree that God is sovereign. However, what Christians disagree on is to what degree does God control the universe, nature, humans.

One extreme says God causes and permits everything. Everything that happens in the world is God's will. So when Hurricane Harvey hit the Gulf, it was God. I heard someone say that God brought Harvey on Texas because they voted for Trump.

On the other side of the coin, I read a sermon by a pastor who said that the sovereignty of God was the worse doctrine created by the church. It's a faith killer he said because it blames God for the bad things in our lives.

So, how do we handle the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God? How do we understand scripture when it says God is above all things and before all things. God created all things and holds all things together. God knows the past, present and future. God can do all things and accomplish all things. Where do we fit in?

Somewhere in the sovereignty of God, we have been given freedom to make choices. God has a perfect plan for us (Jeremiah 29:11), but God doesn't make us walk that path. We are given the ability to think and choose. God tells us what are the right choices (Deuteronomy 30:19), but God doesn't make those choices for us.

Yet, the sovereignty of God says that despite our choices, God's plan will be accomplished.

Think of the beautiful promise in Romans 8:28 that says in all things God works for the good of those who love God. That promise can only be made by Someone

who is all-knowing, all-wise, all-powerful, and all-loving. It is a testimony to God's sovereignty. You simply cannot work things together for good unless you are the Sovereign God of the universe.

I heard an illustration that has helped me understand the sovereignty of God and our choices. It's World War II, and a general is in his office looking at a large map of Europe on his wall. There are pins of different colors placed on various spots on this map.

The red pins are battles that have already been fought. They are in the past. The blue pins are battles being planned for the future. The green pins are battles going on right now.

As the general looks at the map, he is seeing the past, the present and future all at the same time. It is all planned out. In a sense he has stepped outside of time as he looks at that map.

Now if you zoom in on one of those green pins, you see a battle being fought right now. Every individual in that battle are making their own choices in order to survive.

Do you see how this explains the sovereignty of God? God has a plan from the beginning and God has an end (it is in the book of Revelation by the way), and it will happen. God is outside of time and sees it all. God will do it even though we have the freedom to make our choices. Despite those choices, God's will will be done (as we pray in The Lord's Prayer).

Let's take a look at the Ephesians passage. This passage uses words that apply to the sovereignty of God, but are applied to us as well.

Because of the sovereignty of God, we are chosen; another word used is predestined – a good old-fashioned Presbyterian term. This is not so much about who gets into heaven, rather we are chosen for a purpose.

Another word the Bible uses for predestined is election. What do you think of when you hear the word election? You think of that thing we do every couple years...we vote. We elect someone to do a certain job. We are elected, chosen, predestined, as our passage says, "to be for the praise of his glory." Our task is to glorify God with our lives.

The passage goes on...We are adopted as God's Children. We are bestowed. This is the same word used when the angel told Mary that she was the favored one. We are favored not by our effects, but simply because God loves us. We are lavished upon. We are favored so much that God lavishes His grace upon us.

God will do it because God is sovereign. What God has planned, God will do. We are chosen, adopted, favored, lavished upon...so we can glorify God.

So how do we respond to the Sovereignty of God? I can think of many ways:  
It gives us courage to face our days. So many things are beyond our control. If the universe ran by luck, I would be scared.

It helps us give thanks in adversity.

It humbles our planning.

It deepens our confidence in God.

We can marvel at our own salvation - it was done with sovereign power.

We can be bold with our prayers before the Throne knowing that our prayers, even the most difficult things, can be answered.

Let's apply the sovereignty of God to what has happened this past week:

Hurricane Harvey. I have heard many explanations as to why it was so bad.

Storms are becoming more violent and bigger and extreme due to the warming of the earth.

I heard that because Houston has no zoning and development plans...they let people build wherever. Because everything is covered with concrete, there is no where for the water to go. However, we have to admit that 50 inches of rain is a lot anywhere in the world.

I think we can agree that humans have a part in the increase of intensity of our storms. But back to my friend who asked why does God allow hurricanes to exist in the first place? Think on this:

I have been watching CNN. One day, an announcer concluded her time on the show with these words: Think about how this month began and how it ended. It began with demonstrations of hate and violence. It ended with neighbor helping neighbor, strangers helping strangers. People coming from long distances to do their part. There are so many volunteers that sometimes they outnumbered the victims in the shelters. We came together, united to save people. What a contrast from the beginning of the month, she said.

I don't know why God allows hurricanes and earthquakes and tornadoes. Scripture say right now we see through a glass darkly; in other words, we don't understand everything, but it also promises that someday we will understand.

In the meantime, we lean on the sovereignty of God - that God is in control and that hurricanes draws people together.. This is when we are the best. And maybe we need to see it to remind us that community still exists. Hope is rising up. And people are praising God, acknowledging his presence with them, talking about their faith and their church.

One man, a volunteer who was rescuing people, said this: "People are thinking about humanity, faith, love. It's a beautiful thing. I can see the joy in people's faces that people were coming together. People coming together for one purpose, one cause."

This, too, is the sovereignty of God.