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# SOVEREIGNTY

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## Talk 2: The Lord who is God

“Why would I want to ‘reconcile’ human responsibility and God’s sovereignty?  
They are not enemies, they are friends.” *C. H. Spurgeon.*

### A. WORSHIPPING THE GOD WHO IS

#### Problems

1. Human free will and responsibility
2. Suffering and evil

#### “Solutions”

1. Limiting God's will
2. Limiting God's knowledge

*“The value that regards knowledge as a good can be more fully realised by foregoing the possibility of being a complete know-all, and creating a world in which the future actions of others can only be surmised, and sometimes not even that. If God created man in His own image, He must have created him capable of new initiatives and new insights which cannot be precisely and infallibly known and which give to the future a perpetual freshness as the inexhaustible variety of possible thoughts and actions, on the part of His children as well as Himself, crystallises into actuality” J. R. Lucas, The Future.*

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## **B. GOD'S WILL**

### **1. God's plan**

Psalm 139:16 All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Prov. 21:30 There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord.

### **2. God's desire**

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Ezek 18: Why will you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!

Ephesians 1: 4: For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons...

## **C. THE WILL OF MAN**

### **1. Choices**

*"An antinomy exists when a pair of principles stand side by side, seemingly irreconcilable, yet both undeniable. There are cogent reasons for believing each of them; each rests on clear and solid evidence; but it is a mystery to you how they can be squared with each other."* J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*.

### **2. Will**

Josh. 24:14-24 "... choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! ... "No! We will serve the Lord." Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord."

Rom. 14:5-12 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.... So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

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### 3. Freedom

- Genesis 6:5      The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.
- John 8:34        "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin....44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire.
- Rom. 8:5         Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.
- Eph. 4:17        So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

*"The natural man is free to come to God but not able. How can he repent of his sin when he loves it? How can he come to God when he hates him?"* Loraine Boettner.

### D. COMPATIBILISM

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## 1. Joseph

Gen. 45:4      Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! 5 And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. 6 For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be ploughing and reaping. 7 But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance

Gen. 50:20      You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

## 2. Pharaoh

Exodus 7:1-5

## 3. Cyrus

Isaiah 44-45

*“The problem of the relationship of God’s will to the created will [i.e. human will] is not to be solved by denying God’s sovereignty, as though through the creation of human wills and demonic wills he had delimited an area within his creation over which he has given up control. Not only is this contrary to the whole of revelation, but it would be unbearable and terrifying were it true, and prayer and trust would become impossible. God has not limited himself in any way at all. The Bible knows nothing of such an idea.”* David Broughton-Knox

## 4. Jesus

Acts 2 (ESV)      22 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Acts 4: 27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

1 Peter 1: 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

## **E. IMPLICATIONS: GOD USES MEANS**

### **1. Responsibility**

1 Cor. 3: 5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

1 Cor. 9: 19 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible....27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

1 Cor. 10: 31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— 33 even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Acts 14: 1 At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.

Col. 1: 28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. 29 To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

## 2. Prayer

1 John 5: 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

*“In this extraordinary way, God draws us in to his government of the world, so that our God-shaped desires and yearnings actually shape what happens! There is no higher privilege.” Christopher Ash.*

## 3. Perseverance

1 Corinthians 6: 9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5: 19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Hebrews 3: 12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 3 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

Phil 2 12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose

## **RESPONSE**

Something I've been reminded of:

Something new I've learned:

Something I need to do or change as a result: