

# Divine Sovereignty - John's Gospel II

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[ 0 : 00 ] The Gospel of Matthew, and the first will be in chapter 15, 1-14.

Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?

For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread. And he answered and said to them, Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?

For God said, Honor your father and mother, and he who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.

But you say, Whoever says to his father or mother, Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God.

[ 1 : 14 ] He is not to honor his father or his mother. And by this you invalidate the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

You hypocrites! Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you. This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.

But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. After Jesus called the crowd to him, He said to them, Hear and understand.

It is not what enters the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.

Then the disciples came and said to him, Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?

[ 2 : 28 ] But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.

Let them alone. They are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.

Then if you'll turn back a few pages to chapter 23, they're in Matthew.

We'll be reading verses 27 through 39. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead bones and all uncleanness.

[ 3 : 42 ] So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous.

And say, If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.

So you testify against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers.

You serpents! You brood of vipers! How will you escape the sentence of hell? Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes.

[ 4 : 55 ] Some of them you will kill and crucify. And some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth.

From the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berchia, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. Well, it ought to be abundantly obvious from the passages just read that our Lord cared nothing for political correctness.

He just insisted on calling things what they were as they were, and that was that. And oh, for a longing to return to those days.

Because we have been absent from our subject for a week, and we are considering or continuing to consider the subject of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and theologians and philosophers have struggled for years to coordinate these two, how can we make human responsibility mesh with divine sovereignty, how can we have a God who is absolutely sovereign, who orders all things after the counsel of his own will, and at the same time have created human beings in his likeness and in his image with whom he has endowed a very real measure of volition or the power to make choices, to make decisions regarding moral issues and right and wrong, and how can we coordinate those?

[ 7 : 07 ] And I do not profess to say that I have the answer. All I can say is I have some light on the answer. Certainly don't have all the light for sure.

That's become painfully aware to me as I've studied the scriptures over the years. So today, I would like to, by way of some preliminary propositions, recap some previous sessions that we've had, and then we'll move on into consideration of passages from John's gospel that seem to support the Calvinist idea that we have since abandoned, and I have been addressing on your behalf.

So let me begin by some remarks that I've jotted down. The entire system of Calvin, and by the way, let me say this, to show you how far declined our nation has become in biblical illiteracy, I am convinced that in the vast majority of churches across the country, the comments that I am going to read would be listened to by people in those congregations saying to themselves, what in the world is he talking about?

They don't have a clue. They don't have a clue about an issue that has been a central focal point of theology and philosophy for the human race for the last 2,000 years, and they don't have a clue. Because they are so caught up in other things, many of which don't amount to a hill of beans, but where you have come from and why you are here and where you are going and why is pretty important.

[ 9 : 10 ] And all of this relates to that. It's all connected. So the entire system of Calvinism, I'm not going to take time to define, I think I've done that adequately in the past.

The entire system of Calvinism is dependent upon the order in which personal salvation of each individual is realized. With Calvinism, the believing individual is said to have been made alive or quickened by the Holy Spirit, and as a result of having received spiritual life, he is then rendered capable of belief upon hearing the gospel.

This is called unconditional election. The divine process by which God alone, completely apart from the individual, selects or elects or chooses some to eternal salvation while ignoring all others, thus allowing them to suffer the eternal perdition they deserve.

The necessity of the elect being first made alive is due to the fact that they are spiritually dead, and being spiritually dead, they must first be quickened or made alive so as to be able to believe.

Thus, in the Calvinist system, eternal life comes before believing. All this is required to make the Calvinist system work, and for years, as your pastor, I embraced this concept and taught it here at Grace.

[ 11 : 02 ] We pointed out to you what we believe to be the rationale for unconditional election as first espoused by Augustine in the fourth century, later adopted by such spiritual stellar saints as John Calvin, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and scores of others.

Their motivation, I believe, was to elevate the absolute sovereignty of God, and to do so to such an extreme that God alone has to do with the salvation of a man, and that the man has nothing to do with it, whatever.

Even his believing is not his, but God's, who gave him the ability to believe. His volition or will need never have been engaged.

God did it all. God made alive, God elected, God saved, and the individual had nothing to do with it, absolutely nothing.

He was just chosen by God as one of the elect. Nobody knows on what basis God made those choices because that is not revealed. He just chose whom he chose because he chose them.

[ 12 : 22 ] Despite my having been influenced by these men I have mentioned, and many others whom I regard as my mentors, and men whom I still have great admiration for and respect deeply, and I fully expect them to be in heaven where we all get straightened out when that time comes.

So I do not disparage these men. I believe that they, like I, were simply misled, were influenced by others who were very powerful in their teaching, and very convincing and persuasive in their arguments, so that people bought them.

And by the way, isn't that what we're supposed to be? Aren't we supposed to be persuasive and convincing? It is you who have the responsibility to weigh and evaluate what is said, as to whether to give it legitimacy or not.

I do the best I can to proclaim the truth. I do not proclaim anything that I do not believe to be true. I only wish I could say that as long as I'm sincere about it, everything I say is so.

I wish it worked that way. All you have to do to be able to speak pure truth is just want to, and nothing but pure truth tumbles out. But it doesn't work that way.

[13:49] So that means you have to be Bereans. You have to search the scriptures and see whether those things are so. Because, just because it comes from this pulpit does not make it true.

It doesn't make it true if it comes from any pulpit unless Jesus Christ is standing behind the pulpit. But I am not he. So, you have to weigh and evaluate.

Despite my having been influenced by these men I have mentioned, I have discovered in my past 25 years of the 40 that I have been here, that the scriptures simply do not support the Calvinist scheme.

And this was a revelation to me like a bombshell. Frankly, I wish the scriptures did support it for the sake of my own personal ego.

Then I wouldn't have to hang out all this dirty laundry for you. I could just say I'm comfortable with what I taught you, but I'm not. And I now repudiate it. Our verse-by-verse analysis of each book of the New Testament has persuaded me that man is not incapable of believing the gospel, but is in fact responsible for doing so.

[15:09] Let me repeat that. man's spiritual death does not render him incapable of belief, but it does mean he is separated from God by his sin.

That's the definition that we have given you of spiritual death. It does not mean a cessation or an elimination of one's volition so that he cannot exercise his will.

That is not what spiritual death means. Spiritual death means separation, alienation from God. In the same way that physical death is separation of the human spirit from the body, spiritual death is separation of the human spirit from God.

death. It, spiritual death, does not mean he cannot respond to God in the gospel, but it means he remains separated from God until he does respond with his own God-given will, with which God has endowed all humans.

Those responding to the gospel and the offer of salvation are recipients of eternal life imparted by the grace of God. Those who do not, for whatever reason, are left to the justice of God.

[17:06] All deserve God's justice. Deserving it simply means you have it coming. Justice is the least that God can dispense.

Grace is the most that God can dispense. This, the dispensation of grace, is characterized by salvation being made available freely to all who repent of their sin and believe in the finished work of Christ.

And before we go to the passages in John's gospel, I would ask you to turn right next door to the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 17, a verse that is key and very important.

Acts, chapter 17, and remember that Paul is speaking to a group of non-Jews.

These are Gentiles. They don't know beans about the Old Testament and the law of Moses. all they know is their philosophy. They are all pagans. They are into polytheism.

[18:22] They are worshiping multiple gods. These are the same people of whom Paul said when he came to the city, I perceive that you are very religious. I see statuary and idols all over the place.

I even saw one that you had erected to the unknown God. So these people were really into paganism. But, now I want to point out something as an aside, but this is really interesting and it's very important.

Do you know who these people were, these Athenian philosophers? They were the intellectuals. They were the intelligentsia of Greece.

These people were descendants of Socrates and Plato and Aristotle. men of high caliber IQs.

And Paul talks about human intelligence and human wisdom in 1 Corinthians, particularly chapter 2. An individual can be ever so brilliant with an IQ that you can't even measure and be absolutely

spiritually ignorant.

[ 19 : 33 ] Because an intellect, an IQ, is no entree to spiritual truth. You can be relatively uneducated and what the world would call an ignorant individual, and yet have biblical insight and biblical wisdom and biblical standards that would elevate you above much of humanity, even though you don't have the recognized degrees and credentials to go with it.

So all I'm saying is, human intelligence is no guarantee of spiritual information or spiritual knowledge. And this is a perfect example because these guys were brains. They were all brains. But Paul says, knowledge, if all you have is just pure knowledge, do you know what it will do? It will puff you up.

And the word that the expression is given there is it puffs like a toad. Like a toad puffs itself up. That's what knowledge does.

Knowledge alone feeds the ego. It makes you proud and arrogant. Pure knowledge alone will do that.

[ 20 : 49 ] And interestingly enough, one of the Old Testament prophets, I think it's Daniel, yes, it's Daniel, says that in the latter days, knowledge shall increase.

Isn't one of the names they give to this current culture the information age? We have got information coming out the wazoo. But we're lacking in wisdom. wisdom. And the scriptures say that in the latter days, knowledge will increase, but it doesn't say anything about wisdom increasing. And wisdom is the judicious application of knowledge. If all you have is just pure facts and pure knowledge, all it does is makes you a fathead. It just puffs you up. It just makes you fatheaded. You just become so impressed with all that you know. But of course, you don't know what to do with what you know. You just know it. That's all. You know more than everybody else. Smartest guy in the room, and spiritually the most stupid, and don't even know it.

[ 22 : 00 ] So that's who these people are that Paul was talking to. And in verse 29, well let's look at verse 28. Maybe verse 27 should be included too.

Okay, so we start with verse 26. God made from one. This is Adam.

God made from one every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation that they should seek God.

Now, there's a good point for the Calvinist. How can they do that? And isn't there a verse in Romans that says there is none that seeketh after God? And our Calvinist friends rely on that.

I know that was one of my propping verses for a long time. Nobody seeks after God. God does all the seeking. No one seeks after God. You never sought after God.

[ 23 : 04 ] God sought after you. It isn't possible for a fallen man to seek after God. That's the traditional Calvinist line. And the scriptures seem to support it. But a seeming support is not a support.

And I will show you why this is not the case. There are those that seek after God because after all, we are told to seek after God. So what do you do with that verse in Romans 3.10?

It says there's none that seeketh after God. There's none altogether become unprofitable. They are all turned to their own way. There's none that seeketh after God. So how do we coordinate those? It's a lesson and we'll get there eventually. So here, Paul says that they should seek God. And one might say, but if I'm not one of the elect, I'm not going to seek God because I don't have the ability to seek God.

But here he's saying we should seek God. Do you think God is saying you should seek me? But I know you really don't have the ability to do that. But you ought to do it anyway. But you can't do it. But, well, that's nonsense.

[ 24 : 15 ] If perhaps they might grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. How is it that God is not far from each one of us? Paul said, you know, it isn't necessary to go up where he is and it isn't necessary to bring him down where we are.

He's very near at hand. How near is God God? He is as close as your volition. He is as close as your will. He is as close as your mind and your heart.

You make a conscious deliberate decision with your mind to connect with God. How far do you have to travel to do that? Where do you have to go to do that?

It's done right within your own personhood. God is not far from each of us. For in him we live and move and exist as even some of your own prophets or poets have said, for we also are his

offspring.

Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of men. Therefore, and here is the blockbuster verse, therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, and I just really can't put as much a handle on that expression as I would like, the only conclusion that I can come to is that God seemingly, and I use that word seemingly because I want to qualify and I'm not all that sure of what I'm talking about, it appears that God had some degree of leniency that he extended to mankind before the death of Christ for the sins of the world than what he does after the death of Christ.

[ 26 : 12 ] Now, let's read on, see if you get that impression. Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, and I'm equating the times of ignorance with the time before the death of Christ.

So we would say Old Testament times. Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now, now.

Isn't the contrast rather apparent that this is the way it was, but now. It's different. Something has changed.

What has changed? more information has been provided, and the more information man gets, the more accountable man is for that information.

Because unto whom much is given, from him shall much be required. So, God is now declaring to men that all, everywhere, should repent.

[ 27 : 17 ] repent. But, what about those who are not elect? They can't repent. They don't have the wherewithal to repent.

Remember, they're dead. They can't repent. But that doesn't square with the demand of the text. Because let me tell you something. God is not going to require anything from you that he has not already given you the ability to do, or has made provision for you otherwise.

And by that, in the gospel, there is an excellent example. God is not going to require anything from you that you cannot provide. Alright? What about righteousness?

What about righteousness that is perfect? The kind that God requires? You can't provide that, can you? No.

But God requires it, doesn't he? Well, is it fair that he requires something of you that you can't provide? That you're just at a loss to provide? You can't provide the righteousness that God will accept, and God says, I know that, so you know what I'm going to do?

[ 28 : 30 ] I am going to provide that righteousness for you, and I'm going to do it through my Son, Jesus Christ, so that he will give you his righteousness that I will then find acceptable, so you will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ, not in your own.

So God is not unjust in requiring something for us that we can't provide if he turns right around and provides it for us, but he can justly condemn us for not taking advantage of what he has provided at such great cost, and that is inherent in the gospel.

So Paul says, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent. And I don't want to wear this word out, but let me tell you something.

There is absolutely nothing in all of the universe, nothing, can so radically change the direction of a human being more than this one word, this subject, repentance.

There is only one thing that anyone ever needs to repent of, and that is an acknowledged wrong about anything.

[ 29 : 59 ] And it doesn't even have to have a moral base behind it, although we usually think of repentance as a religious term, it means to change your mind about anything.

Not just Christ, not just salvation, not just Christianity. If you decided to go to town today and you were going to leave at noon but it started to rain, and you changed your mind about going to town, that's repentance.

And people say, well, that's silly, that's not repentance. Yes, it is. All the word repent means is change your mind about anything. Why should you change your mind about anything?

Because you learn something that you didn't know before that causes you to change your mind.

And when you look out there and you see it's raining, that's information.

And you process it and you say, I'm not going to town today, it's raining. You just change your mind.

So when it comes to repentance regarding spiritual things, it means that you discover you were wrong about what you had always believed about whatever and you're now prepared to reverse yourself.

[ 31 : 16 ] This is exactly what happens when people embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior because they change their mind. And when we preach the gospel, when we preach the gospel, all we are doing is dispensing information and giving people a reason to change your mind.

We give them information about who Jesus Christ is and what he did and why it matters and who you are and why and how you are a sinner and where it's going to take you and what the remedy is that God has provided.

This is all information. And you know, some people have heard this over and over and over and over again, and they've never done anything about it. They just hear it and hear it and hear it and hear it, but they don't act on it.

And after a while, it just becomes so foggy and so commonplace and so, I've heard that before, but they've never done anything about it.

And when you repent, you take that information and you process it in your mind and you come to a conclusion, and the conclusion is this, wow, if this stuff is true, if what this preacher is saying is true, and I've been wrong all along, because I thought, I always thought I stood in good favor with God because, you know, I'm basically a good person.

[ 32 : 53 ] I mean, I don't claim to be perfect, but I'm as good as most people, and I've never committed any terrible crimes, and on and on and on. They go, you know, and then they hear the gospel, and the gospel says, our sin has separated us and alienated us from God, and there is no help and there is no hope for us apart from what Jesus Christ did on that cross.

And if you put your faith and trust in that crucified Savior and what he did on that cross, God will take the righteousness that belongs to Christ and he will put it to your account so that it officially becomes yours and you become forgiven and pardoned and accepted and you get eternal life because Jesus Christ died for your sin.

And we have to start processing that and thinking about that. First of all, is that true? Is that true? And if it is, what am I going to do about it?

And when you say, I want to trust that one who gave himself for me, I want his life to be my life, you are doing a 180.

You are reversing yourself. You are changing your mind. And that's why this is so important.

[ 34 : 25 ] I've often said that nobody has ever been saved just by repentance. But you cannot be saved without it. Because you cannot come to Christ without changing your mind.

You have to change your mind in order to come to Christ. You have to think differently. And what you are thinking is based on the information that you are getting.

And you process that information and you reach a conclusion and uh-oh, now there comes a crisis point. What am I going to do? You can maintain the mode of rejection or you can accept.

And the acceptance is a deliberate personal act of the will. will. It is the engaging of your volition where you intentionally, purposely commit yourself to Jesus Christ who died for you.

That's what this is all about. And when Paul says God commends all men everywhere to repent, read the rest of the verse. because, verse 31, because he has fixed a day.

[ 35 : 49 ] You know what day that is? It's a judgment day. That's a day of reckoning. That is a day of giving an account.

God is going to call you and me into question. One day. And we're going to give an account.

Yesterday, with friends, I had an opportunity to talk with a couple, and was able to share with them what I call the Barnhouse question.

It's just the most wonderful, definitive question I've ever come across. I shall forever be indebted to Donald Gray Barnhouse, who went to be with the Lord in 1960. He was a pastor of 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for several years.

And he formulated a question that I think is just absolutely stunning. More than anything else, this question helps people know where they are or are not with God.

And the question is this. If you were to die today and stand before your maker, and God looked at you and said, John Doe, why should I let you come into my heaven?

[ 37 : 13 ] What would you tell him? What would you tell him? And Dr.

Barnhouse went on to give the standard answers. Well, you know, I've always tried to be a good person. I've always tried to do the right thing. Line number one, line number two. I've lived by the Ten Commandments, line number three.

We're all such stinkers when it comes to this. You know, we all think we're a lot better than we really are. And none of this stuff will fly. These are all wrong answers.

There must be 10,000 wrong answers, but there's just one right one. Think of that. You know, the world does not like this. The world does not like one answer to anything.

the world loves its options. They want choices. They want cafeteria religion. Take a little of this, a little of that, a little of something else. Everybody's right.

[ 38 : 12 ] Nobody's wrong. Just one big happy family. That's what the world likes. But there's just one right answer. And the right answer is, you should let me come into your heaven because Jesus Christ died for my sin in my place.

and he is all I've got. I have nothing else to offer. And if that isn't enough, I'm sunk.

That's the only right answer. Is that your answer? Or are you in your mind going on about how you're better than most people and how you've never killed anybody and how you've blah, blah, blah, blah.

None of that stuff will fly. Paul said, if righteousness, if righteousness can come by the law, if righteousness can come by doing good things, if righteousness can come by being in a church, if righteousness can come through anything else, then Jesus Christ died for nothing.

You understand the implications of that? Christ was on that cross dying in our place because there was no other way. And in doing so, he balanced the scales of heaven and eternity so that we can be accepted by the Father all because of Jesus Christ.

[ 39 : 38 ] And you know, I can't tell you how many times I've proclaimed this message over and over and a lot of times right here and you know something? It feels brand new to me every time I do it.

I never get tired of it. this is the world's most important neglected message of all the universe.

This is it. Nothing compares with this. Nothing. Not Einstein's theory, not going to the moon, not anything. Nothing compares with this.

This is the focal point of all human history of all times. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

Wow! That is something. And you mean all I have to do? No, I mean all you can do is just transfer whatever it is you're trusting in.

[ 40 : 39 ] Your moral goodness, your good intentions, your background, your hopes, your dreams, whatever. Transfer whatever your confidence or trust is in and put it solely on Jesus Christ because he is called the Savior.

The Savior saves. He knows how to do it and he's the only one who does. This is a very basic message and this is essentially what Paul is declaring to these people.

he will judge the world in righteousness through a man. What does that mean? It means that this man, this man, and who is this man?

This man is Jesus Christ. That's who this man is. He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom he has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead.

God is going to judge and evaluate you and me and he is going to use the righteousness of Christ as a standard.

[ 41 : 58 ] Now that ought to scare you witless. He is going to use the person of Jesus Christ as the standard by which he is going to evaluate you.

So where do you measure up with him? I don't care who you are. You are not as arrogant to profess yourself to be equal to this one.

I don't care how arrogant you are. You're not that arrogant. That's God's standard. And if you don't measure up, but if you have the righteousness of Christ because he has imputed it to you so that it now is yours by virtue of a grace gift from him, then you are in Christ's righteousness.

And that makes you accepted before the Father. And Paul tells us when he writes to the Ephesians that we are accepted and the beloved, and that means God approves of you.

Isn't that something? Isn't that awesome? You are approved of God. Does that mean that everything about you is lovely? Nope. Everything about you is right and good and honest and pure?

[ 43 : 16 ] Nope. But it means judicially and legally and forensically and in the law court of heaven you are declared by the Almighty not guilty.

Not guilty because another took your guilt in your place and he died for you. Wow. This is a life-changing message.

This is the gospel. This is why it's called good news. And the world's never heard anything like it. It's been around for 2,000 years and it's still the world's best-kept secret.

Isn't that amazing? And I'm sorry to say that sometimes we churches have so muddied up the gospel and confounded the gospel and obfuscated the gospel and added on to the gospel and detracted from the gospel that people can't understand it or recognize it for what it is.

But it's just this simple, simple truth and it's precious, precious, precious, priceless. Wonderful. Pray with me. Loving Father, we never get over this.

[ 44 : 30 ] This is so sublime. this is the very best that heaven has to offer. And to think that we can be recipients of it just by acknowledging our need, confessing, admitting our flaws and failures and sins and ugliness and rebellion, just being honest with you, saying, yes, that's what I am.

But despite all of that, Jesus Christ loved me so in such a way that he gave himself to do for me what I could never do for myself.

And I just can't get over that. But I want to be a recipient. I want to believe on that Christ who loved me in that way. I want to trust him as my Savior and give myself to him for his forgiveness and his eternal life.

Thank you, Father, for making that wonderful provision for me. And dear friend, if you've made that decision this morning, you need to tell somebody about it.

And let somebody who knows Christ encourage you. Feel free to approach me after the service. I'd be delighted to talk with you and try to answer any questions that you may have.

[ 45 : 59 ] Our only desire is that you know this wonderful Lord whom to know aright is life eternal, life changing, destiny altering.

So much is in Christ. We cannot begin to tell it all. Thank you, Father, for the privilege of being here this morning and for once again explaining this grand old gospel to some who know it so well and to some who perhaps have really heard it for the first time.

It is ever new to us. We bless you for it in Christ's name. Amen. I'm not going to have a Q&A; this morning. And I did not intend this message at all.

I intended to bring something out of John, but we never got there. But maybe next week we will. So I do. There is good stuff in John that we need to look at. And we'll get there hopefully next week.

So thank you and the Lord bless you. Have a great afternoon.