

The Implication/Application of the Excellencies of God

Lesson 7 – Omnipotence and Sovereignty

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Review

We are studying the excellencies of God. God has made us true worshipers (John 4:23) for the purpose of declaring His excellencies (1 Peter 2:9). His excellencies are the perfect, full manifestation of characteristics that describe His intrinsic eminence, His nature. They are what God has stated and/or exhibited in His self-revelation, the Scriptures.

We are studying the excellencies in order to know God better (have correct, true knowledge) and be impacted by that knowing (grow in sanctification). There is no shortcut to the study of God. God designed growth in the knowledge of Him to be a lifetime pursuit culminating with entrance into glory. Horner notes, “There can be no condensed learning of God; the very thought is an insult to His transcendent majesty.”

- **Transcendence** (or beyondness) means that God is distinct, far above, greater than His creation (including people) and independent from it (them).
- **Immanence** (nearness or intense closeness) means that God exists and remains in His creation and is intimately involved in it (including people).
- **Perfection** means that God lacks nothing in either type of excellency or in any excellency itself. There is nothing that can be added to make Him better.
- **Beauty** means that God is the possessor and the sum of all desirable qualities.
- **Blessedness** means that God delights fully in himself and in all that reflects his character. The transcendent, self-existent, only true God is self-happy, self-content, self-fulfilled.
- **Aseity** (self-existence, independence) means that God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, He is absolutely, perfectly independent and self-sufficient.
- God’s **glory** is the composite of His excellencies. The sum total of His excellencies is so magnificent that they result in an outshining, visible display of brightness.
- **Immutability** mean that God is unchanging in His being, excellencies, eternal purposes, and promises. He who exists (“I AM”) does not change. He is always the same.
- **Omniscience** means that God fully, perfectly knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.
- **Omnipresence** means that God is present at every point of space with his whole being at every point of time. He is present everywhere, all the time.

Meditating on the excellencies of God can provide the believer, joy, peace, comfort, hope, strength, etc.

❖ **How does thinking of these excellencies impact you?**

Introduction

Think about something great, grand, difficult, or even impossible (humanly speaking) that you would like to do – maybe fly (like without the aid of technology), maybe climb Everest, maybe stand on Mars, maybe be an accomplished _____, maybe be a successful _____, maybe go through the day without physical pain, etc. Now think of something small that you would like to accomplish – maybe get some lunch after church, make it back for choir or AWANA this afternoon, get some groceries this afternoon, hang with your children and/or friends this afternoon, prep the vehicles for the week of work coming, etc.

In any case, whether grand or common, you have a desire to do something. It is your “will” that something happens. But in truth (that which corresponds to reality), you have neither the ability to orchestrate anything to happen nor the power to bring it about, whether big or small.

This is not true with God. He has a perfect, wise will which He desires to accomplish. He both rules and has the power to bring it about. He is both sovereign and omnipotent. And those two must go together. To reign, God must have power, and to reign sovereignly, He must have all power.

⁶Then I heard *something* like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “**Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.**” (Revelation 19:6)

²“I know that **You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.**” (Job 42:2)

Today, we will look at the excellencies of sovereignty and omnipotence.

Omnipotence

Omnipotence comes from the Latin meaning “all-powerful”. God is able to do all His holy will without any effort. God has an incomprehensible plenitude of power; absolute power.

²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, **His eternal power** and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

¹Then Job answered the Lord and said, ²“I know that **You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.**” (Job 42:1-2)

¹⁷“Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! **Nothing is too difficult for You,**” (Jeremiah 32:17)

¹⁴**Is anything too difficult for the Lord?** At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” (Genesis 18:14)

²⁶Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, ²⁷“**Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?**” (Jeremiah 32:26-27)

³⁷For **nothing will be impossible with God.**” (Luke 1:37)

²⁶And looking at *them* Jesus said to them, “With people this is impossible, but **with God all things are possible.**” (Matthew 19:26)

❖ **In your mind do you limit the power of God?**

The definition above says that God has the power to accomplish all His holy will. He cannot do “anything” because “anything” may not be consistent with His holy will. He can and does accomplish all His holy will which is consistent with His holy character.

❖ **Does God’s omnipotence coupled with His glory (sum total of His attributes) give you peace and hope?**

Also, the proverbial saying, “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely” applies to sinful people, but not to God. God’s omnipotence is always in the context of His glory (the composite of His excellencies). So, there is no concern about His abuse of power.

“Although such power might seem frightful, remember that God is good. He can do anything according to His infinite ability, but will do only those things that are consistent with Himself. That’s why He can’t lie, tolerate sin, or save impenitent sinners.” (John MacArthur in “God: Coming Face to Face with His Majesty”)

Sovereignty

Sovereignty is God’s exercise of His rule over His creation using His absolute power.

God’s sovereignty is a doctrine that eludes comprehension. How could God rule, when we think we rule our own life?

“No doctrine is more despised by the natural mind than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. Human pride loathes the suggestion that God orders everything, controls everything, rules over everything. The carnal mind, burning with enmity against God, abhors the biblical teaching that nothing comes to pass except according to His eternal decrees. Most of all, the flesh hates the notion that salvation is entirely God’s work. If God chose who would be saved, and if His choice was settled before the foundation of the world, then believers deserve no credit for their salvation.” (John MacArthur at <http://www.sfplpulpit.com/2007/09/28/gods-absolute-sovereignty>)

The Scriptures declare that God is sovereign:

²⁵“Have you not heard? Long ago I did it; **From ancient times I planned it Now I have brought it to pass**, ... (2 Kings 19:25)

²“I know that You can do all things, **And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted**. (Job 42:2)

²⁴The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, “Surely, **just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand**, (Isaiah 14:24)

⁹“Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰**Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’**; ¹¹Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country **Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it**. (Isaiah 46:9-11)

²¹Many plans are in a man's heart, But **the counsel of the LORD will stand**. (Prov 19:21)

¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who **works all things after the counsel of His will**, (Ephesians 1:11)

Wayne Grudem states that the decrees of God are His "...eternal plans whereby, before the creation of the world, He determined to bring about everything that happens." The decrees of God refer to His sovereign purpose – His comprehensive plan that includes all events that will ever occur. We will collectively view God's unconditional, eternal plan and His providential work in time and space to accomplish His plan as His sovereignty.

It is not merely that God has the power and right to govern all things but that He does so always and without exception. (John Piper)

The doctrine of sovereignty is... "similar to the doctrine of providence, but here we are thinking about God's decisions *before the world was created* rather than his providential actions in time. His providential actions are the outworking of the eternal decrees that he made long ago." (Wayne Grudem)

"God's providence is His constant care for and His absolute rule over all His creation for His own glory and the good of His people." (Jerry Bridges in "Trusting God: Even when Life Hurts")

"... the conviction that God, in His goodness and power, preserves, accompanies, and directs the entire universe. The Bible speaks of God as one who creates, preserves, upholds, wills, acts, governs, foreordains, elects, calls, predestines, judges, redeems, forgives, reconciles, provides, heals, and loves. That God is directly in command of His universe – past, present, and future, is not merely a supposition of Biblical faith, it is a central motif of the Bible." (Benjamin Farley in "The Providence of God")

God is the supreme ruler – in control of all events. All things are under His rule and control, and nothing happens without His direction or permission (Job 1-2). He works all things (not just some things) after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11). God's purpose is all inclusive and is never thwarted (Isaiah 46:11). Nothing takes Him by surprise.

The Father sovereignly plans and brings about all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty, He is neither the author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47). His sovereignty does not absolve people of their responsibility; people are still accountable (1 Peter 1:17).

1. God's plan encompasses all things; He is sovereign over all things.
2. God's plan was formed in eternity past (Ephesians 1:4, 2 Timothy 1:9, 1 Peter 1:20).
3. God's plan is wise, perfect, and beyond our full comprehension (Romans 11:33-36, Psalm 104:24).
4. God's plan is according to His will (Daniel 4:35, Ephesians 1:11).
5. God's plan encompasses His directive will (Isaiah 45:18, Daniel 4:35; 2:21, Ephesians 1:4) and His permissive will through which He brings things about through secondary means (such as the free will sinful acts of men).
6. The purpose of God's plan is His glory (Psalm 19:1; Ephesians 1:4-6, 11-12; Romans 9:23; Revelation 4:11).
7. God's plan encompasses all things, yet man is responsible for his sin (Romans 3:23).
8. God also uses man to carry out His plan (e.g. election and evangelism) (Acts 10:1-5).

The Sphere of God's Sovereignty

Over all things

¹⁹The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty **rules over all**. (Psalm 103:19)

²⁸And we know that **God causes all things to work together** for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. (Romans 8:28)

¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who **works all things after the counsel of His will**, (Ephesians 1:11)

Over all of nature

⁶**Whatever the LORD pleases, He does**, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps. ⁷He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain, Who brings forth the wind from His treasures. (Psalm 135:6-7)

⁴The **LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm** on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. (Jonah 1:4)

⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He **causes His sun to rise** on *the* evil and *the* good, and **sends rain** on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. (Matthew 5:45)

²⁶He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then **He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm**. ²⁷The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that **even the winds and the sea obey Him**?" (Matthew 8:26-27)

⁷"Furthermore, **I withheld the rain from you** While *there were* still three months until harvest. Then **I would send rain on one city And on another city I would not send rain; One part would be rained on, While the part not rained on would dry up**. ⁸So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water, But would not be satisfied; Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD. ⁹**I smote you with scorching wind and mildew; And the caterpillar was devouring Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees;** Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD. (Amos 4:7-9)

Over physical laws

⁵But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, my master! For it was borrowed." ⁶Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw *it* in there, and **made the iron float**. (2 Kings 6:5-6)

¹²Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, "O sun, stand still at Gibeon, And O moon in the valley of Aijalon." ¹³So **the sun stood still, and the moon stopped**, Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day. ¹⁴There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel. (Joshua 10:12-14)

⁷“This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that He has spoken: ⁸Behold, I will cause the shadow on the stairway, which has gone down with the sun on the stairway of Ahaz, to go back ten steps.” So **the sun’s shadow went back ten steps on the stairway** on which it had gone down. (Isaiah 38:7-8)

Over angels, Satan, and demons

²⁰Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, **Obeying the voice of His word!** ²¹Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You who serve Him, **doing His will.** (Psalm 103:20-21)

¹⁵And **God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it**; but as he was about to destroy *it*, the LORD saw and was sorry over the calamity, and said to the destroying angel, “It is enough; now relax your hand.” (1 Chronicles 21:15)

¹²Then the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD. (Job 1:12)

⁶And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, (Jude 6)

Over nations

¹⁰The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples.

¹¹The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation. (Psalm 33:10-11)

⁷For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with a skillful psalm. ⁸**God reigns over the nations**, God sits on His holy throne. ⁹The princes of the people have assembled themselves *as* the people of the God of Abraham, For **the shields of the earth belong to God**; He is highly exalted. (Psalm 47:7-9)

²⁰Daniel said, “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. ²¹It is He who changes the times and the epochs; **He removes kings and establishes kings**; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. (Daniel 2:20-21)

Over human beings

¹The king’s heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; **He turns it wherever He wishes.** (Proverbs 21:1)

⁶The **LORD kills and makes alive**; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. (1 Samuel 2:6-7)

¹⁵But when God, who had **set me apart even from my mother’s womb** and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, (Galatians 1:15-16)

Over animals

⁴It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and **I have commanded the ravens** to provide for you there.” ⁵So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. ⁶The **ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening**, and he would drink from the brook. (1 Kings 17:4-6)

¹⁷And **the LORD appointed a great fish** to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. (Jonah 1:17)

²⁷However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me.” (Matthew 17:17)

Over “accidents”

³³The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD. (Proverbs 16:33)

⁷Each man said to his mate, “Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity *has struck* us.” So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. (Jonah 1:7)

²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And *yet* not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. (Matthew 10:29)

Over free acts of men

²¹I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. ... ³⁵Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; ³⁶and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. (Exodus 3:21; 12:35-36)

⁹The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps. (Proverbs 16:9)

¹⁸So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. (Romans 9:18)

Over sinful acts

⁵Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. (Genesis 45:5)

²⁰As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. (Genesis 50:20)

²²“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— ²³this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. (Acts 2:22-23)

²⁷For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. (Acts 4:27-28)

❖ **How does (or should) heart-level understanding of God’s sovereignty impact you?**

The Means God's Sovereignty

God's decree includes the means to accomplish that decree. He is sovereign in all things, yet uses various means to bring about that sovereign purpose. God has elected certain individuals for salvation, yet no one is saved from sin without hearing and responding to the gospel (e.g., the salvation of Cornelius in Acts 10). Similarly, God has ordained all things that will come to pass and yet He uses prayer to accomplish them (e.g., Jeremiah's (25:11-12) prophecy of the 70-year Babylonian captivity and Daniel's (9:19) prayer to end the captivity).

God has decreed that certain events shall come to pass, but He has also decreed that these events shall come to pass through the means He has appointed for their accomplishment. God has elected certain ones to be saved, but He has also decreed that these ones shall be saved through the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel, then, is one of the appointed means for the working out of the eternal counsel of the Lord; and prayer is another. God has decreed the means as well as the end, and among the means is prayer. (A. W. Pink in "The Sovereignty of God")

God's plan is so comprehensive that it not only includes the final destinies of things but also includes the secondary, creaturely processes that work together to accomplish these ends. (Richard Pratt in "Pray with Your Eyes Open")

Implications of omnipotence and sovereignty

- Because God is omnipotent, you need not fear anything.
- Because God is omnipotent, you can rely on Him for strength in the battle with sin.
- Because God is sovereign and omnipotent, you know that God is working out His perfect plan for His maximum glory and your maximum sanctifying good.
- Because God is sovereign and omnipotent, all you entrust to Him is secure.
- Because God is sovereign, you understand God's kingly place and your lowly place.
- Because God is sovereign (and you are not), you are brought to your knees in humility.
- Because God is sovereign and omnipotent, there is hope and security in any circumstance.
- Others?

❖ **Does God's sovereignty and omnipotence give you hope?**

Conclusion

We are studying God's excellencies in order to know Him better and be impacted by that knowing. God is all-powerfully, sovereignly working all things for His maximum glory and your maximum sanctifying good.

Additional Study

- Each day this week, reread the passages that we looked at today.
- After reading the passages, spend time in prayer adoring God. Commit to trust Him completely in all circumstances.
- Memorize Romans 8:28.

²⁸And we know that **God causes all things to work together** for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. (Romans 8:28)