

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #104

Genesis 50:15-21

Dr. Baraekman writes: “The Scriptures teach that God exercises sovereign, absolute rule over the universe to do what He wills.”

I Chronicles 29:11-12 says, “Thine O LORD is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O LORD, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from Thee and Thou dost rule over all...”

Psalms 103:19 says, “The LORD has established His throne in the heavens and His sovereignty rules over all.”

Ephesians 1:11 says, “. . .we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”

If ever there has been a book that emphasizes the Sovereignty of God, it is Genesis. Genesis begins with God speaking things into existence. In Genesis, God sovereignly creates life and takes life. He does the positive and the negative.

The problem concerning God’s sovereignty is not one of Divine revelation; it is one of human explanation.

In this text we get a glimpse of something that enabled Joseph to stay faithful all through his life, his grasp of the Sovereignty of God. To Joseph the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God was very personal and very practical. It kept him from rebellion during the bad times and from retaliation during the good times.

A BELIEVER’S GRASP OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IS THAT WHICH WILL ENABLE A BELIEVER TO COPE WITH NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE AND MINISTER IN A GOD-HONORING WAY.

When we realize that God is controlling all things it enables us to continue to function in a very God-honoring way:

OBSERVATION #1 - Those who do not have a grasp of the sovereignty of God are very afraid when something negative happens. **50:15-18**

It is quite clear from Joseph’s response in **verses 19 and 21** that when Jacob died, Joseph’s brothers were very much afraid of what Joseph might do in retaliation against them. The word used for “fear” is one that means to be afraid to the level of terror, reverence and trembling (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 364).

Josephus claims that this fear began at the funeral in Hebron and Joseph's brothers realized that if they went back to Egypt, Joseph could legitimately punish them for what they had done to him years before. Josephus claims that the boys believed that the only reason Joseph had been nice to them was because his father was alive and now that he was gone, he had both the right and the power to punish them all (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 55).

(Reaction #1) - Those who are afraid often speculate about things. **50:15**

Fearful people are people of speculation not actualization; they live in a world of imagination, not realization. Those who lose sight of the sovereignty of God react in ways that are emotional and irrational.

(Reaction #2) - Those who are afraid often distort things. **50:16-17**

Although it is possible that Jacob at some point suggested what is recorded in **verse 17**, there is absolutely no record of it anywhere in the Bible. In fact, the claim that Jacob commanded this before he died is very suspect because we have recorded for us, in a very precise systematic manner, the very words of Jacob before his death (**Genesis 49**). It is probable that the brothers are distorting reality and making this up. John Calvin said had this actually been the true wish of Jacob, he would have orchestrated it before he died (John Calvin, *Genesis*, p. 484).

(Reaction #3) - Those who are afraid often are a slave to things. **50:18**

Verse 18 would be glorious, if it weren't so pathetic. Once again we find Joseph's brothers fulfilling the prophecy Joseph gave to them when he was 17 years old and they are bowing down before him (**37:7**). They don't see themselves as brothers, but as slaves.

OBSERVATION #2 - One who does have a grasp of the sovereignty of God is very faithful when something negative happens. **50:19-21**

(Reason #1) - Because Joseph is not God. **50:19**

Joseph believed, as his father Jacob believed, that sovereign judgments were to be to God (**30:2**).

(Reason #2) - Because Joseph was directed by God. **50:20**

Even though the brothers had sold Joseph, God had sent Joseph.

(Reason #3) - Because Joseph would continue to minister for God. **50:21**

Joseph would continue to nourish them, comfort them, care for them and be kind to them. What enabled Joseph to turn the other cheek was his realization of the Sovereignty of God.

God's sovereignty is a very important doctrine. It is a key to survival, righteousness and ministry. God's sovereignty means He is in control of everything that happens in our lives. If we realize this and remain faithful, He will greatly use us and honor us.