



The Book of Hebrews 1:1 - The Sovereignty, Providence, and Decrees of God

October 15, 2023

Holy Text: Hebrews 1:1

Last week, we began our expository journey through Hebrews by renewing our understanding of the **Doctrine of God**. We looked at how He is revealed in Scripture via some of His names, general revelation, special revelation, and briefly at the revelation of God in Christ.

The reason we did this? The truth of God and His existence is life-altering! The truth that **HE IS!** changes the game! God gives us life and purpose, hope and a future!

And like the audience to whom the writer of Hebrews is communicating, we do must embrace the sovereignty and eternal truths of Almighty God regardless of the cultural pressures to conform. We too must remember that “Theos” has spoken in His Word and just as He called Jews out of lifeless ritual and worshiping through types to bow before the antitype, Jesus Christ, so He calls us out of our old lives and to walk in the newness of life in Jesus!

***Romans 6:4 (KJV)** Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

***Romans 7:6 (KJV)** But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

***2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)** Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

***Ephesians 4:23-24 (KJV)** And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; **24** And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

One of the sources of strength He has given that we might obey and be set free His knowledge of Him. As we closed last week, we wanted to do three things:

1. Think deeply about God, about the reality of Him!
2. Ask, “LORD, am I living in the joyful truth of the divine reality of Thee? Does my life clearly and joyfully show the knowledge and worship of Thee?”
3. Increase our Praise! God...IS! He is beyond time, the Creator of vastness of the universe, upholding and all things, and the Chooser of YOU for salvation in the Son! Hallelujah!

Sovereignty vs Providence

First, let us establish that these two attributes of God, although closely related, differ enough to warrant an explanation.

God’s **Sovereignty** declares His rule over all things. The Webster 1828 Dictionary defines it as “*Supreme in power; possessing supreme dominion; as a sovereign ruler of the universe.*” In his landmark work, *The Sovereignty of God*, AW Pink writes:

The Sovereignty of God. What do we mean by this expression? We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the godhood of God. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that God is God. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the Most

High, doing according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay His hand or say unto Him what doest Thou? (Dan. 4:35). To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in Heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purpose, or resist His will (Psa. 115:3). To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is "The Governor among the nations" (Psa. 22:28), setting up kingdoms, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as pleaseth Him best. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the "Only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). Such is the God of the Bible.

The great protestant confessions speak of this. For example, the *1689 London Baptist Confession* says:

God, having all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself, is alone in and unto himself all sufficient, not standing in need of any creature which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them; he is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things, and he hath most sovereign dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth; in his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain; he is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands; to him is due from angels and men, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience, as creatures they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them.

God's **Providence** is His wise execution of His authority in His creation. Again from the Webster 1828, Providence is:

Foresight; timely care; particularly, active foresight, or foresight accompanied with the procurement of what is necessary for future use, or with suitable preparation. How many of the troubles and perplexities of life proceed from want of providence!

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* declares:

God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth

only from the creature, and not from God; who being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

What are these attributes important to know and understand?

Recall what our brother, Elder Scott Brown said recently concerning God's sovereignty:

“It is the Swiss army knife of the Christian life. What can you do with a Swiss army knife?

A Swiss Army Knife has Multiple functions. Screw driver, can opener, saw blade, scissors...it is the perfect companion for everyday life.

The term *Swiss army knife* became a figure of speech for something that can do everything and get you through everything. Someone once said that The elephant's trunk is the Swiss army knife of the animal kingdom... it does almost everything.

Your view of God is like that, it determines everything; The sovereignty of God is like that. It determines everything!

The Elephant's trunk does almost everything. It is a hand , a snorkel, a hose, vibration detector, storage tank, suction pump, plant harvester, breathing apparatus, used for social greetings, used for affection toward offspring, skin care tool, cooling hose, a shower for bathing, Trumpet, weapon of war, fruit picker. It is used for pushing trees and even painting pictures. It is a sniffer that is twice sensitive as a bloodhound. It weighs 300 pounds and is 9 feet long. It. Has 40,000 muscles.

Its trunk is the Swiss army knife of the elephant. The Sovereignty of God is like that. It is the Swiss army knife of the believer.

This knowledge can help you get through everything you encounter in life. The sovereignty of God is not only the Swiss army knife of the believer it is the greatest inheritance you can leave with your children.”

Amen!

Charles Spurgeon said, *“There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought more earnestly to contend than the doctrine of their Master over all creation—the Kingship of God over all the works of His own hands—the Throne of God and His right to sit upon that Throne.”*

The Sovereignty of God as Revealed in Scripture

Genesis 1:1 (KJV) *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

1 Chronicles 29:10-12 (KJV) Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. **11** Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. **12** Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.

Job 12:9-10 (KJV) Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? **10** In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.

Psalms 33:8-11 (KJV) Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. **9** For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. **10** The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. **11** The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Psalms 115:3 (KJV) But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

Isaiah 40:22-23 (KJV) It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: **23** That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

Isaiah 45:22-23 (KJV) Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. **23** I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

Isaiah 46:9-10 (KJV) Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, **10** Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Isaiah 55:10-11 (KJV) For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: **11** So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Daniel 4:34-35 (KJV) And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: **35** And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

Jeremiah 32:27 (KJV) Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?

Colossians 1:15-18 (KJV) *Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

1 Timothy 6:15-16 (KJV) *Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.*

Revelation 1:8 (KJV) *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

The Providence of God as Revealed in Scripture

Proverbs 16:9 (KJV) *A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.*

Daniel 2:21 (KJV) *And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:*

Romans 8:28-30 (KJV) *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

Ephesians 1:3-6, 11 (KJV) *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

11 *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

Philippians 2:13 (KJV) *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

The Heidelberg Catechism says concerning Providence,

“God's providence is his almighty and ever present power, whereby, as with his hand, he still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, indeed, all things, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand.

AW Pink wrote:

Nothing is more strengthening to faith, stabilizing to the mind, and tranquilizing to the heart of a Christian, than for him to be enabled to discern his Father's hand guiding, shaping, and controlling everything which enters his life; and not only so, but that He is also governing this world, and all people and events in it. Alas, we are living in an age of terrible skepticism, when most of what happens is attributed to natural causes, while God is more and more banished from the world, in the consideration of His creatures. Now it is not only a fact that God governs the world in a general sense, but He also regulates all its affairs, controls all creatures in it, "working all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11). Fully is this truth brought before us in the Scriptures, not only in specific statements, but by innumerable exemplifications and demonstrations.¹

No matter what you face Christian, take heart! May Joseph's understanding of God's Sovereignty and Providence strengthen you today...

***Genesis 50:20 (KJV)** But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

The Decrees of God as Revealed in Scripture

And if the fact that we serve and Sovereign and Providential God isn't enough, we can also rest in His Decrees! One more time from Webster.

A decree is, "A Judicial decision, or determination of a litigated cause. In theology, predetermined purpose of God; the purpose or determination of an immutable Being, whose plan of operations is, like himself, unchangeable."

Again from Westminster (the Larger Catechism),

"God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of His will, whereby, from all eternity, He hath, for His own glory, unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men."

From the Westminster Shorter Catechism: How doth God execute His decrees?

Answer: God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence.

AW Pink wrote:

The decrees of God relate to all future things without exception; whatever is done in time, was foreordained before time began. God's purpose was concerned with everything, whether great or small, whether good or evil. But with reference to the latter we must be careful to state that while God is the Orderer and Controller of sin, He is not the Author of it in the same way that He is the Author of good. Sin could not proceed from a Holy God by positive and direct creation, but only by decretive permission and negative action.

¹ https://gracegems.org/Pink2/divine_providence.htm

God's decree, as comprehensive as His government, extends to all creatures and events. It was concerned about our life and death; about our state in time, and our state in eternity. As God works all things after the counsel of His own will, we learn from His works what His counsel is (was), as we judge an architect's plan by inspecting the building erected under his direction.

God did not merely decree to make man, place him upon the earth, then leave him to his own uncontrolled guidance. Instead, He fixed all the circumstances in the lot of individuals, and all the particulars which comprise the history of the human race from commencement to close. He did not merely decree that general laws should be established for the government of the world, but He settled the application of those laws to all particular cases. Our days are numbered, and so are the hairs of our heads. We may learn what is the extent of the divine decrees from the dispensations of providence in which they are executed. The care of Providence reaches to the most insignificant creatures, and the most minute events—the death of a sparrow, the fall of a hair.

Amen!

Some Decrees:

Psalms 148:2-6 (KJV) *Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. 3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. 4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. 5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created. 6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.*

Job 28:26-28 (KJV) *When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: 27 Then did he see it, and declare it: he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. 28 And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.*

Proverbs 8:29 (KJV) *When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:*

Psalms 2:7 (KJV) *I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.*

Blessings of God's Sovereignty, Providence and Decrees for the Believer

1. **Peace and Comfort.** Christ upholds and governs all things! You can rest in His wisdom and power!
2. **Faith and Trust in the LORD.** Christ never errs, is never wrong, and is executing His good plan for us!
3. **Joy regardless of Circumstances.** The King of Kings reigns! Rejoice! He decreed you to be and orders the circumstances of your life for His praise!

Amen!