

## A SOVEREIGN GOD — A ROCK OF REFUGE

All sorts of belittling notions about God abound; you've probably heard often: "God can only do what you let him do"; "Won't you let God have his way in your life?" Where do these ideas come from?—this portrayal of God as though he's weak, disappointed, and even frustrated by man: some helpless old grandfather who's doing the best that he can. Folks imagine him as just *a great big man*—"thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself!" (*Psalms 50:21*). Since we know the Bible doesn't talk like this, the question is: Where do these phony concepts of God come from? They stem from a lack of "basic training" in our churches today on **the Sovereignty of God!** If we set forth God as the Scriptures do—a triumphant, glorious king who rules over all things majestically—then those under our care will be *sheltered* from the onslaught of such widespread ignorance.

What God says about himself in the Word needs to be heard—"I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 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 46:9,10*). This is a prevalent theme all through the Bible that we should sound out! "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations!" (*Psalms 33:10,11*). This is not something we should be bashful about. Our God rules with a mighty hand! and we should be comforted by this fact, knowing that while "there are many devices in a man's heart; *nevertheless* the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand" (*Proverbs 19:21*), "and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth" (*Job 23:13*). This is not a trait about God that we should feel that we have to defend or make an apology for—*This is God!*—Always glorious, and altogether victorious! The Lord reigneth!

With all the wickedness that goes on all around us in this world, we ought to often remind ourselves of the absolute control that God has *over the wicked*. The Scriptures are there to boost our hearts and encourage us in whatever it is that we run into—"so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (*Hebrews 13:6*). God is able to *restrain* the wicked and *prevent* them from doing that which they are naturally inclined to do. Remember how Abimelech from Sarah away from Abraham? What kept him from fulfilling his lustful desires? God said, "for I also *withheld* thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee *not* to touch her" (*Genesis 20:6*). The wicked *only* touch the righteous with God's permission! Remember the Jews three annual festivals that they had to attend *at Jerusalem*? What did God say to them so they wouldn't worry about leaving their homes like that?—"neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God" (*Exodus 34:24*). During those times, God promised that he would *restrain the covetous desires* of their pagan neighbors! Imagine that! Do these examples portray a God *who can only do what a person lets him do*? That's absurd!

When God would have his temple rebuilt, in fulfillment of the prophecy in Jeremiah, he took a wicked and a pagan king, and *contrary* to his natural inclination, "the Lord *stirred up the spirit* of **Cyrus king of Persia**, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom" in favor of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem (*Ezra 1:1*). The Lord can *soften* any man's heart to accomplish his purposes. **King Artaxerxes**, who aided the Jews in this same work, is another prime example! Ezra said, "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which *hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart*, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem" (*Ezra 7:27*). The Lord didn't ask for permission from either of these two kings, or counsel with them in any way! Why? because "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: *he turneth it whithersoever he will*" (*Proverbs 21:1*).

The Bible is full of this! **The Sovereignty of God** is set on display for all to see—for *the righteous* to take comfort in, and for *the wicked* to tremble before! Let come what may: God's people have a refuge here that is unsurpassed! The righteous can rest on this rock; it will *not move* in the midst of adversity. Let evil befall them,—they know that *God's purpose* is behind it, and that *his hand* is directing it,—all for their good and his glory! Why do you think **the story of Joseph** takes up so much of the book of Genesis? that we might not *miss the message!* and that we may know, that although everything may seem *up-side-down*,—the sovereignty of God's purpose is *certain* to come shining through! And what Joseph said there at the end is to be an everlasting *tower of strength* to the righteous,—“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” (*Genesis 50:20*). And God's people “*know* that **all things work together for good** to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (*Romans 8:28*). This promise would be *utterly worthless* to the righteous if God were not in **absolute sovereign control** of every single thing that comes into their lives! Whatever it is, they know—"God meant it unto good!"