

Connexions Theological LEs

The Nature of God – Sovereignty

Context: Individual

Focus: Christ/Community/Competencies

The sovereignty of God refers to His position as Supreme in the universe – realms both seen and unseen. By His will and power He alone created all things, sustains all things and directs all things to His divine purpose which cannot be thwarted. As a guide for how we humans should approach this truth, Scripture provides three essential insights. The first is that God has a plan for His creation, and it is a good and just one – not arbitrary. The second is that His providential control is guided by His plan and is necessary for accomplishing it. Thirdly, His plan includes giving humans genuine choices and genuine responsibility for those choices.

Truth No. 1: God has a sovereign plan for His creation. Before His creation of the world, God predestined all things that would ever exist or come to pass.

Truth No. 2: God, [through His *providence*,] is actively preserving His creation and controlling all things in order to fulfill the purpose and plan He predestined. [God began execution of His plan (i.e. predestination) with *creation* and continues with His *providence*.]

Truth No. 3: God's plan included that man would be given genuine choices and would ultimately be held responsible for those choices.

Exercises:

Day 1 – Today we will begin a 3 day series looking specifically at the subject of predestination, God's sovereign plan.

1. Review the six Fundamental Principles of Predestination contained in the project appendix and read the scripture references for each.
2. God's sovereign plan includes all things. From your reading today, what are some of the events and things that God has predestined for His creation? In

Connexions Theological LEs

your own life, what good things has God predestined for you to experience? What bad or negative things has He predestined for your life? Read Romans 8:28-39. Are you able to rest in God's love for you and trust that He is working all things (the good, bad, and downright ugly) together for your good? Share your struggles and doubts with your pastoral coach and intercessor. Ask them to stand with you as you learn to trust God's love and sovereign control even in the midst of incredible challenges and difficulties.

3. The sovereign Creator has foreordained or predestined each and every person who is currently in a position of leadership over you. Make a list of the various leaders in your life. These will be from your family, church, school, workplace, and government. Commit to begin praying for these leaders every day as part of your morning devotions.

Day 2 – Let's continue our study of predestination by looking more closely at principle 3, God's plan is perfect and not arbitrary. God's plan is perfect because God the planner is perfect (Matt. 5:48). Because God's plan is perfect, it at all times remains faithful to His nature and character.

1. God's sovereign plan remains faithful to His love.
 - a. Read Psalm 136 slowly 3 times.
 - b. Spend several minutes meditating on this passage. As you do consider the following questions:
 - i. What is the recurring theme of this psalm?
 - ii. Who was shown God's favor time and again?
 - iii. Who suffered as a result of God showing His favor to this one group?
 - iv. Was God's nature contradicted by His sovereign choice to favor one people over all others? Did the psalmist see any contradiction?
2. God's sovereign plan remains faithful to His holiness.
 - a. Answer the following question: Since God predestined all things including the fall of man, is God responsible for sin?

Connexions Theological LEs

- b. Review your study of the attributes of God and His holiness. In addition, read the following scriptures which speak of the origin of sin: James 1:13; 1 John 2:15-16; Romans 5:12, 15-19.
- c. Based on your understanding of God's nature, the principles of predestination and your reading today, write a defense of your answer above. Turn this paper in to your Cx mentor next week.

Day 3 – We will wrap up our 3 day study of predestination by addressing a common error concerning God's sovereign plan. Some have falsely claimed that God who is all-knowing looked down through history and foresaw everything that would happen and then made His plan to reflect history. This idea undermines God's sovereignty and places the focus solely on man who ultimately decided God's plan for Him.

1. In the appendix you will find Table 1, Whose Will Rules. For each specific event or topic, read the corresponding scriptures and decide whose will (God's or man's) ultimately ruled each situation. Fill in the blank column with your final answers.
2. What does the clear teaching of the Bible show us about God's and man's roles in predestination?

Day 4 – For the next two days we will consider God's providence. Providence is God's continual involvement with all created things in three aspects. First, God is actively preserving His creation (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17; Acts 17:28; Neh. 9:6). Second, God mysteriously controls all things even as they act according to their own natural properties (see table below). Third, His active preservation and cooperative control are directing all things according to His purpose and plan – that which He has predestined (Eph. 1:11; Ps. 103:19; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 11:36; 8:28).

1. Review the first set of Scriptures in the preceding paragraph. Then, using a concordance, find at least three more that speak of God's preservation of His creation.

Connexions Theological LEs

2. Fill in the column headings and row headings on the following table:

		Job 38:12,31,32; Ps. 104:14; 148:8; Matt. 5:45
		Ps. 104:27-29; Matt. 6:26; 10:29
	Prov. 16:33a	Prov. 16:33b
	Is. 10:13	Job 12:23; Ps. 22:28; Acts 17:26
	Neh. 1:4	Ex. 12:36; Ezra 1:1; 6:22; 7:6, 27; Phil. 2:13
	Job 1:12,15,17, 19; Acts 2:23b	Job 1:21; Acts 2:23a
	Prov. 13:4; 16:9a	Matt. 6:11; Ps. 139:16; Prov. 16:9b; Acts 17:28

3. Summarize each of the three aspects of providence into one word each. Consult with your teammates. To which one does the above table refer?

Day 5 – We will now look in more depth at some examples of God’s providential control.

Look at each set of scriptures and answer the questions that follow.

1. 1 Kings 12:1-15; 2 Chron. 10:1-15 – What elements of God’s sovereignty do we see in this situation?
2. Job 1:21 – What does Job’s response to hardship tell us about God?
3. Gen. 45:5 – Why did God send Joseph to Egypt?
4. Pharaoh
 - a. Ex. 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:8 – Who hardened Pharaoh’s heart?
 - b. Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 14:4 – What was his purpose?

Day 6 – We will turn now to the issue of man’s responsibility in relation to God’s sovereignty.

Connexions Theological LEs

1. Acts 2:23; 4:28 –
 - a. Who determined that Jesus should be crucified?
 - b. Who was responsible for actually crucifying Jesus?
2. Job 1:21-22 – What instruction should we take from Job’s response here?
3. Gen. 45:5 – How did God “send” Joseph to Egypt? (see also Gen. 37:4-11, 20-28)
4. Look again at Pharaoh. This time read Exodus 8:15, 32 and 9:34 and answer the following questions:
 - a. Who hardened Pharaoh’s heart? What was his purpose?
 - b. Whose purpose prevailed? Cite Scripture to support your claim.
 - c. State your conclusion about God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility.
5. In light of what we have studied so far, give your observations on the following sets of Scriptures:
 - a. Rom. 8:28; Gen. 50:20 – Your observation:
 - b. Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Luke 22:22; James 1:13-14 – Your observation:
 - c. Isa. 66:3-4; Eccl. 7:29; Rom. 9:19-20 – Your observation:

Day 7 – We have seen how the Bible teaches the sovereignty of God right alongside the responsibility of man. This is one of the great tensions of our Christian faith along with triune nature, the unity of Christ as God and man, and others. Let’s look at 2 specific opportunities that we have to obey God and take responsibility for our part in His sovereign plan. A healthy understanding of the sovereignty of God does not allow for fatalism.

1. Repentance and Faith
 - a. We have clearly read that God has predestined those who would be saved (Eph. 1:3-10; 2 Tim. 1:9) and those who would be lost (1 Pet. 2: 6-8) since

Connexions Theological LEs

before the creation of the world. Yet, the Bible also clearly teaches that man has the responsibility to repent and believe.

- b. Read Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:9-13; John 6:37; Ezekiel 18:21-23, 30-32.
 - c. When you repented and gave your life to the Lord Jesus, did you have any idea that you had been predestined to be saved? An understanding of which, predestination or man's responsibility, is necessary for salvation?
2. Prayer – God has not only predestined the end result of all things but also the means by which the end result is reached. Prayer is one of His means.
- a. Read the account of the Israelites worship of the golden calf and Moses intercession to God on their behalf in Exodus 32:1-14.
 - i. Did God change His sovereign plan in this case? What happened?
 - b. Read 1 John 5:14-15; John 15:7-8; Luke 10:2; 2 Thess. 3:1; Eph. 6:19; 1 Tim. 2:1-4, 8; 1 Thess. 5:17; Phil. 4:6; James 1:5-8.
 - i. What are some specific things that we have been commanded to pray for?
 - ii. We can pray with confidence that God will answer us if we pray in what way?
 - c. From your own life what examples do you have of God answering prayer?

Connexions Theological LEs

APPENDIX

Fundamental Principles of Predestination

1. God’s plan is eternal – Eph. 1:3-6; 1 Pet. 1:17-20; Matthew 25:31-34;
Isaiah 37:21, 22 & 26; Psalm 33:8-11
2. God’s plan is sovereign – Is. 14:24-27; 46:9-11; Daniel 4:28-37
3. God’s plan is perfect and not arbitrary – Ps. 104:24; 145:17; Deut. 32:3-4
4. God’s plan ultimately is intended to glorify Him – Is. 43:1, 5-7; Ps. 19:1-4; Rev. 4:11
5. God’s plan is unchangeable – Malachi 3:6; Is.14:24; Ecclesiastes 3:14
6. God’s plan is universal and includes all things – Eph. 1:11; 2:10; Acts 4:27-28 (w/
2:22-23); Ps. 139:15-16; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:6-8; Prov. 16:4

Subject	Scriptures	Whose Will Rules?
The good actions of men.	Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13; Prov. 20:24; Ezra 1:1; 6:22; 7:6, 27; Ps. 37:23.	
The sinful actions of men.	Is. 37:26; Gen. 45:1-8; 50:15-20; Acts 4:27-28; 2:22-23; 3:18; 1 Pet. 1 20; Deut. 2:26-30; 1 Sam. 2:25; 2 Sam. 17:14; 1 Kings 12:12-15; 15:27-28 with 16:1-2; Ps. 105:25; Rev. 17:17.	
The activities of Satan and his hosts.	Jud. 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:14; Ps. 78:49; 2 Thess. 2:11; Job 1:6-12; 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Chron. 21:1 with 2 Sam. 24:1.	
Things that appear to happen by chance.	Prov. 16:33; Ex. 21:12-13; Jon. 1:7; 1 Sam. 9:3-10 with 9:15-16; 1 Kings 21:17-19 and 22:28 with 22:34-38.	
The duration of men’s lives.	Job 14:1-5; Ps. 39:4; John 21:18-19; Ps. 139:16.	
The movements and locations of all nations.	Acts 17:26; Is. 41:2-4; 44:24, 28; Deut. 32:8; Dan. 2:21; 4:17, 35; Hab. 1:6.	
The natural world.	Matt. 5:45; 6:26; 10:29; Ps. 36:6; 104; 135:6-7; 145:14-16; 147:8-9.	

Connexions Theological LEs

Subject	Scriptures	Whose Will Rules?
The salvation of the righteous.	John 15:16; Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9.	
The eternal punishment of the lost.	1 Pet. 2:6-8; Prov. 16:4; Rom. 9:21; Rev. 17:8.	
All things.	Ps. 103:19; Eph. 1:11; Dan. 4:35.	

Table 1 – Whose Will Rules, God’s or man’s