

Joni Eareckson Tada, Suffering and Trusting God's Sovereignty



Joni Eareckson Tada is a testimony to the Sovereignty of God. Since Joni's horrific accident she has lived a life of faith founded on the premise that God ordained her life to be one of suffering for His glory and the comfort and encouragement for thousands of suffering Christians. In the early days of her accident she was angry at God and even wanted to die, but God through His amazing grace strengthen her faith in Jesus Christ. He taught her that His sovereignty is the only truth that makes sense of intense suffering. And with this new found knowledge He gave her supernatural comfort by His Spirit. So it is that every suffering believer should

learn to believe this grand truth found throughout Scripture. Then they too will know what a comfort it is to know in your heart that God is sovereign in your suffering.

Have you recently suffered some terrible lose or are going through great suffering? Are you angry at God saying, "Why me Lord, it's just not fair this suffering... You are punishing me."

Can I encourage you to read on because if the idea that God is behind your suffering and even has caused it may seem strange and even cruel. nothing could be further from the truth. God made you for Himself, He knows you perfectly and His loving plan is that you would become like His Son Jesus. His love for you is so great He can order suffering as your lot so you grow into the person He wants You to be; one who trusts and delights and worships in Him and His Son more than anything or anyone. He puts His happiness before yours, His glory before yours. But don't worry there is joy inexpressible and pleasures at His right hand when we thirst for Him and don't worship other people or things. Our God is jealous for our full attention. Yes He needs nothing and is sufficient in Himself yet as our father our worship delights Him no end.

What you need more than anything right now is a deep hope founded on knowing the God is sovereign in you present sufferings. Take time now to learn what this means. Why not grab a coffee, take your note pad, pen and jot down the scriptures and points below for mediation and study later?

Let's pray...

Dear loving Father,

Please teach me now by your Holy Spirit through this teaching based on your Word. Help me to learn and believe what it means that you have ordained my present suffering for my eternal good. Forgive me for complaining and being angry at you for my present circumstances. Grant me faith to accept your teaching that part of being my father God is your sovereign control of my life for your pleasure and my growth in becoming like Your Son Jesus. Amen.

Listen to the instructive words of noted Christian Writer A.W.Pink adapted from his popular book ["The Sovereignty of God."](#)

What is God's Sovereignty?

"Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all." (1 Chronicles 29:11).

THE Sovereignty of God is an expression every Christian should understand. It was often used in Christian literature. It used to be a theme frequently preached from the pulpit. It was a truth which brought comfort to many hearts, and gave steel and stability to a Christian's character. But sadly today, to talk about God's sovereignty is, in many churches, to speak a foreign language.

The truth is this teaching of the Bible is the key to history; in fact it makes sense of everything that happens because it helps us understand God is in control of every thing and even every person. (cf. Romans 8:28) It is a foundation plank the under pins Scripture, and therefore the foundation of Christian theology. The alternative is horrifying! That God is not in control of all events therefore chance and chaos reign. Therefore what hope have we of God giving us salvation we so desperately need, because He is weak and not powerful enough to accomplish what one man can do? Why then should it be so sadly neglected and so little understood and what do we mean by this saying the Sovereignty of God?

We mean God being supremacy, king or boss. Commander in Chief is a good example. There is no one higher stronger than God. It's stating the obvious but to say God is sovereign is to declare that He *is* God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that;

"He does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" (Daniel 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 (Psalm 115:3). To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is "The Governor among the nations" (Psalm 22:28), setting up kingdoms, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as pleases 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 Timothy 6:15). Such is the God of the Bible.

How different is the God of the Bible from the God of modern Christianity! The idea of God most widely believed today among Christians who say they believe the Scriptures, is helpless and effeminate commanding the respect of no thinking person.

The God of popular thinking is cheesy and sentimental. Hence the God of many a present-day pulpit is often one we should pity rather than fall on our knees and give our awe-inspiring reverence too.

To say that God the Father has purposed to save every one and that Jesus died for every human, and that God the Holy Spirit is now seeking to win people to Christ; when, it is obvious that the great majority of our fellow humans are dying in their sin, and going to hell is to say that God the Father is *disappointed*, that God the Son is *dissatisfied*, and that God the Holy Spirit is *defeated*.

We have stated the fact bluntly, but there is no escaping it, to say God is “trying His best” to save everyone but they want let Him save them, is to insist God is powerless and that our wills are powerful.

Then to go and blame, the Devil doesn't remove the difficulty, for if Satan is defeating the purpose of God, then, Satan is Almighty and God is no longer the Sovereign Lord.

To declare t the Creator's original plan has been frustrated by our rebellion is to *dethrone* God. To suggest that God was taken by surprise in Eden and that He is now attempting to remedy an unforeseen disaster, is to *degrade God* to the level of a finite mortal. To argue people are free moral agents who determine their own destinies, and therefore out smart God of being all powerful. To say that God was a helpless spectator when Adam and Eve rebelled is to go against the Bible namely,

“Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt.” (Psalm 76:10).

In other words, to deny the sovereignty of God is to enter on a path which, if followed logically stares into the face of atheism!

The sovereignty of the God in scripture is absolute, irresistible, and infinite. When we say that God is sovereign we say He has the right to govern the universe, which He has made for His own glory, just as He pleases. We agree *His right* is the right of the Potter over the clay, i.e., that He may mould that clay into whatsoever form He chooses, fashioning out of *the same lump* one vessel to honor and another to dishonor. We affirm that He is under no rule or law outside of His own will and nature, *that God is a law to Himself*, and that He is under no obligation to give an account of His matters to anyone.

Sovereignty characterizes the whole Being of God. He is sovereign in all His attributes. *He is sovereign in the exercise of His power*. His power is exercised as He wills, *when* He wills, *where* He wills. This fact is evidenced on every page of Scripture.

For a long time that power appeared to be dormant, and then it is put forth in irresistible might. Pharaoh dared to stop Israel from going forth to worship Jehovah in the wilderness—what happened? God exercised His power, His people were delivered and their cruel task-masters slain. But a little later, the Amalekites dared to attack these same Israelites in the wilderness, and what happened? Did God put forth His power on this occasion and display His hand as He did at the Red Sea? Were these enemies of His people promptly overthrown and destroyed? No, on the contrary, the Lord swore that He would “have war with Amalek *from generation to generation*” (Exodus 17:16).

Again, when Israel entered the land of Canaan, God's power was truly displayed. The city of Jericho barred their progress—what happened? Israel did not draw a bow nor strike a blow: the Lord stretched forth His hand and the walls fell down. But the miracle was never repeated! *No other city fell after this manner.* Every other city had to be captured by the sword!

Many other instances might illustrate the exercise of God's sovereign power. For example, God put forth His power and David was delivered from Goliath, the giant; the mouths of the lions were closed and Daniel escaped unhurt; the three Hebrew children were cast into the burning fiery furnace and came forth unharmed and unscorched. *But God's power did not always intervene for the deliverance of His people,* for we read:

“*And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, More over of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, and were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented*” (Hebrews 11:36, 37).

But why weren't these men of faith delivered like the others? Or, why didn't the others suffered to be killed like these? Why should God's power rescue some and not the others? Why allow Stephen to be stoned to death, and then deliver Peter from prison?

God is sovereign in *delegating His power.* Why did God endow Methuselah with a vitality which enabled him to outlive all his contemporaries? Why did God impart to Samson a physical strength which no other human has ever possessed? Again; it is written,

“But thou shall remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that *gives thee power to get wealth*” (Deuteronomy 8:18),

But God does give His power to everyone. Why has He given such power to men like George Bush or Bill Gates? The answer because God is Sovereign, and being Sovereign He does as He pleases.

God is sovereign in the exercise of His mercy. Necessarily so, for mercy is directed by the *will* of Him that showed mercy. Mercy is not a *right* to which man is entitled. Mercy is that adorable attribute of God by which He pities and relieves the wretched. But under the righteous government of God no one is wretched who does not *deserve* to be so. The objects of mercy, then, are those who are miserable, and all misery is the result of *sin*, hence the miserable are deserving of punishment not mercy. To speak of *deserving mercy* is a contradiction of terms.

God bestows His mercies on which He pleases and withholds them as seemed good to Him. A remarkable illustration of this fact is seen in the manner that God responded to the prayers of two men offered under very similar circumstances. Sentence of death was passed upon Moses for one act of disobedience, and he besought the Lord for a reprieve. But was his desire gratified? No; he told Israel,

“The Lord is angry with me for your sakes, *and would not hear me:* and the Lord said to me, Let it suffice thee” (Deuteronomy 3:26).

Note the second case,

“In those days was Hezekiah sick to death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amos came to him, and said to him, Thus said the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord, saying, I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus said the Lord, the God of David thy father, *I have heard thy prayer*, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up to the house of the Lord. And I will add to thy days fifteen years” (2 Kings 20:1-6).

Both of these men had the sentence of death in themselves, and both prayed earnestly to the Lord for a reprieve: the one wrote: “The Lord would not hear me,” and died; but to the other it was said, “I have heard thy prayer”, and his life was spared. What an illustration and exemplification of the truth expressed in Romans 9:15!—“For He said to Moses, I will have mercy *on whom I will have mercy*, and I will have compassion *on whom I will have compassion*.”

The sovereign exercise of God’s mercy—pity shown to the wretched—was displayed when Jehovah became flesh and tabernacled among men. Take one illustration. During one of the Feasts of the Jews, the Lord Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He came to the Pool of Bethesda, where lay “*a great multitude* of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.” Among this “great multitude” there was “a certain man which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.” What happened?

“When Jesus saw *him* lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he said *to him*, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered Him, Sir; I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another stepped down before me. Jesus said to him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked” (John 5:3-9).

Why was this one man singled out from all the others? We are not told that he cried “Lord, have mercy *on me*.” There is not a word in the narrative which intimates that this man possessed any qualifications which entitled him to receive special favor. Here then was a case of the sovereign exercise of Divine mercy, for it was just as easy for Christ to heal the whole of that “great multitude” as this one “certain man.” But he did not. He put forth His power and relieved the wretchedness of this one particular sufferer, and for some reason known only to Himself, He declined to do the same for the others.

Again, we say, what an illustration and exemplification of Romans 9:15!—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

God is sovereign in His love. Ah! that is a hard saying, who then can receive it? It is written, “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven” (John 3:27).

When we say that God is sovereign in the exercise of His love, we mean that He loves whom He chooses. God does not love everybody; if He did, He would love the Devil. Why does not God love the Devil? Because there is nothing in him *to love*; because

there is nothing in him to *attract* the heart of God. Nor is there anything to *attract* God's love in any of the fallen sons of Adam, for *all* of them are, by nature, "children of *wrath*" (Ephesians 2:3).

If then there is nothing in any member of the human race to attract God's love, and if, notwithstanding, He *does* love *some*, then it necessarily follows that the *cause* of His love must be found in Himself, which is only another way of saying that the exercise of God's love towards the fallen sons of men is according to His own good pleasure.

In the final analysis, the exercise of God's love *must* be traced back to His sovereignty, or, otherwise, He would *love by rule*; and if He loved by rule, then is He under a *law of love*, and if He is under a *law of love* then is He not supreme, but is Himself *ruled* by law. "But," it may be asked, "Surely you do not *deny* that God loves the entire human family?" We reply, it is written,

"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13).

If then God loved Jacob and hated Esau, and that before they were born or had done either good or evil, then the *reason* for His love was not in them, but in Himself.

That the exercise of God's love *is* according to His own sovereign pleasure is also clear from the language of Ephesians 1:3-5, where we read,

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 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 having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will.*"

It was "*in love*" that God the Father predestined His chosen ones to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, "according"—according to what? According to *some excellency* He discovered in them? No. What then? According to what He *foresaw* they would become? No; mark carefully the inspired answer— "According to the good pleasure of *His will.*"

God is sovereign in the exercise of His grace. This of necessity, for grace is favor shown to the *undeserving*, yea, to the Hell-deserving. Grace is the antithesis of justice. Justice demands the impartial enforcement of law. Justice requires that each shall receive his legitimate due, neither more nor less. Justice bestows no favors and is no respecter of persons. Justice, as such, shows no pity and knows no mercy. But after justice has been fully satisfied, grace flows forth. Divine grace is not exercised at the expense of justice, but "grace reigns through righteousness" (Romans 5:21), and if grace "*reigns*", then is grace sovereign.

Grace has been defined as the unmerited favor of God; and if unmerited, then none can claim it as their inalienable *right*. If grace is unearned and undeserved, then none are *entitled* to it. If grace is a gift, then none can *demand* it. Therefore, as salvation is by grace, the free gift of God, then He bestows it on whom He pleases. Because salvation is by grace, the very chief of sinners is not beyond the reach of Divine mercy. Because salvation is by grace, boasting is excluded and God gets all the glory.

Because God is sovereign over my suffering I can...

Resign myself to God's loving care

Coming to believe in my heart God's sovereignty will stop me from *complaining*. This makes sense but think about it. It is natural to *complain* when we go through hard times and suffering. It is natural to complain when we don't get the things we had set our hearts on. We regard our possessions as ours unconditionally. We feel that when we have made our plans with care we are *entitled* to success. That when we hard work and have become 'competent,' we *deserve* to keep and enjoy it. That when we are surrounded by a happy family, nothing or anyone can enter that charmed circle and strike down a loved one; and if by 'chance' or 'bad luck' illness, unemployment, financial loss or death does come then the perverted instinct of our human heart is to cry out against God.

But as Christians who, by grace, has learnt God's sovereignty, my complaining is silenced, and instead, I learn to humbly bow to God's good will, and agree that He has not afflicted it on me as I *deserve*.

So Christian by recognizing God's sovereignty means resigning to the fact God has the perfect right to do with me as He please. If He chooses to send me poverty, sickness, death in the family, even while this might be ripping the guts out of me I will say, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right!' Often there will be a struggle, in my mind about this but this it means to be a pilgrim on a journey to heaven and the end of suffering.

But though there may be a conflict within his breast, nevertheless, to the one who has really yielded himself to this blessed truth, there will presently be heard that Voice saying, as of old it said to the turbulent Gennesareth, "Peace be still"; and the tempestuous flood within will be quieted and the subdued soul will lift a tearful but confident eye to heaven and say, "Thy will be done."

A striking illustration of a soul bowing to the sovereign will of God is furnished by the history of Eli the high priest of Israel. In 1 Samuel 3 we learn how God revealed to the young child Samuel that He was about to slay Eli's two sons for their wickedness, and on the morrow Samuel communicates this message to the aged priest. It is difficult to conceive of more appalling intelligence for the heart of a pious parent. The announcement that his child is going to be stricken down by sudden death is, under any circumstances, a great trial to any father, but to learn that his two sons—in the prime of their manhood, and utterly *unprepared* to die— were to be cut off by a Divine judgment, must have been overwhelming. Yet, what was the effect upon Eli when he learned from Samuel the tragic tidings? What reply did he make when he heard the awful news?

"And he said, It is the Lord: *let Him do what seemed Him good*" (1 Samuel 3:18).

And not another word escaped him. What wonderful submission! Sublime resignation! What a amazing display of the power of Divine grace to control the strongest affections of the human heart and subdue the rebellious will, bringing it into unrepining acquiescence to the sovereign pleasure of Jehovah.

Another example is seen in the life of Job. As is well known, Job was one that feared God and shunned evil. If ever there was one who might reasonably expect Divine

providence to smile upon him— we speak as a man—it was Job. Yet, how fared it with him? For a time, the lines fell to him in pleasant places. The Lord filled his quiver by giving him seven sons and three daughters. He prospered him in his temporal affairs until he owned great possessions. But of a sudden, the sun of life was hidden behind dark clouds.

In a single day Job lost not only his flocks and herds, but his sons and daughters as well. News arrived that his cattle had been carried off by robbers, and his children slain by a cyclone. And how did he receive this intelligence? Harken to his sublime words: “*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.*” He bowed to the sovereign will of Jehovah. He traced his afflictions back to God. He looked behind the Sabeans who had stolen his cattle, and beyond the winds that had destroyed his children, and saw *the hand of God*. But not only did Job *recognize* God’s sovereignty, he *rejoiced* in it, too. To the words, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,” he added, “*Blessed be the name of the Lord*” (Job 1:21). Again we say, What submission! What humble resignation!

A true recognition of God’s sovereignty causes us to trust God despite difficulties and trials. It makes us recognize that the Divine Potter has absolute power over the clay and moulds it according to his own sovereign pleasure. What should our attitude be?

“Go to now, you that say, Today or tomorrow *we will* go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeared for a little time, and then vanished away. For that ye *ought* to say, *If the Lord will*, we shall live, and do this, or that” (James 4:13-15).

Yes, it is to the *Lord’s will* we must bow. It is for *Him* to say where I shall live—whether in New York or Washington. It is for *Him* to determine under what circumstances I shall live—whether in wealth or poverty, whether in health or sickness. It is for *Him* to say how long I shall live—whether I shall be cut down in youth like the flower of the field, or whether I shall continue for three score and ten years. To *really* learn this lesson is, by grace, to attain to a high form in the school of suffering, and even when we think we have learnt it, we discover, again and again, that we have to relearn it.

Because God is sovereign over my suffering I can be deeply thankful and joyful

The *heart’s understanding* of this most blessed truth of the sovereignty of God, produces something far different than a sullen bowing to the inevitable. The philosophy of this perishing world knows nothing better than to say “What bad luck or that was chance”. But with the Christian it should be other wise. Not only should the recognition of God’s supremacy produce within us godly fear, ready obedience, and entire resignation, but it should cause us to say with the Psalmist, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name”. What does not the apostle say?

“Giving thanks *a/ways* for all things to God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20)?

Yes, it is at *this* point the state of our souls is so often put to the test. There is so much self-will in each of us. When things go as we wish them, we appear to be very grateful to God; but what of those occasions when things go contrary to our plans and desires? We take it for granted when the real Christian takes a plane journey that, upon reaching his

destination, he returns thanks to God—which, of course, argues that *He* controls everything;

Or, if in business, at the close of a good week, gratitude is expressed to the Giver of every good (temporal) and of every perfect (spiritual) gift—which again, argues that *He* directs all customers to your shop. So far, so good. Such examples occasion no difficulty. But imagine the opposites. Suppose my car was caught in traffic and delayed for hours, did I fret and fume; suppose another car ran into it, and I am injured!

Or, suppose I have had a hard week at home or school or work, do I see the hand of God in *these* things?

Take the case of Job once more. When loss after loss came his way, what did he do? Bemoan his “bad luck”? Curse the robbers? Murmur against God? No; he bowed before Him in worship. Ah, dear reader, there is no real rest for your poor heart until you learn to see the hand of God in everything. But for that, *faith* must be in constant exercise. And what is faith? A blind credulity? A fatalistic acquiescence? No, far from it. Faith is a resting on the sure Word of the living God, and therefore says,

“We *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);

and therefore faith will give thanks “always for all things”. Operative faith will “Rejoice in the Lord *always*” (Philippians 4:4). We turn now to mark how this recognition of God’s sovereignty which is expressed in godly fear, implicit obedience, entire resignation, and deep thankfulness and joy was supremely and perfectly exemplified by the Lord Jesus Christ.

In all things the Lord Jesus has left us an example that we should follow His steps. But is this true in connection with the first point made above? Are the words “godly fear” ever linked with *His* peerless name? Remembering that ‘godly fear’ signifies not a servile terror, but rather a filial subjection and reverence, and remembering too that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” would it not rather be strange if no mention at all were made of godly fear in connection with the One who was wisdom incarnate! What a wonderful and precious word is that of Hebrews 5:7—



“Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him that was able to save Him from death, and

having been heard *for His godly fear?*”

(R. V.). What was it but ‘*godly fear*’ which caused the Lord Jesus to be “subject” to Mary and Joseph in the days of His childhood? Was it not ‘godly fear’—a filial subjection to and reverence for God—that we see displayed, when we read,

“And He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up: and, as *His custom was*, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day” (Luke 4:16)?

Was it not ‘godly fear’ which caused the incarnate Son to say, when tempted by Satan to fall down and worship him, “It is written, thou shall worship *the Lord thy God* and Him only shall thou serve”? Was it not ‘godly fear’ which moved Him to say to the cleansed leper,

“Go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses *commanded*” (Matthew 8:4)?

But why multiply illustrations? How perfect was the *obedience* that the Lord Jesus offered to God the Father! And in reflecting upon this let us not lose sight of that wondrous grace which caused Him, who was in the very form of God, to stoop so low as to take upon Him the form of a *Servant*, and thus be brought into the place where obedience was becoming. As the perfect Servant He yielded complete obedience to His Father. How absolute and entire that obedience was we may learn from the words, He

“became *obedient to death*, even the death of the Cross” (Philippians 2:8).

That this was a conscious and intelligent obedience is clear from His own language—

“Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. *This commandment* have I received from My Father” (John 10:17, 18).

And what shall we say of the absolute *resignation* of the Son to the Father’s will—what, but, between Them there was entire oneness of accord. Said He,

“For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” (John 6:38),

and how fully He substantiated that claim all know who have attentively followed His path as marked out in the Scriptures. Behold Him in Gethsemane! The bitter ‘cup,’ held in the Father’s hand, is presented to His view. Mark well His attitude. *Learn* of Him who was meek and lowly in heart. Remember that there in the Garden we see the Word become flesh— a perfect Man. His body is quivering at every nerve, in contemplation of the physical sufferings which await Him; His holy and sensitive nature is shrinking from the horrible indignities which shall be heaped upon Him; His heart is breaking at the awful “reproach” which is before Him; His spirit is greatly troubled as He foresees the terrible conflict with the Power of Darkness; and above all, and supremely, His soul is filled with horror at the thought of being separated from God Himself—thus and there He pours out His soul to the Father, and with strong crying and tears He sheds, as it were, great drops of blood. And now observe and listen. Still the beating of thy heart, and hearken to the words which fall from His blessed lips

“Father, if *You* be willing, remove this cup from Me: *nevertheless*, not My will, but *Your* be done” (Luke 22:42).

Here is submission personified. Here is resignation to the pleasure of a sovereign God superlatively exemplified. And He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. He who was God became man, and was tempted in all points like as we are—sin apart—to show us *how* to wear *our* creature nature!

Above we asked, What shall we say of Christ's absolute resignation to the Father's will? We answer further, This,—that here, as everywhere, He was unique, peerless. In all things He has the pre-eminence. In the Lord Jesus there was no rebellious will to be broken.

In His heart there was nothing to be subdued. Was not this one reason why, in the language of prophecy, He said, "I am a worm, and no man" (Psalm 22:6)—*a worm has no power of resistance!* It was because in Him there *was* no resistance that He could say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John 4:34). Yes, It was because He was in perfect agreement with His Father in all things that He said,

"*I delight to do Your will, O God; yes, Your law is within My heart*" (Psalm 40:8).

Note the last clause here and behold *His* matchless excellency. God has to *put* His laws into *our* minds, and *write* them in *our* hearts (see Hebrews 8:10), but His law was *already* in *Christ's* heart!

What a beautiful and striking illustration of Christ's thankfulness and joy is found in Matthew 11. There we behold, first, the failure in the faith of His forerunner (vv. 22, 23). Next, we learn of the discontent of the people: satisfied neither with Christ's joyous message, nor with John's solemn one (vv. 16-20).

Third, we have the non-repentance of those favored cities in which our Lord's mightiest works were done (vv. 21-24). And then we read,

"*At that time* Jesus answered and said, I *thank* Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou *hast* hid these things from the wise and prudent, and *hast* revealed them to babes" (v. 25)!

Note the parallel passage in Luke 10:21 opens by saying, "In that hour Jesus *rejoiced* in spirit, and said, I thank Thee" etc. Ah, here was submission in its purest form. Here was One by which the worlds were made, yet, in the days of His humiliation, and in the face of His rejection, thankfully and joyously bowing to the will of the "Lord of heaven and earth". What ought to be our attitude towards God's sovereignty? Finally,

Because God is Sovereign over my suffering I can adore Him in worship

It has been well said that "true worship is based upon *recognized* GREATNESS, and greatness is superlatively seen in Sovereignty, and at no other footstool will men *really* worship" (J. B. Moody).

In the presence of the Divine King upon His throne even the seraphim 'veil their faces.' Divine sovereignty is not the sovereignty of a tyrannical Despot, but the exercised pleasure of One who is infinitely wise and good! Because God is infinitely wise He *cannot* make a mistake, and because He is infinitely righteous He *will not* do wrong. Here then is the *preciousness* of this truth. The mere fact itself that God's will is

irresistible and irreversible fills me with fear, but once I realize that God wills only that which is good, my heart is made to rejoice.

Here then is the final answer to the question —What ought to be our attitude toward suffering if God is sovereign?

The right attitude is that of godly fear, implicit obedience, and unreserved resignation and submission to God's sovereign will. But not only so: the recognition of the sovereignty of God, and the realization that the Sovereign Himself is my *Father*, ought to overwhelm my heart and cause me to bow before Him in adoring worship.

At all times I must say, "Even so, Father, for so it seems *good* in Thy sight." We conclude with an example which well illustrates our meaning. Some two hundred years ago the saintly William Cowper, wrote these words,

Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings;
It is the LORD who rises
With healing in his wings:
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again
A season of clear shining
To cheer it after rain.

In holy contemplation,
We sweetly then pursue
The theme of God's salvation,
And find it ever new:
Set free from present sorrow,
We cheerfully can say,
Even let the unknown tomorrow,
Bring with it what it may.

It can bring with it nothing
But he will bear us through;
Who gives the lilies clothing
Will clothe his people too:
Beneath the spreading heavens,
No creature but is fed;
And he who feeds the ravens,
Will give his children bread.

Though vine, nor fig-tree neither,
Their wonted fruit should hear,
Though all the fields should wither,
Nor flocks, nor herds, be there:
Yet God the same abiding,
His praise shall tune my voice;
For while in him confiding,
I cannot but rejoice.

William Cowper

Because God is sovereign over my suffering I can fear Him

Why is it today, the so many aren't concerned about spiritual and eternal things, and that they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? Why is it that in our journey so few are indifferent to their soul's welfare? Why is it that people care little whether they go to heaven? The answer is, "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:18). Again; why is it that the authority of the Scriptures no longer directs Christians to humbly follow God's Word what ever the cost or comfort?

Why is it that even among those who profess to be the Lord's people there is so little real subjection to His Word, and that its precepts are so lightly esteemed and so readily set aside? Ah! what needs to be stressed to-day is that God is a *God to be feared*.

"The *fear of the Lord* is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 1:7).

Happy the soul that has been awed by a view of God's majesty, that has had a vision of God's awful greatness, His ineffable holiness, His perfect righteousness, His irresistible power, His sovereign grace. Does someone say, "But it is only the unsaved, those *outside* of Christ, who need to *fear* God"? Then the sufficient answer is that the saved, those who are *in Christ*, are admonished to work out their own salvation with "fear and trembling." Time was, when it was the general custom to speak of believer as a "God-fearing man"—that such an appellation has become nearly extinct only serves to show whither we have drifted. Nevertheless, it still stands written,

"Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that *fear* Him" (Psalm 103:13)!

When we speak of godly fear, of course, we do not mean a groveling fear, such as prevails among those who don't live for God but only themselves. No; we mean that spirit which Jehovah is pledged to bless, that spirit to which the prophet referred when he said,

"To this man will I (the Lord) look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, *and trembles at My Word*" (Isaiah 66:2).

It was this the apostle had in view when he wrote, "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. *Fear God*. Honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17).

And nothing will foster this godly fear like a recognition of the sovereign Majesty of God. What ought to be our attitude toward the Sovereignty of God? We answer again,

Because God is sovereign over my suffering I can willing obey Him

A sight of God leads to a realization of our littleness and nothingness, and causes a sense of dependency and casting ourselves on God. Or, a sight of God's Sovereignty promotes in me a spirit of godly fear and this, in turn, leads to a desire to obey God in my daily walk.

Here then is the Divine antidote for the evil of our hearts. Naturally, we are filled with a sense of our own importance, with our greatness and self-sufficiency; in a word, with pride and rebellion. But, as we remarked, the great corrective is to behold the Mighty God, for this alone will really humble us. You will glory either in yourself or in God.

You will live either to serve and please yourself, or you will seek to serve and please the Lord. You can't serve two masters. Irreverence breeds disobedience. So said a proud Pharaoh in God's hearing...

"Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? *I know not the Lord*; neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2).

To Pharaoh, the God of the Hebrews was merely *a powerless* god, one among many, who needed not to be feared or served. How sadly mistaken he was, and how bitterly he had to pay for his mistake, he soon discovered. Pharaoh's defiant spirit was the fruit of irreverence, and this was because he was *ignorant* of God Sovereignty.

If irreverence breeds disobedience, true reverence produces obedience. To realize that the Bible is revelation from God communicating to us His mind and will for us is the first step toward growing in godliness. To recognize that the Bible is *God's Word*, and that its precepts are the precepts of the Almighty, will lead you to see what an awful thing it is to despise and ignore them. To receive the Bible as addressed to your own soul, given to you by the Creator Himself, will cause you to cry with the Psalmist,

"Incline my heart to Thy testimonies....Order my steps in Thy Word" (Psalm 119:36, 133).

Lets Pray...

Dear Sovereign Father,

Thank you for Your clear teaching in Your Word - that You are sovereign over all of life. Help me to believe that you are sovereign over my present suffering. Please change me through this comforting truth by the power of your Holy Spirit. Father renew my thinking and motivation so it stops breeding self pity, anger or believing this is fate or karma. Rather help me to meditate daily on your Sovereignty. Now by Your Spirit motivate me to live believing you are in daily control of my life for your pleasure and to make me more like Jesus and fit for Heaven. Help me to worship you daily through your Son Jesus Christ and forgive me all my sins. Be my King and I will be your humble servant. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Homework

1. Look up every Bible verse and mediate on it asking;
2. What is the meaning of the verse?
3. What is the context of the verse?
4. What does the passage say?
5. What does the passage mean? (Use a good commentary)
6. How does it apply to me?
7. What do I need to do to change?

8. Pray over the verse and memorize it.

9. Since you began to suffer have you spoken to someone about this?
10. Set aside time each day to pray, study the Bible and mediate on what God is teaching you through your present suffering.
11. Examine your life to see whether any life dominating sin may be God's loving discipline resulting in your present suffering.
12. If this is the case – resolve conflicts and repent of your sin asking for God's forgiveness.
13. Keep a journal of your thoughts and what God is teaching you through suffering.
14. Make an appointment with either your Pastor or a wise Christian to counsel you through your trial. **Link to counselors/Churches**