

HEALING AND GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

by Bob Brassett

The question, on occasion, arises in the church, "Since God is sovereign, and since we don't, at present, see everyone healed, are we, therefore, correct in assuming that God sometimes does not want to heal a certain individual?" Allow me to attempt to answer that question by exposing some misconceptions about God's sovereignty . What does it really mean when we say, "God is sovereign?" Does it mean, as some people seem to assume, that God wants to save or heal some and not others? I am convinced that God's sovereignty is, at the same time, one of the most precious truths of the Bible and one of the most abused truths of the Bible. Further, I'm convinced that God's sovereignty has been blamed for more of the devil's work than anything else the devil does. Sometimes, God's sovereignty is what people blame all human failure on. There's a true story of an Air Force pilot instructor attempting to train two Arabic trainee pilots. One or the other of the trainees would do something wrong, and the flight instructor would try to correct them. Their reply was always the same, "Allah wills." ---another mistake, an attempt at correction, always the same reply--- "No! Allah wills!" The bottom line was that they made no mistakes, because everything was "the will of God." The church frequently thinks like that.

Redemption

The Bible tells us what redemption should look like, what deliverance should look like, and what healing should look like. Often we fail to walk in and appropriate these truths. Many times, it's through no intentional fault of our own. Sometimes, it's a corporate fault or weakness (I Cor. 11), or the opposition of the enemy (Ephesians 6:1, 1 Peter 1..."Be sober, be vigilant, because..."). Whatever the reason might be, our response is: "I didn't get it: God is sovereign. It must not have been His will." What we are really saying here, in so many words, is, 'God's sovereignty means that He doesn't have to keep His word, or make available to us what He says in His word is available to us, because, after all, God is sovereign; He doesn't have to keep His word.' There is, of course, an absurdity in that statement. In fact,

scripture says that God, "has placed His word above His throne." (Psalms) That means that God obligates Himself to keep His word. There is a subtle teaching that permeates much of Christianity that says, 'I know God promises healing, and I know He says, in His word, that He will heal all our diseases, but, God is sovereign and sometimes, He will go against even what He promised in His word.' That attitude is an insult to God's character, disguised as religious humility. "But," people say, "I don't want to make people feel guilty if they can't appropriate God's promises." Well, they are right about that! Jesus never made people feel guilty just because they weren't healed immediately. Jesus never told the sick, "It's because you don't have enough faith." In fact, the only ones He ever upbraided, in that department, were His disciples who couldn't get the demon out of the boy that sometimes threw him into the fire." (Matt.17:14) Beyond this, we also have an enemy who robs us. ("The thief came to kill and steal and destroy..."John 10:10). I've seen some people in ministry acting in a very cruel manner. They've said, 'You didn't get healed - it's your own fault. It's unbelief, or, if you only had more faith, or, you're not doing enough, or, you have sin in your life, or, you have demonic bondage - that is why you're not healed.' No, this is wrong. People's abuse does not mean, however, that we shouldn't use the gifts (like healing and deliverance) properly. Abuse shouldn't result in non-use.

God Rules in History

The Scriptures teach that God is the unlimited, sovereign, reigning Lord, who has reconciled the world to Himself, through His Son, the Messiah. They also teach that we do not yet see all things under Jesus' feet. One day, every knee will bow. Until that day, his people operate under His delegated authority. A true, accurate biblical description of God's sovereignty does not include concepts such as manipulation, or coercion. That God is ultimately sovereign is scripturally true and evident. Everything is going to end up where He says. By that, we sometimes assume that God overrides or bypasses human initiative and that God has the devil completely under control at this season. This is not what the scriptures say. If that were true, then why have a church that is supposed to represent His authority? If God's perfect, sovereign

will is being completely worked out in time, space and history, apart from human effort and involvement, then why in the world have a Kingdom of God where Christ's authority is manifest? In fact, if God is sovereign in the way much of the church says He is, then why have Jesus come and undo God sovereignly keeping all those people sick, and why cast out all those demons that God sovereignly wanted them to have? If, for instance, God sovereignly wants a person deaf, then why wear a hearing aid? If, as some in the church think, God's sovereignty means He is controlling everything and it's going just the way He wants, then why change anything? The exact opposite is true! Jesus comes and absolutely devastates all evil and says, "I come representing, completely and perfectly, the will of God. I represent His total lordship and rulership. When you look at me, you see God's rule in operation, you see God's heart. Are you sick? Be healed! Are you demonized? Be delivered! Are you hungry? Be fed! Are you naked? Be clothed! Are you poor? Receive of my abundance!" Then He says, "Now, go in my name and do the same!" (In other words, represent me accurately, show people what my Father is like.) Why? So people can truly know my Father and His character.

Rebel Territory

So, teaching that says that God is sovereignly wanting people sick and to die prematurely, and the devil can't do anything unless God sovereignly wills it, is deficient. Where does that kind of teaching leave us? It leaves us without the ministry of Jesus. Hebrews 1:2 says, "In these last days...God has spoken to us in His Son whom He appointed heir of all things." God's will is fully disclosed in Jesus, in both His actions, and His words. His actions and words disclose that His Father is the supreme ruler, but, that there are pockets of 'rebel territory' on planet earth, where God's will is not fully carried out. Further, we are shown that sickness and disease interrupt and impair the outworking of the will of God. Thus, a fatalistic type of sovereignty thinking, which is more pagan than scriptural, robs the church of both its' mandate and its' authority! Instead of crying out, "where are the miracles of our forefathers?", people say, "don't you know God is sovereign? Don't you know He's got the devil on a leash?" Try telling that to David Hogan and to the 200 former corpses, who are now vital and alive! Or is it

only the North American corpses that are to sovereignly remain that way? We have been robbed. It says in I Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your enemy, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour." It does not say, 'whom he may pretend to devour.' There are real casualties that are not part of God's sovereign, predestined intention. In Ezekiel, it says, "I looked for a man to stand in the gap to make up the wall so that I wouldn't send judgement but I couldn't find a man." If that verse means anything, it means that one man, one woman, can change the destiny of things. God is compelled to act in perfect justice if no one calls on Him in mercy. Intercession is calling on God to be merciful .

A Scriptural Picture

From Genesis to Revelations, Scripture is full of examples where both are shown in the same passage of Scripture. Here are a few:

Man's Initiative God's Sovereignty

Draw near to God and...(James 4:8) he will draw near to you
Work out your own salvation...(Phil:2:12) for it is God who works in you to will...

...call for the elders...(James 5) and the prayer of faith will save (heal) the sick

Seek the Lord...(Isaiah 55:7) while he may be found

Call upon Him...(ibid) while he is near

I sought the Lord...(Psalm 34:4) and he heard me and delivered me

Abimalech sought the Lord...(Genesis 6:38) and the Lord healed him

Syro-Phoenician woman sought healing...(Mark 7:24) Jesus healed her

Crowds followed...(Matt. 7:19) Jesus healed them all

Go ye...into all nations...make disciples...((Matt.28:20) all authority...has been given to me

Choose this day whom you will follow God is not willing that any should perish

Another way to look at this is, there is a Legal Side and a Vital Side to our Redemption / Salvation.

Vital Side Legal side

has to do with our experience has to do with the law

has to do with what God did for us,
at the cross

has to do with man's initiative has to do with God's sovereignty

vital ,experiential relationship covenant is a legal agreement

vital, experiential fellowship with God also a legal relationship
with God

provides something powerful, vital and alive purpose of the legal
relationship

Experientially, we often have difficulty in appropriating this.
Legally, however, we have all the healing we will ever need
available. This is real; an accomplished, historical fact. It is not
just a theory. We need both of these. What we need is sound
doctrine, confirmed in valid, biblical experience.

Positional Truth

The legal side of our redemption is actual, biblical and real. In
describing positional truth, some well-meaning teachers would
have us believe that God has truth that isn't true. They says things
like, "positionally it's this - but actually it's this." Why is there a
contradiction - a conflict? Because what God has done for us
legally and judicially may not have been apprehended by us
experientially and vitally yet. This is no cause for condemnation,
self-recrimination or despair. It's rather an incentive to continue
to seek and expect.

One More Example

Our Salvation

Legal/Judicial --- Vital-Experiential

Positional --- Actual

"Jesus, who was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised up for our justification...therefore... we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"(Rom.4:25)

Because of the legal side, the historical side (which is past-tense) we now, in our present experience, have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ! (That's the vital side). If you've received Christ; what took place objectively, outside of you, in history, (it's an historical fact - the crucifixion), has become, for you, a vital, present experience and brings you into possession of new things. Among these new things is peace with God from here on in! The hostility is ended (2,000 years ago). You now have the right to walk in that peace all the time. What was legal became vital. The same thing happened with regard to healing.

In conclusion

People say, "What about Paul's thorn in the flesh? What about Timothy, whom Paul admonished to take a little wine for frequent stomach ailments? Aren't there exceptions?" My answer would be, 'I sure don't have all the answers.' I don't have a 'pat answer' for everything, or a formula. I believe scripture is very clear, though, that Paul's thorn in the flesh was definitely not sickness, but a "messenger of Satan - sent to stir up opposition and persecution wherever he ministered." As for Timothy, Paul did urge him to seek a natural remedy (a little wine as a medicinal therapy)

instead of saying," your sickness is God's Will, so don't try to recover." So, in conclusion, in an overall sense, I think we are very safe and scriptural in seeking healing for everyone that asks for it knowing that we are firmly in the centre of God's good, pleasing, and perfect sovereign will. As John Wimber used to say, "everytime we ask for healing, it is sent." Another time, Wimber tells of how God spoke to him, after he had been struggling with people who didn't seem to be able to receive healing, and God showed him a vision of ample healing being poured out on everyone. There was more than enough healing for everyone on earth and still a number of people weren't receiving. God said, "John, the problem is not on my part. The problem is not up here." So, we recognize that there is a mystery here, and that there is what the Bible calls 'the mystery of iniquity' at work in the earth today. Thank God that greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world. Thank God that, as we get closer and closer to His coming again, we are seeing greater and greater demonstrations of His healing, miracle-working power.

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