

“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” (1 Chronicles 29:11).

Let us today meditate upon and consider the sovereignty of God. It is a subject that in today's “modern age” is rarely discussed and you certainly won't hear about from modern pulpits. It is, however, an important idea to have firmly cemented in our minds and hearts. I do not believe that one can properly worship God if not recognizing His sovereignty, and fully submitting to that in all ways and at all times.

It is especially important to consider the sovereignty of God in today's world because it is constantly denied all around us. How frequently do we hear the power and control of our God denied in the news, in the entertainment industry, in casual conversation? The generation in which we find ourselves walking is obsessed with finding new things to attribute God's actions and providence to.

This isn't surprising, since His sovereignty was denied from the beginning. What more is “ye shall not surely die” if it isn't a rebellious declaration that God is not indeed sovereign? That is the crux of Satan's battle against God, and his primary weapon against us! We must understand, embrace and love the sovereignty of God, to do battle against our foe, or risk being seduced and devoured by this roaring lion!

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11).

Those wiles include this egregious lie that our enemy has done such a good job of propagating throughout human history – the lie that the very God who created us is a liar, that there is no punishment for sin, there is no death when God promises it for disobedience to His commandments. This lie is easy for us to fall for when we don't put that armor on, and when we don't see the Sovereign God in everything that happens to us. It is easy to fall for this lie because the way before us at times seems too difficult, the sacrifice more than we can give up, the mocking too hard, the heart strings pulled too taut back to a loved one that has departed the faith. The adversary whispers in our ears “ye shall not surely die” every opportunity he gets.

To properly consider the sovereignty of God requires first that one puts aside their pride. The Psalmist tells us

“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts” (Psalm 10:4).

Pride is at direct odds against our consideration of the sovereignty of God, because it puts **US** before God. When succumbing to pride, you will not seek after God, because you look to yourself to provide what you need. Pride keeps Him from our thoughts! What a dark and dismal place that is! Pride places us in the seat of power and control, and **denies** God His sovereignty. What is *“ye shall be as gods”* (Genesis 3:5), if not an appeal to pride?

But what is pride? We frequently talk about pride, but how often have you considered what it really is? How can you set it aside even for one second if you do not know what it is you are supposed to be setting aside? For certain, it is a nefarious and damning sin that can manifest itself in a number of ways, and perhaps in more ways than one person can even consider.

The dictionary defines pride as *“a high or inordinate opinion of one's own dignity, importance, merit, or superiority, whether as cherished in the mind or as displayed in bearing, conduct, etc.”*

We know from scripture many things about pride:

It leads directly to and is a prime indicator of impending destruction:

“Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom”
(Proverbs 13:10).

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall”
(Proverbs 16:18).

Contempt, the direct opposite of charity and brotherly love, is a leading characteristic of it:

“Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud” (Psalm 123:4).

It is a destroying force, bringing the highest of the high down low:

“A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit” (Proverbs 29:23).

Pride has no place with God:

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:16).

The proud are an abomination to God Almighty (note, not their pride, but the proud themselves):

“Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished” (Proverbs 16:5).

We have many examples in scripture of outward, haughty pride being manifested. Consider the angels who fell, which Jude specifically seeks to put us in remembrance of in verse 6 of his epistle

“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day”.

Here you have these amazing creatures – a creation of the same God that created man – they are more powerful than man, they are continually in His presence to serve Him, fortunate in their proximity and ability to observe His glory and His perfection from the beginning of their creation. There is no shroud or veil between the angels and God, only that firmament from which they can see His glory. They are gifted with bodies exceedingly more powerful, and presumably without the weaknesses that plague ours. Their station at the time of their creation was and is today vastly superior to mankind, from what we see in Scripture, they know no bodily corruption, they have powers that our minds cannot fully comprehend, and above all they have been gifted with direct proximity to the throne of God since their beginning. They are not to be worshipped, certainly, but God is due great admiration and wonder at His creating them.

Despite these vast superiorities to us as creatures, something happened, the precise details of which we are not given to know, but we are certainly given some inkling. When it was discussed, determined, and agreed upon in the council halls of eternity between God the Father and God the Son that Jesus would assume the form of man in order to suffer for the sake of the Father’s

chosen remnant, and thereby redeem that remnant from the fall of Adam, some portion of these tremendous creatures could not stand the idea. They bucked at the idea that Christ would take the form of a man. A man! A being that was created in the providence of God primarily to be destroyed! That Christ, the Son of God would take that form to redeem and save some portion of our filthy race was untenable to them. That mankind should be lifted up above the station that they held, the mighty Angels of God, beings compared to the morning stars, that man should be elevated in estate above theirs was more than they could bear. Their pride in their station, their estate, was greater than their sense of gratitude and service to the God who created them. They could not entertain the idea that this lowly creature man would be lifted up above them in their station and their position with the Creator by God the Son taking man's vile, filthy form and dying for him, and then placing those chosen men at His right hand. It wasn't 'fair' in their estimation of things.

Their sense of self-importance was too great, and they could not bear that God would not hold them up to be the greater and more important of His creations, that He wouldn't make mankind eternally subordinate to them in their position around His throne, that they, the Angels, would not be called His children was utterly offensive and unrighteous of Him in their eyes, and so that portion of them rebelled.

They held themselves in greater esteem than the decrees and providence of their Creator. They held forth the thought and apparently sought to enforce the idea that they could do a better job of running this universe than their God created. Their definition of what is just and fair drove them to rebel against the only being in all the universe for whom there is no superior being, no law other than Himself, who as Sovereign can do only just and righteous things, and those rebels are paying an eternal price for their rebellion. The price for their pride is having no redemption from that rebellion against God.

This is a breath-taking thing to ponder when you consider that God created those angels with a built-in mechanism to help them with that pride. Look at Isaiah 6:2, and the description we get of these marvelous creatures

“Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.”

God created the angels with these wings with which they could cover their faces in humility and recognition that while compared to all the rest of creation they are simply astounding in ways my words cannot express, in relation to the glory of God, their faces are no better than that of the sickly Lazarus lying in the street with his running sores. God gave them that ability and innate sense of their lesser state in comparison to Him. For some of them, however, that gift was seen as nothing, and they would unfurl those wings and stare God in the face and defy Him to elevate this man, this wingless creature who decays from the moment of birth until he returns to that weak, lifeless dust from which he came. They uncovered their feet and bodies, and dared their Creator to say that they were anything but the most magnificent creature in all the universe, worthy of all His praise, worthy of His admiration and adoration and that this sacrifice of the Son was worthless, a waste of time and energy. They furlled those wings away with which they were tasked to minister and do His bidding in great displays of power and rebelled against His orders, defying that mission to minister to these lowly clay creatures who cannot fly, who cannot withstand the view of God's great glory, who cannot speak in His presence. "Who are they, to warrant our ministrations and our demeaning ourselves, lowering our greatness to their level", they demanded as it were. They lifted themselves to a station to which they did not belong, and for which they were not created.

And of course, God, being sovereign, having no more powerful a creature in the universe to tell Him otherwise, did with His angelic creation **as He saw fit**, and cast the rebels down, to be placed in outer darkness, as far from that glorious light of His righteousness and beauty as is possible; He struck them down with, from what we are told in Scripture, **no opportunity for redemption, repentance, or reduction in their eternal sentence**. They are, in other words, without hope of any kind.

Pride in man is no less insidious and rebellious. Pride generates the same level of rebellion in man that it did and I warrant continues to do in the fallen angels. How many times have we seen it, friends? Listen to our leaders speak, look at a fag pride parade, see the boasting nature of those in the sports world, the political world, the entertainment world; it is all around us and it is utterly breathtaking to see. From movies depicting people in raging storms flipping off God asking "is this the best you can do" to those like Kevin Jennings and his blasphemous declaration that the God who created him had done nothing for him, and his statement to God "Screw you, buddy – I don't need you anymore".

I still gasp when I read those words or consider that kind of thought even crossing my mind in a fleeting moment of weakness! How can you say such a thing to the God that has your life in His hands at all times, able to crush you with all righteousness!?! Breath-taking is not a strong enough word or idea for how crushing that kind of thinking is.

That's not the pride I want you to consider today, though, my dear friends and loved ones. I want you to consider where that outward 'look at me' pride starts. Consider that the worst kind of pride is not that which is so openly displayed and obvious as we see about us every day. Consider that the worst pride is that pride which you conceal from your outward appearance, your language, your demeanor. Look again at Proverbs 16:5

“Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.”

Focus on the phrase “proud in heart”. Distinguish this from a proud or haughty look that is clearly visible and identifiable. A puffed out chest and proud words are easy to identify. They are terrible things in a man, and the arrogance of pride, that is, thinking that you are better than everyone else, smarter, more righteous, more holy, more pious, more elect, whatever it is you put out there that smacks of pride is bad enough. What's going on in a person's heart, however, is a different thing. It is a more insidious thing and a greater sin.

Pride, really, is an internal sin. Even a boastful pride starts in your heart when you elevate yourself above even one other person, but in reality it doesn't ever have to show itself visibly. Pride is primarily a sin of the heart that is between you and God and never has to show itself as an offence to another human being. You can be as prideful as the angels that fell from their first estate, but put on a face of humility such that others around you literally never see it. Rest assured, though, your God sees it and hears it in your heart. You can know the Bible cover to cover and be able to quote it at all the right times with all the right context, and lay out words that are helpful to people and appropriate for consideration, but all the while in your heart, be disdainfully looking at those people whom you claim to be helping and elevating yourself above them in your mind. You can look like the most helpful, reserved little human, ready to lend a hand and come to the aid of anyone without being asked, ready to put whatever resources you have to work in their aid, but in your heart murmur against your

being in that position with a pride as dangerous and rebellious as that of Satan's. It is a dangerous pitfall for us.

Let's look at the context of Proverbs 16:

“The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD. All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits. Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established. The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished. By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Proverbs 16:1-5).

We have the sovereignty of God in verse 4 *“The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil”* juxtaposed directly against the pride of man in verse 5. That's not a coincidence. The two are opposed to one another. That is the core of pride. An absolute inability and unwillingness to recognize and worship God as the Creator, abjuring all power to Him to do with His creation as He pleases.

“But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased” (Psalm 115:3).

Forgive me a small aside on this point. The Psalmist here declares this issue of God's sovereignty as plainly as any place in Scripture, in my opinion. Sadly, though, most of the commentators quibble and vacillate on this idea that God created people for the sole purpose of destroying them. Gill, Pink, Zanchius, Henry, Pool, and others, all back away from this idea, and give power to man to “become wicked”. At Proverbs 16:4, Gill says

It is not the sense of this text, nor of any other passage of Scripture, that God made man to damn him; nor is this to be inferred from the doctrine of predestination: God made man, neither to damn him, nor to save him, but for his own glory; and that is secured, whether in his salvation or damnation; nor did or does God make men wicked; he made man upright, and he has made himself wicked; and, being so, God may justly appoint him to damnation for his wickedness, in doing which he glorifies his justice.

Gill, and others, fail to acknowledge that His creating man to destroy the majority of mankind, according to His good pleasure, demonstrates His mercy in NOT destroying ALL of mankind. Gill erroneously attributes his human sense of 'justice' and 'fairness' to God! He is taken up in that subtle disease of pride. He does not exalt the God who can do nothing **but** just and righteous things, trying to squirm out of the apparently uncomfortable position that God has not created the wicked to be wicked people. Matthew Henry puts it a slightly different way when he says at the same place God "*[made] no man wicked, but he made those who he foresaw would be wicked*". WHAT!?! Did He or did He not raise up Pharaoh to show His power through his destruction? He didn't roll the dice to see if Pharaoh might come out evil! He created him to be what he was – a despotic tyrant hell-bent on destroying the Israelites!!! How else could Romans 9:20 ("*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why has thou made me thus?*") make any sense at all?

Let's get this straight --

"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand" (Deuteronomy 32:39).

This is God Almighty talking here! There is no god with or perhaps better translated above Him! There is no law restricting or binding Him to do anything, except that which He has declared He will or will not do! He is a law unto Himself!

Put away your pride and your sense of self-importance and acknowledge that the God that numbers the hairs of our head (Luke 12:7) **dictated the number of the hairs!** He doesn't have to count them! Christ tells us not that God can number the hairs, or that He can count them, but that "*the very hairs of your head are all numbered*". Already accomplished. Dictated before our conception! There isn't anything that is an unknown with God, because He has dictated all things to occur, and they occur precisely as he dictated them to occur! YES, He dictated that Satan would rebel! How is that fair, then, you might ask, that He has damned Satan and his co-conspirators to eternal punishment, when He dictated that they would rebel? It is fair because He established that it should be so, and He can do nothing that is unjust or unrighteous! He created those creatures to do with them **PRECISELY** what He has done and will do, and who

do you think you can appeal to on that point precisely? Put aside your sense of so-called 'fair' when you speak of God! Your filthy human lips, heart, and mind shouldn't utter the word 'fair' in the same sentence as 'God'. His ways are past your feeble ability to find out. All that He does is just and righteous, and if you can't handle that, THAT is a pretty good indicator of why He created you. Humble yourself before His mighty hand!

Which brings me back to that pride of the heart, this insidious, hateful, way we must guard against at all costs, warring against it in our members, and striving to put it away every second of every hour of every day. This is not a thing that can be taken lightly or put aside with an "aww shucks" attitude. You can't blanket apologize for all the wrongs you have done people and in your heart carry the foul stench of superiority, perceived greater righteousness, etc., etc. God knows your heart! Communication is no sacrifice (Hebrews 13:16) if in your heart you cannot or will not esteem those with whom you communicate as truly being greater than yourself. If you cannot sacrifice without murmuring in your heart, even if you refrain from murmuring with your lips, it is no sacrifice! It is an elevation of yourself above your brother, and indeed, above your God.

Pride of heart is THE obstacle, THE stumbling block to brotherly love and charity. If we do not war against it and commit our works unto the LORD in all things, He will not establish our thoughts! We must submit ourselves to the sovereignty of God in all affliction, in all our works, waiting on Him to open doors of utterance, to relieve our oppression, deliver us from our enemies, heal our bodies, and ultimately to finish His glorious work of redemption that He may be glorified fully by all of His creation!

Pride is a terrifying thing when it gets ahold of your heart and body, and we must diligently seek the LORD for His putting our feet in straight paths, removing our natural depravity as dross from our souls and aiding us to earnestly consider one another in every way we possibly can.

I love you all, and thank you for affording me this time, I hope this has been of help to you.

Amen.