

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## Toward Sound Decision-Making, Pt 2

### Selected Passages

**Keywords:** Decision-Making, God's Will, Prayer, Word of God, Wisdom, Counsel

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:** Having examined several common methods in decision-making for Christians Pastor Henry now seeks to establish a basic paradigm for decisions. This process is established in the Word and moves out from there, resting on the sufficiency of Scripture coupled with the freedom given to us in Jesus Christ. With this message the sovereignty of God is explored in relation to decisions.

### I. Introduction.

- A. We continue in building a sound theological platform for making decisions as Christians.
- B. Last week I spent the majority of the time on the first prerequisite to making sound decisions—being rightly related to Jesus Christ.
  - 1. So obvious and yet so often we fail to keep this in mind.
  - 2. We become numbed to the daily assault of this age with its myriads of whispers, nudges, shouts and shoves.
  - 3. But all who follow Jesus and hope in Him for their forgiveness of sin and true life are called to order their lives in light of their Lord.
  - 4. Once we were dead in our sins. Once we lived as slaves to the desires of this age. As the bible says it, we were objects of divine wrath and judgment as we shook our fist at our creator, or worse yet, just pretended He didn't exist.
  - 5. But, because God our Father made us alive together with Jesus Christ we are called therefore to live in light of that truth. We arrange ourselves under the Lordship of Jesus.
  - 6. When this comes to making decisions we begin to first consider how those decisions affect that relationship before Jesus.
    - a. Does it promote truth?
    - b. Does it show diligence?
    - c. Is it good and right?

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- d. How does it show mercy or justice?
- e. Is my behavior above reproach and excellent before those who do not know God?
- 7. As this settles into your heart you will find that many decisions you face are already answered.
- C. This leads us to the second key prerequisite for making sound decisions—recognizing God’s sovereignty in all things.

## II. God’s Sovereignty in All Things.

- A. Frankly, until this is established in your mind as well you will eventually find yourself in a very bad place.
  - 1. Genesis 1:1 must be contemplated.
    - a. Before anything existed, God existed.
    - b. All things exist because God made them. Nothing is outside that reality.
    - c. This is why the bible says that it is God who both causes one to live or to die.
    - d. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the lord, or who became his counselor? Or who has first given to him that it might be paid back to him again? **For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.** To Him be the glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-36)
    - e. This is why you will see over and over the fact that God is creator come up in the bible. If that is true, then radical change must occur in our thinking and living.
    - f. We do not live outside of God’s creation; rather we are part of that creation and we must learn to consciously remember that.
    - g. And the moment that we think that anything exists outside of that creative work of God we become bankrupt as people for we then look elsewhere for meaning, purpose, and joy.
  - 2. The greatest commandment is because God is sovereign.
    - a. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 11:30).

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- b. He alone is worthy of that level of commitment and delight. And He alone is able to fill you to the fullest with what is most joyful.
  - c. He is our maker and sustainer. Even while we live and breath pretending we need Him none at all or only in the bad times, He continues to hold us together and allow us to taste and see His goodness.
  - d. Basic decision-making asks how this decisions or that will promote a love and delight in God. It will shun and reject what seeks to diminish the centrality and glory of God in our minds and souls.
3. True religion begins when it is framed and defined and confined by God's sovereignty.
- a. By religion here I mean not coming to church or performing some set of rituals.
  - b. True religion is one where a people live a life in the awareness of their Creator God.
  - c. When Paul came before the Athenian leaders in Acts 17 he proclaims, "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things." (Acts 17:23-25)
- B. When we think about God's sovereignty too often we limit it to those things related to salvation.
1. That is an important but small part of the doctrine.
  2. Perhaps the key word to learn regarding God's sovereignty is that of "providence."
  3. It is the reality that God's rule, authority and activity is complete and absolute within all of creation. We may not always see clearly, or even at all, His hand in things, nonetheless He is present.
  4. For those who are His enemies this is a point of great hatred and frustration. For those who, through Jesus Christ, love Him, this brings joy and hope, even in the midst of tears.

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- C. Isaiah 10:5-17.
1. Often when we pray for God to "help" us it is because we think that we are to do things in our own ability and once that is used up then we need God to push it over the finish line.
  2. Instead we ought to learn to see that all things we do are under His gaze and His sovereign care. But not merely us but in all things.
  3. Romans 8:28-30.
    - a. God's oversees all things and most certainly all things over our lives. But remember that "good" doesn't mean "pleasant."
    - b. But at the same time hear J. I. Packer from *Concise Theology*, "The doctrine of providence teaches Christians that they are never in the grip of blind forces (fortune, chance, luck, fate); all that happens to them is divinely planned, and each event comes as a new summons to trust, obey, and rejoice, knowing that all is for one's spiritual and eternal good."
    - c. Note the purpose of our predestination in vs 29.
    - d. The surety of our end in vs 30.
    - e. Now how that all affects us this side of eternity through to vs 39.
    - f. Providence of God means
  4. Ephesians 1:11.
    - a. Trust that God is guiding you ever step of the way through His all-encompassing providence.
    - b. This alone is sufficient, if grasped, to make you stop that second-guessing that can utterly paralyze you.
  5. James 4:13-16.
    - a. Rather there is simply a decision to do something and go somewhere and resting in the sovereignty of God.
    - b. The rebuke is that they are not factoring in God's will but that is not the same as then trying to divine it.
    - c. Nowhere is there the idea of then second-guessing your decision or using new methods to divine that will beforehand.

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- D. Sovereignty is not fatalism.
1. Fatalism is simply an aberration of the doctrine of God's sovereignty.
  2. Fatalism has no purpose or reason. Therefore we do what we want for it does not matter in the end.
  3. For Christians we see it come up in various ways"
    - a. Why pray if God has already decided it anyhow?
    - b. I know it is sin but God has not changed it in me and therefore it is His will that I do it.
    - c. I know I should do such and such but the fact that I don't proves that God has not ordained it.
  4. Rather we are to recognize the fulness of what Deuteronomy 29:29 implies:
    - a. There are secret things that belong to God. Therefore they do not belong to us. Embrace that. Learn to delight in that.
    - b. There are things that belong to us.
      - (1) They are given to us by God through revelation.
      - (2) The revelation He to which He refers is the Scripture.
      - (3) We are expected to follow, love, obey, teach and live them.
    - c. Illustrated—Job 1-2.
      - (1) Note that he had no say over these events. He didn't even know all that took place.
      - (2) But note also his determination to give praise and worship to God. No fatalism rather there was grief-filled hope.
      - (3) When his friends gathered they could not perceive God would/allow do these things without cause. This exchange then covers the bulk of the book of Job.
      - (4) Elihu, the young man, then determines to speak after those who should be wise and learned of the ways of God had spoken. Five chapters of a young man shaming the folly of the old men.

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- (a) In chapter 33 he points Job to God's grace (vss 23-29).
  - (b) In 34 he declares God's justice (vss 12-15).
  - (c) In 35 he speaks of God's self-righteousness that stands outside of creation (vss 5-8).
  - (d) Then in 36 he pleads and warns Job from allowing his heart to be embittered against God in this time of distress (18-26).
  - (e) Finally he challenges Job to consider the wonders of God (14-24).
- (5) Then God speaks.
- (a) Almost like Job was not really attending to the words of Elihu.
  - (b) So for the next three chapters God assaults him with wave after wave of questions and challenges.
    - i) The result is not that Job falls into a fatalistic silence that gives up because there is not reason or purpose in his life.
    - ii) Rather, hear and learn beloved what it looks like to live under the sovereign hand of the Lord our Maker (42:1-6).

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A. Divine providence is most wonderfully seen in the gospel.
- B. We read the story of creation and then the Fall.
- C. We see shame and fear come rushing in to fill the void left by pure innocence in Adam and Eve.
- D. Then God comes and proclaims hope because of the One who will crush Satan.
- E. The rest of the Bible is simply walking us through countless lives and people as that promise is providentially worked out to fulfillment.
- F. With Jesus Christ we see the sovereignty of God worked out in its most glorious manner.

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## Small Group Questions

- Discuss how this sermon affected those who heard it.
- Why must we **PROPERLY** grasp God's sovereignty before we can make consistently sound decisions?
- How do you struggle with God's providence (most do at some point)? How has understanding it helped you in decisions and simply in living?