CHAPTER FOUR - GOD’S PURPOSE:

TO ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM

“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:”

Isaiah 46:9-10 KJV

Toward all this God is moving with infinite wisdom and perfect precision of action. No one can dissuade Him from His purposes; nothing turn Him aside from His plans. Since He is omniscient, there can be no unforeseen circumstance, no accidents. As He is sovereign, there can be no countermanded orders, no breakdown in authority; and as He is omnipotent, there can be no want of power to achieve His chosen ends. God is sufficient unto Himself for all these things.

A.W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy

God declares, “I am He, I am the first, I also am the last.” (Isaiah 48:12). Certainly God is the beginning and the end! He created the universe and it is His. The Lord’s grand design for everyone is right on schedule and His plan and purpose will be fulfilled. Job humbly acknowledged God’s sovereignty: “I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee” (Job 42:2). How encouraging to know that this life ultimately is part of God’s accomplishing His eternal good pleasure. God superintends His world and He knows exactly what is going on with each of us. It’s important that we begin to understand God’s sovereign rule in our lives because once we do, we will have hope, security, and a desire to persevere. Jonathan Edwards wrote, “Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God.”

**God’s Purpose: To Establish His Sovereignty**

1. A king has supreme authority and we are told that “For God is the King of all the earth” (Psalms 47:7). Read Isaiah 40:1-31 and write down the descriptive phrases and images that convey God’s sovereignty.

2. The Everlasting God has no equal! What one thought on the sovereignty of God encourages you in your relationship with Him?

The God of the Bible is not weak; He is strong. He is all-mighty. Nothing happens without His permission or apart from His purposes - even evil. Nothing disturbs or puzzles Him. His purposes are always accomplished. Therefore those who know Him rightly act with boldness, assured that God is with them to accomplish His own desirable purposes in their lives.

James Boice
God’s Purpose: To Establish His Kingdom

3. If God is truly sovereign and no purpose of His can be thwarted, then some hard questions emerge. Why is the world like it is today? Why is there sin and suffering? Although we can’t fully answer these questions, we can gain insights from Jesus’ parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). Record your observations concerning God’s sovereignty over evil in establishing His kingdom.

The power of Satan and his fallen angels is limited. They are but finite creatures who can do nothing outside the permissive will of God. Satan could do nothing against Job (and this was his complaint) until divinely permitted to do so. Satan and his angels are in possession of great knowledge, but they are not omniscient; they have vast power, when permitted to employ it, but they are not omnipotent; they cover the world by their delegated responsibility, but they are not omnipresent. They can suggest evil, but cannot coerce the will of another creature. They may spread snares and devices to ruin the children of God, but they cannot compel any other being to comply with their designs. They have power over nature when permitted to use it, but they can create nothing, nor can they employ God’s creation other than as He decrees. They never defeated God. In truth, God uses Satan as an instrument to chasten and correct the erring saints. The knowledge of these limitations cannot but be a comfort to those Christians who take seriously their conflict with the powers of darkness.

Lewis Sperry Chafer

4. A king is not a king without a kingdom, and so it is with God. Despite the activity of Satan, and God’s extraordinary patience, His kingdom is being established (for the present, it is within us) and will be victorious. What specific assurances concerning the certainty of God’s kingdom can you find in the following passages?

Psalm 9

Zephaniah 3:8-9

5. In today’s difficult world, what comfort can you receive from the assurance of God’s sovereignty?

In my own times of disappointment with God, I have called on him to act with power. I have prayed against political tyranny and unfairness and injustice. I have prayed for a miracle, for proof of God’s existence. But as I read the prophets’ descriptions of the day when God finally will take off all the wraps, one prayer overwhelms all others: “God, I hope I’m not around then.” God freely admits he is holding back his power, but he restrains himself for our benefit. For all scoffers who call for direct action from the heavens, the prophets have ominous advice: Just wait.

Philip Yancey
AUTHOR’S REFLECTION - I agree with Jonathan Edwards - absolute sovereignty is what I love about God. Just to know that the Lord is never caught off guard or surprised by anything that happens gives me great comfort. To be reminded that Satan is a defeated foe and that the lawlessness around us will be righteously judged enables me to endure while “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;” (Titus 2:13).

To be loved by God and to be a part of His powerful kingdom is an incredible privilege. Not to trust God with my life or to doubt His wisdom in the affairs of this world is to presume that He is not truly the almighty God. In a sense, I have a choice of living as a secure, beloved child of the King, or living as an anxious, frustrated child whose God is not all-powerful or compassionate.

When tragic, unexplainable situations enter my life, I must be willing to wrestle with my Sovereign, to honestly come to Him with my broken heart. I must also be willing to rest in His wise ability to accomplish His purpose in His way for His kingdom and for me.

I know I cannot rule my life and find true fulfillment. I praise God for His desire to “take me under His wing” and to be Lord of my life. I love Him for His sovereignty!

When I say God is in control, I do not mean that God is controlling everything that is happening. If God were actually controlling, there would be no sin. But God is in control, meaning He allows people to do what they want; and sometimes He intervenes, sometimes He stops them.

God is in control in the sense that eventually everything is going to work out according to His plan. He is in control of the future. God is in control of the present in the sense that nothing happens that He does not permit to happen. God permits many things to happen that He does not will to happen. He does not want me to sin, but He does permit me to sin.

C. Donald Cole

God’s Purpose for Me (For Contemplation and Prayer)

6. Over the next few days, think about God’s sovereignty and what it means to be a citizen of His kingdom. To help your reflection and application from this session, carefully consider the following verses.

The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. Psalms 33:11-12

Use the following questions to guide your meditation.

7. In what ways do I overlook God’s sovereignty in my understanding of Him?

8. In what ways will my life be blessed as I trust in God’s sovereign ability to accomplish His purpose in the world and in my own life?

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE MEMORY: Psalms 33:11-12
Isaiah 40:1-31

1. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. 3. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. 6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: 7. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. 8. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. 9. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! 10. Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 11. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. 12. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? 13. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? 14. With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? 15. Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. 16. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. 17. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. 18. To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him? 19. The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. 20. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. 21. Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22. Is it he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: 23. That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. 24. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. 25. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? Saith the Holy One. 26. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. 27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? 28. Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. 29. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 30. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

24. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: 25. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. 26. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? 28. He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29. But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

36. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. 37. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; 38. The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; 39. The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. 40. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. 41. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

Psalms 9:1-20

1. I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvelous works. 2. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High. 3. When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. 4. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right. 5. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. 6. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. 7. But the Lord shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. 8. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. 9. The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. 10. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. 11. Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. 12. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble. 13. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:

Zephaniah 3:8-9

8. Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. 9. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.