

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

GOD THE CREATOR

CLASS 3

“Christianity is not a series of truths in the plural, but rather truth spelled with a capital “T”. It is Truth about total reality, not just about religious things. Biblical Christianity is Truth concerning total reality – and the intellectual holding of that total Truth and then living in the light of that Truth.” Francis Schaeffer

1. The most basic and fundamental premise (Truth) of the Christian religion is, “I believe in God, The Father Almighty maker of heaven and earth.” We believe God has created all that exists out of nothing or “ex nihilo” by the word of His power, and in six days (Genesis 1-2). (See Article Young Earth vs. Old Earth by Ra McLaughlin)

2. Secularists only answer to the existence of our complex world is the irrational idea of self - creation. This, however, is logically absurd. For something to create itself, it must exist before it is.

“Some have called this spontaneous generation, which is a sophisticated synonym for the word ‘poof.’ ” R.C. SPROUL

3. After God created all other creatures, God made man in His own image. God distinguished man from all other creatures by giving him a soul that would never perish and by giving him dominion over all the created order.

“Perhaps the most common imbalance in American evangelicalism is to overemphasize the Fall. Consider the typical evangelistic message: “You’re a sinner; you need to be saved.” What could be wrong with that? Of course, it’s true that we are sinners, but notice that the message starts with the Fall instead of Creation. By beginning with the theme of sin, it implies that our essential identity consists in being guilty sinners, deserving of divine punishment. Some Christian literature goes so far as to say we are nothing, completely worthless, before a holy God.

This excessively negative view is not biblical, however, and it lays Christianity open to the charge that it has a low view of human dignity. The Bible does not begin with the Fall instead of Creation: Our value and dignity are rooted in the fact that we are created in the image of God, with

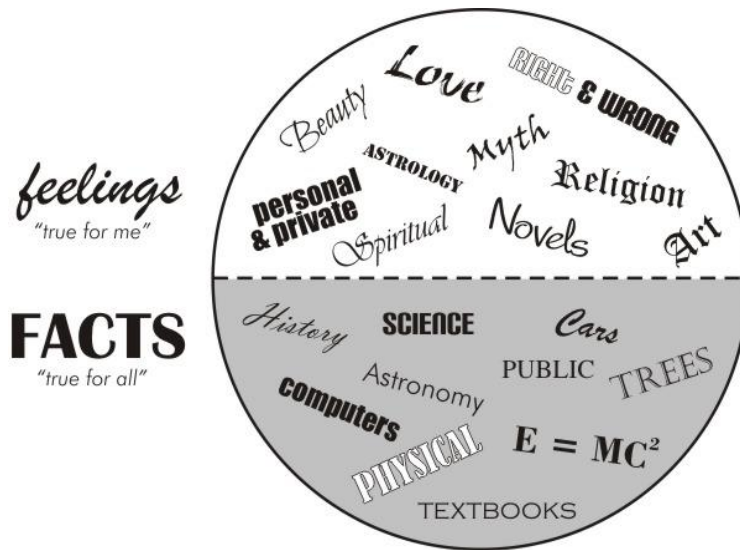
the high calling of being His representatives on earth. In fact, it is only because humans have such high value that sin is so tragic. If we were worthless to begin with, then the Fall would be a trivial event. When a cheap trinket is broken, we toss it aside with a shrug. But when a priceless masterpiece is defaced, we are horrified. It is because humans are the masterpiece of God's creation that the destructiveness of sin produces such horror and sorrow. Far from expressing a low view of human nature, the Bible actually gives a far higher view than the dominant secular view today, which regards humans as simply complex computers made of meat—products of blind, naturalistic forces, without transcendent purpose or meaning." TOTAL TRUTH, Nancy Pearcey

4. Secularists reject the Biblical account of the creation of Adam and Eve. They posit, rather, a fanciful belief in the perfectibility of man through a random process of natural selection we popularly call evolution.

"If you came into the kitchen and saw Alphabet cereal spilled on the table, and it spelled out your name and address, would you think the cat knocked the cereal box over?" Norman Geisler

The disastrous consequence of man's falling for the lies of evolutionary doctrine have been the loss of human dignity and the absence of any meaning to our lives.

...the major impact of Darwinian evolution does not lie in the details of mutation and natural selection, but in something far more significant—a new criterion of what qualifies as objective truth. As one historian explains, Darwinism led to a naturalistic view of knowledge in which "theological dogmas and philosophical absolutes were at worst totally fraudulent and at best merely symbolic of deep human aspirations." Let's unpack that phrase: If Darwinism is true, then both religion and philosophical absolutes (like Goodness, Truth, Beauty or Human dignity) are strictly speaking false or "fraudulent." We can still hold on to them if we really want to, but only if we're willing to place them in a separate category of concepts that are not genuinely true but "merely symbolic" of human hopes and ideals. Total Truth, Nancy Pearcey



5. God entered into a covenant with Adam and Eve called the Covenant of works, where, upon condition of perfect obedience, man would live forever. In this covenant, God forbade Adam and his wife from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, with the understanding that failure to obey would result in the penalty of death.

GOD THE RULER

1. The Bible teaches that God has supreme authority over heaven and earth. God created the universe, owns the universe, and governs the universe. There is nothing which takes place in this world that He does not ordain to come to pass. There is no one who can frustrate, change, limit or defeat any purpose of God. This is the doctrine of predestination.

- A. Ephesians 1:11 – God works all things after the counsel of His will.
- B. Proverbs 21:1 reminds us that men who fashion themselves as sovereign are totally under God's control.
- C. Matthew 10:29 teaches us that God is not too busy to even attend to the most minute details of governing His creation.
- D. I Kings 22:28-34 proves that seemingly accidental events are controlled by God. The concepts of luck or chance are fallacious and should only be in the lexicon of the unbeliever. (See also I Samuel 14:42.)

- E. Job 36:32 tells us that “natural disasters” are not from the hand of “mother nature”, but are acts of God.
- F. Genesis 50:20; Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27, 28 show that even evil acts are ordained by God, in that they are permitted and used to advance His purposes.
- G. Job 2; Luke 22:31; I Corinthians 5:5 make it clear that even the evil one is a creature and subject to God’s authority. Christianity is not dualistic; we do not believe there are two equal powers locked in a struggle for supremacy. Satan is an evil creature and is powerless to act without God’s permission.
- H. Job 38-41 is one of the most powerful statements in all scripture of God’s authority. He asks Job “where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” Job’s conclusion in 42:2 - “I know that thou can do all things and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted,” should be our bedrock conviction as well.

2. This doctrine of God’s authority or sovereignty is not unique to the Reformed school, or even to Christianity but is simply a tenet of theism. For if something can take place apart from God’s permission then God is not in utter control, and if God is not utterly sovereign He is not God. To reject sovereignty then is to embrace nothing short of atheism.

3. The most knotty issue raised by the sovereignty of God is the origin of evil. The questions are perplexing - - did evil come into the world against God’s will or is even evil in some sense foreordained by God? The Bible is very clear that while God clearly allowed sin to happen, He himself is not the author of sin and man himself is wholly culpable for his rebellion. (See “Problem of Evil” by Rob Barnes)

“I believe the reason why Satan could be perfect, and yet fall, is that while he was perfect, he was still a creature, not a creator. He was not a deity – he was lower than God. Only God is immutable. Thus, Satan could “naturally” degrade without God forcing him to sin or inject him with unbelief. God allowed it to happen for His greater glory, but He did not force it upon Satan or mankind.” Rob Barnes

MAN THE SINNER

1. Our first parents chose to rebel against God and eat the forbidden fruit. This act is referred to as the fall of man because as a result man lost his original righteousness and communion with God.

2. The guilt of Adam's sin was imputed to all mankind, for Adam acted as the representative or federal head of the entire human race. Thus when Adam sinned we all sinned and when Adam was punished we were all punished. This is made clear in Romans 5.

"Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin." (v. 12)

"By the one man's offense many died." (v. 15)

"Through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in Condemnation." (v. 18)

"By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." (v. 19)

As a result of Adam's sedition, all men died spiritually - - our relationship with the creator God was severed, all men are under the sentence of physical death and all men are subject to eternal damnation.

3. Not only was Adam's guilt imputed to all mankind, but the radical corruption of our nature, we call total depravity was passed down also. The fact that all men are conceived in a depraved condition we call original sin. This corruption is so pervasive that it affects all of our being: our wills, hearts, minds, and our bodies. TOTAL depravity doesn't mean that we are as bad as we could be - - for no matter how much each of us has sinned, we could have sinned even more, or more heinously. The TOTAL refers to the pervasiveness of the corruption.

4. In Romans 3:10-12 Paul describes the effects of the fall on our nature. Paul says there are:

A. "None who do good" -- we know that man does acts that are good" according to man's standards. For an act to be good by God's standards it must conform to the law of God and spring from the proper motivation. Thus any deed that fails the test of the great commandment "to love God with all our heart, strength, and mind" is not a good deed. Natural man is totally unable to do anything which pleases God.

Suppose a man works as a cook and a doctor on a pirate ship. He has never picked up a sword a day in his life. He just stays on the ship and cooks nourishing meals for the other men when they come back from a hard day's pillaging and looting. He is there to heal their cuts and put salve on their scrapes. What could be more innocent?! But if the British

crown captures the pirate ship, the doctor-cook will swing from a rope just like his shipmates. Why? Because he was doing good things in a wicked cause.

This is the way God looks at model citizens who ignore the Savior. Good people may work hard, drive their kids to soccer, keep their lawns spruced, and wave cheerily to the neighbors. But God says the first and greatest commandment is to love him with all our heart, soul and strength. That is, to do *everything* out of a motive of pleasing him. For the unbeliever, good acts in his life amount to nothing if he disregards God. Two factors can make an act sinful - a wrong action or a wrong motive. Often people's actions are good, but their motives are a universe away from the righteousness God underscores in Romans 3.

B. None righteous -- Romans 3:23 says "... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There are no exceptions. There is no biblical warrant for a state of innocence for infants nor those who are unable to reason. There is no escape clause under an age of accountability. We are guilty of Adam's sins from conception. No man is ever innocent, no man obeys God's commands. Ever!

C. None who understand -- the Bible says the eyes of natural man are darkened and his ears closed (John 8:43, 44a; Matthew 13:14; Corinthians 1:18a, 2:14).

D. None who seeks after God -- man has a total lack of moral ability. He does not seek after God because he has no desire to do so. He does not choose Christ because he cannot. The effect of the fall has left him spiritually dead. (Romans 8:5, 8) "For the mind set on the flesh is death because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Ephesians 2:1) "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins."

In fact the Bible says that natural man hates God and is totally under bondage to the flesh or the world (Romans 6:17). While it is common to refer to some unbelievers as seeking or searching, in fact they are hiding. It is Jesus who came to seek and to save the lost.

5. What is the effect of man's radical corruption on his free will? Man is free, he is not coerced to do what he does not want to do. Man has freedom, what he lacks is ability. He cannot act contrary to his nature, any more than an apple tree is free to produce oranges (Matthew 7:17-19), or the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard remove his spots (Jeremiah 13:23). Man is free to choose God, but he won't because he doesn't want to. He makes that choice of his own free will and is fully culpable for it.

6. Resistance to this doctrine comes from two camps. The Arminian insists that man is not too far gone to cooperate with God's spirit. They believe sin has left man mortally wounded but able to believe and have faith. Faith to the Arminian is the sinner's gift to God which in turn merits their salvation. The liberal denies the holiness of God and the radical pervasiveness of man's sin -- so that there really is no sin problem and no need for a sacrificial, atoning death by a God-Man to satisfy God's righteousness.

7. What is the practical importance of recognizing man's innate wickedness?

A. It should influence our views on a multitude of issues like:

- ◆ child rearing and discipline
- ◆ crime and punishment
- ◆ the purpose and structure of Government
- ◆ the justness of war
- ◆ education

It will cause us to see that the problems of society have spiritual roots and demand spiritual solutions.

B. Our spiritual helplessness ought to humble us. We have no case with God, and if we even venture to open our mouths in His courtroom all we dare utter is "Lord have mercy on me".

C. It ought to give us great confidence and comfort in the security of our salvation (Romans 5:6-8, 10). God knows who we are, He sees all the skeletons in our closet and He chose to redeem us anyway. He will never discover some gross evil of which we are guilty and change His mind. We do not have to pretend with God; we are naked and exposed before Him, and yet through Christ He loves us and always will.

"What matters supremely, therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact, which underlies it—the fact that *he knows me*. I am graven on the palms of his hands. I am never out of his mind. All my knowledge of him depends on his sustained initiative in knowing me. I know him because he first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters. This is momentous knowledge. There is unspeakable comfort—the sort of comfort that energizes, be it said, not enervates—in knowing that God is constantly taking knowledge of me in love and watching over me for my good. There is tremendous relief in knowing that his love to me is utterly realistic,

based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery now can disillusion him about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself, and quench his determination to bless me.”
J.I. Packer – Knowing God.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Read Essential Truths of the Christian Faith (Sproul) sections 19-20; 44-55.
2. Read the Westminster Confession of Faith Chapters 3-6.

CHAPTER III - OF GOD'S ETERNAL DECREES

1. If God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, how can the acts of men still be said to be free? And are they responsible for their actions? Explain. (*Paragraph 1*)

2. What are five passages that support the Biblical doctrine of predestination?

3. Did God choose men who would be His based on His foreseeing their faith? If not, why not and what does foreknowledge mean as used in Romans 8:29?

CHAPTER IV - OF CREATION

1. What is stated here about the origin of the universe that is in conflict with the secular theory of evolution? (*Paragraph 1*)

2. What is meant by man being created in the “image” of God? (*Paragraph 2*)

CHAPTER V - OF PROVIDENCE

1. What do we mean by divine providence? (*Paragraph 1*)

2. Many today believe that things happen with by “chance” or “luck.” Others believe in “blind fate.” Do you agree or disagree with them? Give five passages to support the concept of God’s sovereign control of all that comes to pass. (*Paragraph 2*)