

## **Ole Miss FCA Weekly Devotional: 11/2/09**

*The Power and Passion of the Master Coach, Elliot Johnson*



### **Thought of the Week:**

God is Sovereign

### **Verse of the Week:**

My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. Isaiah 46:10

Larry Bird was a dominant player in the NBA for many years. Peter Vecsey paid his tribute to Bird in *Coaching and Training Times*: "Any living legend can take over a game in the last few minutes. Only a Bird can take it over in the first few minutes."

Our sovereign Lord doesn't just control a basketball game. He controls His entire universe from beginning to end! His sovereignty means that He either causes or He allows all things to happen that do happen. He is absolutely independent, subject to no one, and influenced by no one. Despite the suffering, violence, and filth of this world, God remains in control—whether or not we acknowledge Him. Before time began, God was in control. He has ruled over all creation ever since He created heaven and earth. In the days of Noah, when the wickedness of man was great and every thought and intent of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5), people didn't think God was in control. Finally, His patience with man expired, and God released His wrath, flooding the earth and destroying all living things. Only eight people and the animals in the ark survived (Genesis 7:4-9).

The Israelites must have wondered whether God was in control, as they spent four hundred years of bondage in Egypt. Driven day after day by cruel taskmasters, they surely asked, "If there is a God, where is He?" Would they not question the sovereign control of God as their own sons were cast into the Nile (Exodus 1:22)? They probably reasoned that either there is no God, or that God did not have the power to stop the madness. But what happened? The sovereign God who controls every circumstance led Israel out of Egypt with mighty demonstrations of His power! Israel never forgot His deliverance. The entire world was shaken! Nations trembled at the prospect of confronting God's people.

When Jesus' disciples saw the Messiah nailed to a cross, they must have wondered whether God was in control, for they fled the scene. They probably asked themselves whether He really was who He claimed to be. After all, what good is a dead Messiah? But God proved His sovereignty three days later, when He raised Jesus from the dead! Satan was defeated, and atonement was made for sin according to the sovereign plan of God! Our God was in control the entire time!

All God's purposes are redemptive. Everything He does is done to bring glory to Himself and to draw all men to Himself, for God is not willing that any should perish, but that all come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, God slew animals to cover their nakedness. A sacrifice was needed. Then, He promised a Savior (Genesis 3:15, 21). Unless man accepts God's sacrifice and gives Him total allegiance, he will never be at peace with himself, his Maker, or his neighbor. Because of our prideful hearts, God sometimes uses a big jolt to wake us! We must believe that God is a good God, and that He has devised the wisest plan that could be devised. Even in a world of suffering, we believe that God is faithfully drawing men to Himself, lovingly and firmly disciplining His children and justly dealing with everyone. Believe God: He is in control.

Does God choose to save some people and not to save others? We know His perfect will is that

all be saved (2 Peter 3:9), and He says that "whosoever will" may be saved (Revelation 22:17). Yet, no one is saved unless God calls them to Himself, and everyone God calls will come to Him (John 6:37, 44)! Is God unfair? Absolutely not, for everything He does is right, and He has perfect authority to do anything He chooses (Romans 9; Isaiah 45:9-12; Jeremiah 18:1-7). As clay in the hand of the potter, we have absolutely no right to question God or any of His ways. It is only for us to trust Him!

Men often ask, "If a good God brought all things into existence, from where did evil come?" The answer to this question is, "We don't know!" God has chosen not to tell us at this time. God allowed evil to enter the universe through Satan. The Bible simply says that Satan was blameless from the day he was created until wickedness was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15). But God is not responsible for evil—nor is there any evil found in God. He is a holy and righteous God (Psalm 145:17). He cannot be blamed for evil, because He is total light (1 John 1:5). God is holy, and He cannot look upon sin or be tempted by evil (Habakkuk 1:13; James 1:13-15). Satan is active in this world, and he is responsible for all evil (1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:9).

We may ask, "Why would a loving God allow such suffering in the world?" Could not God, if He desired, eliminate all evil and suffering? The answer is, "Yes, He could eliminate suffering immediately, but He has chosen not to do so." By faith, we know that a sovereign God is ultimately going to bring about greater good for man and greater glory for Himself through suffering. We can't comprehend this now, but eternity will reveal the greatness of God's plan and purpose. Actually, the restraining power of God's Spirit minimizes the suffering that we'd experience otherwise. The sinful nature of man and the wickedness of Satan would make this world unbearable if God were to allow both to run their course. The coming Great Tribulation will demonstrate this fact. But God is in control, and evil does not yet run unrestrained over the world.

The real questions become, "Do we trust a sovereign God despite the evil and suffering in this world? Do we recognize He is working out a higher plan and purpose than our physical eyes can see or our minds comprehend?"

Another way to consider the problem of evil is to consider that we know more about God because of it. How would we know God as a redemptive God if there were no sinners to redeem? How would we know Him as Savior if we didn't need to be saved? How would we know Him as a God of comfort, if we experienced no pain? How would we know Him as a mighty warrior if there were no enemy to defeat? How would we know Him as a God of hope unless we had no hope in every other source? It is God's nature to redeem, to save, to comfort, to love, to pour out wrath on evil, and to give hope. If there were no sin, Satan, or suffering, how could we know Him in these ways? God has given everyone the opportunity to experience victory over these things through the shed blood of Christ. Will you put your trust in Him today?

Larry Bird's past greatness in controlling the tempo of a basketball game pales in comparison to the sovereign control of the Lord God Almighty in controlling events in His universe!

Time Out:

- 1) Do you really believe God is sovereignly in control?
- 2) We must see God's sovereignty in all things and trust in His goodness and unfailing love. Do you see God's goodness in the circumstances of your life?
- 3) Examine the following verses in light of God's sovereignty:  
Romans 8:28. To whom is this verse written? What does this verse reveal about God and His work?  
Romans 8:29. What is God's ultimate purpose for the believer?

- Job 42:2. Can God's plans be thwarted?
- Jeremiah 29:11. What kinds of plans does God have for us?
- Psalm 46:10. What should be our reaction to the dealings of a sovereign God?
- 4) Study Isaiah 46. What do you learn of God's sovereignty from this chapter?