

Text: Selected Scriptures

Title: When God is Small (part 2)

Transcendence and Immanence—

- Some verses speak of both—Isaiah 66:1-2—”Thus says the LORD, “Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD. But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.”
- Psalm 115:3—”But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.”
 - The summing up verse of God’s transcendence
 - In similar fashion: Psalm 103:19—”The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.”

God is incomprehensible in his being - we will never, ever know God completely

- Psalm 145:3—”Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And His *greatness* is *unsearchable*.”
- Psalm 147:5—”Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.”
- Job 11:7—”Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?”— the question begs the answer, “NO”
- Psalm 115:3 is, by implication, loaded with theology— God is Self-sufficient— he needs nothing from us; needs no information from us

1. God is self-existent in his being

- No beginning or end - He is infinite and eternal in he being
- Psalm 90:2—”Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.’
- He is unchangeable in his being

2. God is self-existent in his will

- He does everything according to his own will
- Job 42:2—”I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.”— nothing thwarts God’s will

3. God is self-existent in his counsel

- Isa 40:13—”Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him?”
- Psa 33:11—”The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.”
- ***Eph 1:11—”also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose **who works all things after the counsel of His will,**”

Isaiah 40

- God is the majestic sovereign— 40:10
- God is the tender shepherd— 40:11

- Isa 40:12-31— all tells us something of God’s sovereignty; that his sovereign power is most clearly displayed in his creation— he is the incomparable God
 - 40:12— How big is God - everything can fit in the ‘span’ of his hand
 - 40:24-26— not a picture of God upholding the earth like an atlas— but rather he sovereignly carries creation along to its foreordained end
 - Many people believe or at least act/live as if they believe that God created everything and then stepped back and is not personally involved
 - God is Lord over both nature *and* history
 - History is not cyclical— it is linear— and it is God’s sovereign power that carries it forward to its determined end
 - As Christians, we believe that God is moving history along according to his own eternal plan
 - Our world is not in chaos
 - 40:13-14— God’s wisdom in his creating
 - 40:15-17— the nations are nothing compared to him
- Point: God comforts his people, not by giving them some explanation of their circumstances, but by declaring his sovereign power to create and sustain creation

1. God’s Sovereign Power to Create All Things.

- Psalm 33:6, 9—”By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”
- Genesis 1:1
- Psalm 24:1

God’s Creation reflects His Wisdom.

- Psalm 104:24— God’s infinite wisdom is displayed in his creation
 - See: Job 38-42— creation is a revelation of God’s infinite wisdom
 - Creation declares **his** glory - Psalm 19:1-2—” The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.” - the glory of **God**, not the glory of creation
- God created man for his own glory
 - Isa 43:6-7—”I will say to the north, ‘Give *them* up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not hold *them* back.’ Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth, Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”
 - Psalm 8:3-4—”When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? “

2. God’s Sovereign Power to Sustain All Things. - God’s **Providence**— the “continuous activity of God in his creation by which he preserves and governs”

- That doctrine teaches us two things: 1) God is Lord; he is totally sovereign, 2) we are his dependent creatures, in every way

- Rom 8:28—”And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose
- Isa 46:10—”Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘ My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My **good pleasure**”

RC Sproul: “There is no flaw of intelligence, wisdom, or righteousness in his work of sustenance.”

God is not some Impersonal Force

- See: Psalm 104:1-9— the created order and then his continuous care of it; God is working everyday, in eternity, to uphold all that he has created - God’s power and glory setting everything in its place
- Psalm 104:24-30— God upholds it all by his power
- Job 34:14-15—”If He should determine to do so, If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust.”
- Acts 17:25-28—”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; and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; **for in Him we live and move and exist...**” - we exist because God is moving creation along a path to his eternal purposes
- Col 1:17—”He is before all things, and **in Him all things hold together.**” - ‘hold together’ means ‘are continually enduring’ (present tense); if he took his hand off of it for one moment it would cease to exist
- John Frame: “Were he to withdraw his permission, there would be no world.”¹
- Heb 1:3—”And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and **upholds all things by the word of His power...**” - Christ preserves all things in himself
- The Transcendent God is intimately preserving/sustaining his creation along history - his plan and sustaining includes all contingencies/accounts for all the decisions/failures of man

God’s Plan/Will includes all Contingencies. - Nothing thwarts God’s plan, because God has sovereignly accounted for all man’s actions/decisions and is sovereign over them

- Concurrence— God’s will is the ultimate cause of everything that happens, even though he is not the author of evil and not responsible for the sinful choices of man
 - ***The Westminster Confession of Faith***, V, 1 affirms that: “God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.”
- Eph 1:11—he works ”**all things** after the counsel of his own will”

¹ The Doctrine of God, 278.

All For His Glory.

- It is not just that God is working all things according to his own purpose he does so for the purpose of the ‘**praise of his glory**’
- Eph 1:12—”to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the **praise of His glory**”
- God is self-absorbed with his glory - Isa 42:9—”I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.”
- When his creatures are most absorbed with his glory they are most happiest
- Psalm 115:1—”Not to us O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory”

Implications to Consider.

1. **God’s sovereignty is meticulous** - that means every detail has been thought of and he knows all
 - a. Psalm 33:13-15—”The LORD looks from heaven; **He sees all the sons of men**; From His dwelling place **He looks out On all the inhabitants of the earth**, He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works.”
 - b. He has left nothing to chance— Prov 16:33—”The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.”
2. **God’s sovereign power will effect his plan for our ultimate good** -
 - a. Nothing can come against us that his power does account for
 - b. 1 Peter 1:5—says we are “protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
 - c. See: Psalm 121
 - d. Dan 4:35—””All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘ What have You done?’”
3. **God’s sovereign plan is all-wise** - Psalm 139:13-16—”For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained *for me*, When as yet there was not one of them.”
 - a. We should never question God’s providence, because his providential work is holy, consistent with his character/wisdom, and is without flaw.
 - b. God cannot make an unwise choice with your life
4. **We are completely dependent** upon him for everything. We are to trust him because we are in the hands of a good God. He’s not just sovereign only— he is holy and has our highest good and his glory in mind
 - a. The degree of what we must endure and the duration of it, is completely in the hands of a good and glorious God

Point: We are to trust him, even when we don't understand; we don't need explanations for everything, we simply need to trust his promises— that he is sovereign

- Psalm 115:9-12— "...trust in the Lord"
- Not to fear or falter
- No guarantees that believers will somehow escape trials

John Newton, hymn writer/Anglican pastor who penned the hymn "Amazing Grace: "God's people have no assurances that the dark experiences of life will be held at bay, much less that God will provide some sort of running commentary on the meaning of each day's allotment of confusion, joy, suffering, achievement or pain. It is no great matter where we are, provided we see that the Lord has placed us there, and He is with us."

- We don't need an explanation for everything that happens in life; what we must see is that God is sovereign and sees fit to place us in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in and trust him, even though we have no idea what he is accomplishing in our midst.