

**Personal Choice within God's Sovereignty**  
**Lesson 1– God Orders and Controls of All Things**  
**January 11 & 18, 2015**

1) **Introduction of Main Theological Points to Consider:**

Group questions that apply to saved Christians:

- Do you believe that you have personal choices in your life that you alone make?
- Do you believe that God can influence your life through your decisions?
- Does God directly guide our lives with no choice?

**Key questions to begin our series:**

- For a Christian, have you ever wondered what God's will was or what God was directing you to do?
- To what extent do we have "personal choices" in any given situation or is it totally directed by God through His plan?
- How does a person's decisions fit within God's direction and plans?
- Do your personal choices in life change or affect God's plan?
- How do we know "what we believe is a personal choice" verses God's will that He uses "influence or direct" us in a certain direction?
- How does sin impact choice verses God's direction for our lives?
- How far does God's will and direction reach into our lives? Is it down to the minutia or just big picture within a sphere of choice?
- How does sin occur operating within God's Will?
- How do you reconcile an omnipotent God who knows and planned all with everything under his control with personal choice of an individual? Are these two positions mutually exclusive or can they perfectly co-exist?
- On one hand if God controls and planned everything before the beginning of time, that would essentially make us "robots" playing out God's grand play on earth.
- If on the other hand, if man's personal choices affect and determine the outcome of the world's results, God would not control and direct the eventual outcome?
- If God controls all things, how can our personal decisions and resulting actions have any real meaning?

***Our goal in the series is to challenge our thinking and understanding of God's Sovereignty and how our personal choices fit into God's plan. We pray for God's enlightenment and wisdom.***

2) **Main Scripture for Series:**

**Proverbs 16:1-9**

*1 To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the proper answer of the tongue. 2 All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord. 3 Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. 4 The Lord works out everything to its proper end—even the wicked for a day of disaster. 5 The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished. 6 Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the Lord evil is avoided. 7 When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them. 8 Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice. 9 In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.*

Establishing key scriptural concepts:

- Limitation of man's ability to plan his own life
- God's Will is determinative
- Man's decisions will be judged in light of God's judgment
- Man will make his plans, but the implementation depends on God's divine will
- God's plans must match the divine "decision" for his life to have any expectation of success
- Commitment and loyalty to God will save a man from evil
- Commit yourself go God with the assurance that "your plans will be established"

### 3) Key Discussion Points:



Personal Choice and Decisions

### 4) Scripture and Lessons

#### James 4:13-17

*13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the*

*Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. 17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.*

**Proverbs 19:20-21**

*20 Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise. 21 Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.*

**Daniel 4:34-37**

*34 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. 35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" ...37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.*

**God orders and controls all things, human actions among them in accordance with His own Will**

**Genesis 50:19-20**

*19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*

**Proverbs 21:1-2**

*1 In the Lord's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him. 2 A person may think their own ways are right, but the Lord weighs the heart.*

**Matthew 10:29**

*29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

**Acts 9:27-28**

*27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. 28 So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord*

**Romans 9:19-21**

*19 One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" 20 But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' 21 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?"*

**God holds us responsible for our own actions and acts as judge**

**Matthew 25:1-29**

*1 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps...14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. 15 To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey...21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!...24 "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man,*

harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ 26 “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?’

### **Romans 2:6-16**

6 God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. 9 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favoritism....15 They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) 16 This will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

### **Penalized for unfaithfulness**

#### **1 Corinthians 9:16**

16 For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

Specifically Addressing Saved Christians:

#### **1 Corinthians 3:1-12**

1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. 2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? 4 For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings? 5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building. 10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. 16 Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? 17 If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. 18 Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become “fools” so that you may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness”; 20 and again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” 21 So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, 23 and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

### **Key Summary Points:**

- God's Sovereignty verses Man's Responsibility should be taught side by side as both being truths
  - They should be held together and not played off against each other
  - BH Spurgeon was once quoted as saying when asked if he could reconcile these two truths to each other, he replied "I wouldn't try, I never reconcile friends"
  - Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility/Decisions are not enemies, they actually work together
- Our human understanding tries to equate them equal with the apparently conflicting truths
  - We must recognize we cannot hope to fully resolve in this world
  - We like to tie things up in neat intellectual packages
  - Minds dislike anomalies for the sake of tidier theology
  - Temptation to undercut one by overstressing the other
- Man is a moral agent with a sin nature but not divinely controlled in all actions; finite minds say this is inexplicable
- If God orders all actions, how can we be held responsible for our actions?
  - We have no right to question God or find fault Romans 9:20-21
- Each person is responsible for the way we respond, obedience and disobedience, attention or inattention
- We cannot evade responsibility and judgment for our actions
- By letting our knowledge of God's Sovereignty control the way in which we plan, pray and make decisions: consciously relying on God for decisions
- Danger is an exclusive reliance on God's Sovereignty for your choices
- God uses men as means of achieving His purposes, but nothings depends on man; everything depends on God who raises up people to do His will
  - Uzzah mistake of taking on too much and not getting it done 2 Samuel 6:6-7
  - Should never view self as indispensable
  - But also guard against not taking initiative and acting,
  - Matthew 25:14-30 shows to act on your talents and skills, not sit back and wait in a passive mode
- Through the course of the series, hopefully we will be able to demonstrate how God's Providence and Sovereignty is unquestionable, yet we have personal choices that drive our life and we are accountable to God for them.

### **5) Questions for Small Group Discussion**

1. Do you believe God's will involves a specific plan for every saved Christian?
2. How do we typically judge or gauge whether our "choices and resulting decisions" were within God's will?
3. Discuss Proverbs 16:9 with special emphasis on verse 9. How does this practical play out in our lives?
4. Can we know what is a "personal choice" verses God's will that He uses to "influence or directly affect" in our lives?
5. Discuss whether "your personal choices" in life change or affect God's will? His Plan for you?
6. Discuss how does sin enters through "personal choices" yet Proverbs 16:9 says God directs our steps?
7. How far does God's will and direction reach into our lives? Is it down to the minutia or just big picture within a sphere of choice?
8. How does sin occur operating within God's Will?
9. Discuss opposing end of views:
  - a. God controls and planned everything before the beginning of time that would essentially make us "robots" playing out God's grand play on earth.
  - b. Man's personal choices affect and determine the outcome of the world's results, God uses these decisions and people to the eventual outcome.
10. If God controls all things, how can our personal decisions and resulting actions have any real meaning?