

# God Over Sin, #1

*God Over All*

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We are in a little series, a three or four week series on the providence of God and last week we opened this series with a message titled "God Over Sin" and we looked at some aspects of that doctrine. One of the most important questions I left unanswered knowing that we would deal with it this week is what is the relationship if God is sovereign, how does that play out in the fact of the reality of sin and evil in our world? How is it that if God is sovereign that men rise up in rebellion against him? That seems to be a contradiction to the sovereignty of God. Well, whenever I think about this issue, I always go back to my last full day as a non-Christian back in my early 20s, I won't say how many years ago that was because I know you'll start to do math in your head and I don't want you to do that for a multitude of reasons. It's not important how long ago it was, what's important is what happened on that particular day because it so perfectly illustrates what we need to look at today. Without going into the details, it was a Saturday night and a friend and I got together with the express intention of being able to party and that's what we did. At the time, I was a professing Christian but I was not truly a believer as you will see. I'm not going to go into the unedifying details of that evening simply to tell you this: that in the midst of that night of sin and debauchery, I consciously thought, "I am sinning against God and I don't care." And I proceeded on with my sinful ways that evening; went on my so-called merry way and did what I did.

Now, I know that's just a little brief overview but I want to say something to you about this. The fact that I thought in my mind, "I am sinning against God and I don't care," was an indication of a very profound spiritual truth, although I didn't realize it at the time. My sin on that night, my multiplied sins that night, were a product of my own personal deliberate choice. It was an informed understanding choice that I was rebelling against God. I wanted to do that and so I did. That sin was my own responsibility. It was the overflow of my own sinful heart. God did not cause me to sin that night, God did not tempt me to sin that night, he did not cause me to sin, he did not approve of that sin. That sin was an offense and a stench to his holy nostrils. Every aspect of that night was full-blown rebellion against him that was displeasing in his sight, make no mistake about it, and God bore no responsibility as the one who caused that to happen. Okay, simple enough, right? Many of you probably had nights like that that you can remember in your past as well.

Now, here's where it gets interesting. Having said all of that, that was my sin, not God's, my responsibility, not his, responding to the temptations of the lusts of my own heart, not responding to anything that God initiated in terms of tempting me to sin, with all that clear in your mind, right? I can tell you with biblical authority and without a personal doubt that God was at work in every detail of what happened that evening. Did I just flatly contradict myself? Did I just do something that was a complete contradiction? Nope. I didn't. You see, that's not the end of the story and you can see the way that this plays out. I woke up the next morning which you probably assumed by the fact that I'm here, there is an indication that there was continuity of life in one degree or another. But the next morning I woke up and I went into my bathroom and I looked at myself in the mirror and for a moment, I looked at my mirror and I smiled at myself approvingly of what that prior night had brought to pass in my life. In the very next moment, I mean we're talking moment 1, moment 2, in the very next moment, I was flooded with a sense of guilt, conviction and utter terror, utter fear at the hand of God because my mind went back and I said, "I sinned against God last night," and it was no longer a matter of joyful rebellion, it was a moment of utter fear at the gravity and severity of what I had done. I was struck with absolute terror. I knew for certain that I was on the precipice of eternal hell and the whole profession of Christ that I had made for the prior 20 some years was a sham. It wasn't real. But the whole reality of what I had claimed to be as a Christian crumbled in the reality of an undeniable sense of sin. I looked at myself in that mirror and I said, "You call yourself a Christian?" This is what was going on in my mind. I didn't verbally say it. I said, "You call yourself a Christian? How could you do the things that you did last night if you're a Christian? You're not a Christian at all. You are a wretched, vile, guilty sinner and you deserve the judgment of hell." One moment to the next.

Later in our series on 1 John that we'll come back to, we'll explain how it could happen like that in a moment, but that's not our point here for today. What I want you to see in that is that that change was a work of the Holy Spirit on my heart bringing true deep conviction of sin in an undeniable way, and God used the guilt and conviction that I felt as I looked in the mirror at my shameful sinful face that had just been smiling at the reality of utter rebellion against him, God used that conviction to bring me to repentance and put my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I practically ran out of my bathroom to get into my bedroom to fall down on my knees and confess my sin and ask the Lord to forgive me and to come into my life and save me. My life from that moment forward was transformed and a complex chain of events has unfolded in these subsequent years, in the subsequent decades since that time, a complex chain of events unfolded that has led me to be here this morning teaching you the word of God. Trust me because I'm not going to explain it either in public or in private to you, but just trust me when I tell you that every single detail of that Saturday night of partying had to happen exactly the way that it did or I would not have felt the conviction that I did the next morning which prompted me to turn to Christ. It had to be exactly the way it did. It had to be that night with those circumstances and with those people. It had to be exactly that way or it never would have come about what happened on the following Sunday morning. Details like that don't just happen. That wasn't a random occurrence. So while God did not tempt me to that night of sin, he did not cause me to sin, he did not approve of my sin – get this, watch this pivot because it's absolutely crucial – God on that Saturday night was sovereignly orchestrating

and directing what happened so that he would overrule my sin the next morning in order to bring about the salvation which he had appointed for me before the foundation of the world. God was sovereignly at work even in my sin to accomplish the purpose that he had established before time began. Wow. Wow.

Last week we started this study of the doctrine of divine providence and we said that divine providence means this: God continually upholds his entire creation and he sovereignly works in absolutely everything that happens and thus directs all creatures and all events to accomplish his purposes. And with what we're saying today as we study God over sin, if you want to put a title on this message, we'd call it "God Over Sin." Last week was "God Over All," this week is "God Over Sin." What we're seeing today is that when we say that God works in absolutely everything that happens, we are not excluding the sin of man in that definition. God is at work even when men sin to accomplish his purposes and yet he works in the midst of that in a way that leaves him utterly untainted by the unrighteousness that men perpetrate during their time on earth.

This is a difficult topic but we need to come to grips with it. We need to come to grips with it to understand the sovereignty of God in its depth and profundity but also we need to understand it for a pastoral reason. You need to understand this in your life. You have to understand this in your life and you have to come to grips seriously with what the Bible teaches about this. The temptation that conservative believers sometimes have when it comes to this issue that is absolutely unavoidable is to somehow define God out of existence when it comes to the reality of sin. You know, God didn't do that sin to you or whatever, but never going far enough to embrace the totality of what providence says. Every one of you here have been deeply impacted by sin. Every one of you. You have personally been a great sinner in the eyes of God. Every one of you. Not only that, all of us in one way or another have been impacted by the sins of others against us, some of you profoundly hurt by the way that people have sinned against you. You have sinned and you've been the recipient of evil wicked things against you, sometimes an attitude, sometimes physically, all points in between. I don't need to define it for you. Man, it has hurt and the question is where was God in the midst of all of that? What was his involvement with that? Was he sovereignly orchestrating it? Or did he take a time out and go get a little recess or something and then came back and saw that he had a mess to straighten out? Let's think thoughts that are worthy of God, huh? Let's think thoughts of God that are lofty and high and holy and that are consistent with what we saw last week: that God is over all, that his providence is broad, that his providence is detailed, and his providence is personal. Listen, I want to tell you, if this is new to you, if this is maybe a little contrary to what you've always thought, if you will just take the time to think through this according to the Scriptures, it will utterly transform your perspective on your past sin, on what people have done to you, and what it means for you going forward in your life. What is the relationship between divine providence and sin, your sin? That's the question that we're going to introduce this morning.

First of all, first point if you're taking notes, let us state this clearly and unequivocally that God is sovereignly at work even when men sin. God is sovereignly at work even when men sin. That's our first point. Now, last time we said that God reigns over

everything and he always accomplishes his purposes and I want to remind you of what the passage that we looked at, one of the passages that we looked at I should say, turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 1. Just very brief review that you've got to see here and we're going to cover so much today that it's probably going to give you a headache. I know it gave me a headache when I was preparing this but it's a headache with a profitable result at the end of it so we'll just be patient and go through it together. We've got time, right? We don't have anything to do before communion tonight at 6:30, so let's just take our time and honor God's word and look at it carefully and think and be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

We saw in Ephesians 1:9, it says that, "He made known to us the mystery of His will." Right there is something pretty important is to realize that there are aspects of his will that go beyond our natural understanding. We're in the middle of a topic that deals with that. "He made known to us the mystery of His will," something that was hidden, "according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth." All things, beloved. All things. Don't read something into that passage that is not there. It doesn't say all things except for when men sin, it says he works out all things according to the purpose, the counsel of his will. In verse 11 it says, "In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will."

Now, I could very legitimately just close the Bible right there and say that Scripture solves the issue. It says that God works all things according to the counsel of his will, beloved, that includes the sins that have happened in your life and will ever happen in your life, the way people have sinned against you, God is taking that and working it all to accomplish his will. I could say that and stop there legitimately but I realize it wouldn't answer all of your questions. God reigns over everything and always accomplishes his purposes and yet as we look at Scripture and as we look at the world around us, we see sin and rebellion all around us. How can we explain that? How can we understand that in a way that is biblically coherent, intellectually satisfying even though we can't get our arms completely around it all, and which brings to you a confident sense that you can relax about your past and let it go? That's one thing that's really important here, is that if you come to understand and embrace these things on this idea of God being over sin, it does an enormous spiritual work in your heart that allows you to relax and to stop living in the past, rehearsing and nursing the ways that you failed or the ways that someone failed against you. We're not meant to live in the midst of that kind of spiritual muck, we are meant to transform it, we are meant to transcend it, and the only way you can do that is in part through a solid understanding of this topic we are dealing with today.

Well, how can we explain it? In my judgment, the distinction that theologians make between – oh, these words are so very important here and that's why they are italicized in my notes – the distinction between God's moral will and God's secret will is extremely helpful. God's moral will and God's secret will and I'm going to explain this to you, what I mean by those terms. God's moral will refers to those commands revealed in Scripture by which men and women are to conduct their lives. We'll state it that way. We'll keep it

simple here. If men and women would act rightly before God, they would need to know the word of God and to live according to its principles. That's God's moral will. It's the moral government that he has woven into his creation and to which we are to live underneath. When people sin against that, when people do what God has commanded them not to do, when you don't do what God has commanded you to do, you have broken and violated God's moral will and bear the responsibility of that, and this is where most people stop their thinking. In that sense, God's will is not accomplished. God's moral will isn't accomplished when men sin. He has commanded that not to be done, men come along and do it, God's moral will is violated in that process. But beloved, transition here, crucial pivot point: what you must understand is that there is a bigger dimension to the will of God than what is expressed in his moral will. That is so crucial and it is so central to being able to grasp that is to realize that God's secret will, the will of God includes his moral will but it goes beyond his moral will to establish the purposes for which he made creation. There is the eternal plan of God which is known only to him in which he planned everything that would ever happen and that eternal plan is called God's secret will. It refers to God's hidden decree by which he determined everything that would happen in the universe. That's a mouthful and a head-full, isn't it?

Let's turn to the book of Isaiah 46. Having defined terms, let's look at a very clarifying passage in Isaiah 46. We're going to slow down here and give everybody a time to let this soak in. The distinction between God's moral will and his secret will or his sovereign will depending on which term you prefer. Isaiah 46, beginning in verse 8. It says this and notice who he is speaking to because this is really clarifying. God is speaking here through his prophet Isaiah and he says, "Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind," and here comes the vocative, the people that he is addressing, "Recall it to mind you transgressors." He's speaking to sinners here, those who have rebelled against him, and he says, "Remember," think, call this to your mind, "Remember the former things long past," long past, going back, way back, "For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me." Verse 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.'" God makes a comprehensive statement about his designs for the universe, speaking to sinners saying with absolute authority to those who are rebelling against him is that, "I have planned things from the beginning of time, even before the beginning of time, and my purpose will most certainly be established." Those who are rebelling against him are met with this divine declaration that, "Your sin does not frustrate my purposes in the universe."

Before the beginning of time, God planned everything that would happen so that the outcome of creation would please him in every respect. In every respect, and somehow therefore God's sovereign purpose included the reality of evil and sin. There is a tendency sometimes to think God's Plan A only made it to the end of Genesis 2, and then when Genesis 3 kicked in, he had to kick into an alternate reality that he hadn't accounted for, and suddenly he had to adjust to the sin of men. Listen, that is a totally unworthy way to think about God and his sovereignty. That's totally unworthy of him to think that somehow Adam and Eve rose up and rebelled against him and frustrated – get this – not his moral will but frustrated the very purpose for which he made creation, and the fact

that men continue to think that way is only a reflection of our fallenness and our utter pride to think that man whose breath is in his nostrils, who is going to live 70 years, be buried and forgotten a generation or two later, to somehow think that someone like that, the dust of the earth, could frustrate the eternal plan of the eternal God is utterly unbiblical, sinful thinking.

One writer in discussing God's sovereignty in light of sin said this and it's an extended quote but it's a good one. There seems to be this contradiction between God's sovereignty and sin. The writer said this and I quote, "The explanation of the seeming contradiction is that human rebellion, while it is in opposition to God's express command, falls within his eternal or hidden purpose. God permits sin for his own reasons knowing in advance that he will bring sin to judgment in the day of his wrath and that in the meantime it will not go beyond the bounds that he has fixed for it. Many things work against the sovereignty of God from our perspective but from God's perspective, his decrees are always established." Tough, isn't it? This is hard stuff but we can't shy away from it simply because it's difficult, we need answers to this question. How are we to think about this?

To summarize what we've said so far: the violations of God's moral law, starting with the sin in the garden of Eden, continuing on through the end of time until God brings an end to it, the violations of God's moral law which are incalculable and uncountable, those violations of his moral will occur in the context of his secret will which he is always working out and bringing to pass and which he will certainly bring to pass. The Bible says that he looks at sinners from heaven and scoffs at them; he laughs at them. They are not a frustration to the purposes that he is working out. It might look that way to us from our narrow window of 20 or 40 or 50 years of life experience, but come on. Let's just acknowledge something really important, really obvious: you and I from our little bit of life experience with a fallen mind, no less, are not in a position to see the totality of the perspective that God brings to it as the eternal God over all the universe, right? Part of this, coming to grips with this, is a humbling of our mind before the word of God so that we would humble ourselves before him and say, "Look, I don't understand everything about this but I see the absolute sovereignty of God declared in his word. I see his utter holiness. Those principles can't be violated therefore what must need to change is somehow my perspective on matters, not to question the rule of God in his own creation." So God is sovereignly at work even when men sin.

Now, as we say that and the accusation that is invariably leveled against this doctrine is that it makes God the author of sin, that God is therefore responsible for sin, that's not true. That is not what the Bible teaches and that's what we're going to see here in our second point. Quite simply stated, our second point here this morning is that God is not the author of sin. God is not the author of sin. It's so easy to lose our balance on these things. We affirm that God rules over evil yet, beloved, we also emphasize that he hates evil and he is untainted by the existence of evil. There is no crime that will be ever laid at the character of God as if he was somehow personally responsible for sin.

Habakkuk 1:13, write these references down. I'll just give you a couple, both of them chapter 1, verse 13 which makes it easy to remember; Habakkuk 1:13 says, the prophet

was speaking to God and he says, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor." That's Habakkuk 1:13, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor." James 1:13. You see, I do my best to make this easy for you, 1:13, 1:13. You can remember that. James 1:13 says, "God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone." He doesn't approve of evil, he doesn't tempt anyone to evil.

So where does that leave us? And listen, we're going to have a lot of illustrations to help you understand this in just a bit. We just kind of have to lay it all out here and then go back and think through it. God planned all things before he created the world, including the existence of evil. He planned it that way but he did not create evil directly, personally, immediately. He does not tempt men to sin. He does not approve of their sin. He cannot be blamed for sin. His holiness is untainted by sin and the world he created. He is never the personal agent who brings about sin. God never tempts men to sin directly. He doesn't caused them to sin and when they sin, he disapproves it. It brings about his discipline and judgment, and yet at the same time, sin does not frustrate the accomplishment of God's secret will because, here's the key, he overrules sin to accomplish his own purposes, and there's a verse that you need to see. I want you to turn back to the book of Genesis 50 which probably states this as clearly and succinctly than perhaps any passage in the Scripture and gives you a sense, even though we can't nail down every single corner of detail that we might like to, this gives us a window into how this works. This is at the end of Genesis, it's pretty much the end of the story of the life of Joseph and you remember the story of Joseph, right? Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, carried away unrighteously. They wickedly out of the envy and jealousy of their own hearts sold him into slavery. He was taken into slavery, imprisoned in Egypt unjustly for a couple of years, but through an outworking of remarkable providence, ultimately ended up as the Prime Minister of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, and so orchestrated and administrated that land's agriculture and culture and everything so that there was food in Egypt that allowed the people of Israel to survive a severe famine of seven years. That's what happened with Joseph. The initiating point was a wicked act of their brothers against a righteous man and yet the unfolding of the years went by and Joseph, and you see that that act was the means by which God brought him into Egypt so that he would be positioned at exactly the right time in order to benevolently discharge his authority for the good of the nations that were there.

What can you say about that? Joseph's brothers were in front of him in Genesis 50 at the end of all of this in verse 18. I'm leaving out a lot of the details assuming you know the story, and in verse 18, his brothers were frightened that there was going to be a payback time and, "his brothers also came and fell down before him," Genesis 50, "and said, 'Behold, we are your servants.' But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?'" Now watch this in light of everything that we've said here. "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." You in the sinfulness of your heart meant wickedness against me. You meant evil to me. You wanted to see me dead. You wanted me out of your life. Joseph says, "I understand that. I acknowledge that. Your sin was evil but," Joseph says, "I look at this from God's perspective and therefore I'm not angry with

you because I see and understand that God meant to take your evil wicked action and use it to accomplish good purposes because I was the only man on earth that could administrate things with a skill that would allow the nations to survive a seven year period of famine. If you hadn't done that," one way of looking at it, "if you hadn't done that, I wouldn't have gone to Egypt and then what would have happened?" So what he's saying is that God took what you meant to accomplish wickedly, God used those very actions in order to accomplish a good purpose for a vast number of people.

Take a breath. Catch your breath. These are difficult concepts. As I told you, they give me headaches sometimes but, beloved, these things are crucial for you to understand if you are going to live a fruitful confident life in Christ. These things will motivate you to holiness and it will bring peace to your heart as you see evil multiply around you. On the surface, we see evil things happening. As I said last time, the way that we need to view providence is that there is like a current in a river going on underneath the surface of things, a powerful current of God's eternal purposes which he is most certainly bringing to pass which is pulling all of those events to accomplish exactly what he designed from the creation of the world. There is a current that you can't see, that you can't identify, but you should not define reality and you should not, never ever put limits on the sovereignty and power of God simply based on what you see with your own visual perception. That's a totally wrong way to think. You have to think biblically and you can only know this through the Bible but God has revealed with clarity in the Scriptures that he is sovereign over all things; that he is working all things to accomplish his purposes, and that includes when men sin and it changes everything.

Now, when a teacher wants to communicate a difficult truth like this, one of the best things that he can do is line up the difficult truth against something that is very familiar and that's what I want to do for the rest of our time here. The connection between the familiar and the difficult makes it easier for the mind to absorb, and for the rest of our time this morning, I want to take you to the book of Jonah in the Old Testament. Back in those areas where the pages of your Bible are still fresh and crisp, back in the minor prophets, you'll find the book of Jonah. After Jeremiah, after Ezekiel, after Daniel you'll find the book of Jonah just before the book of Micah in the minor prophets and you know the story. When I speak of Jonah, you probably think of the man in the belly of a fish but we need to think about it from a little different perspective that maybe what you learned about in primary days in Sunday school.

Jonah is telling a story about how God accomplished his purposes to have compassion on the people of the ancient city of Nineveh, and the very last verse of the book, chapter 4, verse 11, Jonah 4:11 tells us in retrospect what purpose God was accomplishing in the events that are recorded in this four chapter book. God speaking to Jonah said, "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?" That's at the end. I know we are starting at the end, that's a weird place to do it but what you need to see, you need to start with this fundamental premise of understanding for everything that we're going to say here over the next minutes. I don't know. Understand in everything that we're about to see, that there was a hidden current



taking place in which, and the current of that in the story of Jonah, the underlying current is that God fully intended to have compassion on a reprobate pagan city called Nineveh, and he called Jonah to be the prophet to that city who would declare his word to them.

Now, as you know, Jonah did not want to cooperate. Look at chapter 1, verse 1 now, "The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying," okay, so God is speaking to Jonah, speaking to the prophet, and he says, "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." What does Jonah do? Verse 3, "But," uh-oh. An adversative contrast, that's not a good sign here, "But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD." What is happening here? A little geography for you. You know the Mediterranean Sea, right? It's kind of an elliptical force there in Europe. An elliptical force. Nineveh as you're looking at the map and you look at the right edge of the Mediterranean Sea, Nineveh was about 400 miles east from there. Tarshish, where Jonah decided he wanted to go, was on the other end of the Mediterranean Sea at the southern tip of Spain. So while God had told Jonah, "Go here," Jonah physically and spiritually turned his back on the command of God and went in exactly the opposite direction of what he had been commanded. God said, "Go east," Jonah said, "I, sir, will go west." And that's what he did. Now, stay with me here, Jonah sinned from his own desires. God didn't tell him to do that. God had told him to do the exact opposite. God said, "Jonah, go east." Jonah says, "I'll go west." God didn't tell him to go west. God did not prompt him or compel him to do that. He went west from his own desires. God did not make him sin.

Now, if that's all you knew in the story at this point, the question that we would ask as we look back on these events which happened some 2,700 years ago, the question is: did Jonah frustrate the purpose of God in what he did? Now, you see here so very clearly the difference between God's moral will and God's more comprehensive secret will. God's moral will to Jonah was, "Go east," but his secret will, the current that was driving all of the events, was his intention to have compassion on Nineveh. Keep that in mind now. What you see is that Jonah's best most valiant efforts to resist God's plan only resulted in the fulfillment of God's plan by the end of the book. You've got to see that because this isn't an isolated story, this is an illustration of how God's sovereignty works in the midst of human rebellion. It is obvious, as you read the book of Jonah, that God was in complete control of this entire situation from beginning to end and there was never a challenge or any doubt about it from the perspective of God.

You know what happened but we'll review it anyway. So Jonah gets in the ship and turns his back on God. What happens? Verse 4. You don't have to go very far to see it, "The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up." God sovereignly intervened, throwing a great storm on that sea so that it could not reach its intended destination. You see God sovereignly at work.

In verse 15, we'll skip some of the intervening things, it was revealed that Jonah was the cause of this sea problem, in verse 15, the other sailors on the boat, "picked up Jonah,

threw him into the sea," which was raging, "and the sea stopped its raging." Wow. It's like someone is making this happen. The storm starts at just the right time to frustrate the design of the ship's captain going west, and then when Jonah is dealt with, it suddenly stops. When Jonah is in the sea, the whole storm stops. Perfect sovereign control. Jonah wasn't in charge here. His sin wasn't frustrating the purpose of God here.

And it goes further. What happens when you throw a man into the sea and he is too far away to swim to shore? He drowns, right? No, verse 17, "the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights." Sovereign natural submarine taking Jonah back where God wants him.

Chapter 2, verse 10, hitting the high points of the story, I understand. Jonah repented in the belly of the fish, when that spiritual purpose had been accomplished, verse 10, "the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land." Sovereign control. A rebellious prophet but God is in sovereign control from beginning to end here.

So he goes, he preaches in chapter 3, you know that. Verse 10, "When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it." God had declared judgment but in the face of their repentance, he turns away from the judgment and he didn't do it. He sovereignly commanded the preaching, sovereignly blessed the preaching, sovereignly determined the outcome of it, and sovereignly forgave them of all of their multiplied offenses against him.

Now, you know, we're just doing a little overview here, in chapter 4, Jonah was none too happy about that. He went out to the edge of the city. He's angry. Chapter 4, verse 1, "it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry." As a Jewish prophet, he didn't want to see this pagan nation repent and so he's angry with the Lord over it. The Lord asks him in verse 4, "Do you have good reason to be angry?" So Jonah goes out in verse 5, east of the city and sits down and looks down on it, wondering what's going to happen next, alone in the sinful anger of his own heart. And it's hot there and in verse 6 it says, "the LORD God," there you see again, "the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant." Verse 7, "God appointed a worm." He appointed a plant, then he appointed a worm to eat the plant. Bummer. Verse 8, "the sun came up God appointed." God appointed. "God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, 'Death is better to me than life.'"

All those verses, the only point here that I want you to see is from the storm to the end of the storm, to the fish, to the fish doing what he did, vomiting Jonah up, to the repentance, to the plant, to the worm, to the wind, in every aspect you see God fully in control of what happened.

Now, with that in mind, isn't it obvious that Jonah did not frustrate the purposes of God that he declared? God said, "I want to have compassion on Nineveh." Jonah did his best

to rebel against it and at the end of the story, God's purposes were firmly established and there are countless numbers, 120,000, I guess that's not totally countless but there are scores and scores of thousands of people in Nineveh that we're going to see in heaven because God had compassion on them and had compassion on them through the preaching of Jonah. Jonah's rebellion did not frustrate the purposes of God. He sinned and God didn't make him sin but God overruled it to accomplish his purposes.

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