

1 TIMOTHY 1:17

PRAISE TO THE KING!

“To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”¹

The Apostle, writing to his son in the ministry, has just expressed gratitude to God, marvelling that he received appointment to divine service, especially in light of his former life. God had assuredly demonstrated mercy and grace toward the rebel, and that resulted in marvel and wonder at the grace Paul had received. The Apostle is quite clear on the reason he received such mercy—it was so that he might serve as an example of God’s patience, of His mercy and of His grace. By his appointment, Paul would draw outsiders to consider life in the Beloved Son and believers would be encouraged in their walk with the Master.

Concluding exclamation of wonder and admiration, the Apostle breaks forth in joyous exultation. “To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” [1 TIMOTHY 1:17]. This one statement of praise contains a wealth of information begging exploration by those who know the True and Living God.

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY DECLARED — “To the King of the ages...” Paul ascribes this unique title to the Lord God. The closest I can come to seeing this title applied to the Lord God elsewhere in the Word is when the Tribulation Saints sing The Song of Moses as recorded in the Apocalypse.

“Great and marvelous are your deeds,
Lord God Almighty.
Just and true are your ways,
King of the ages.”

[REVELATION 15:3 NIV (1984)]²

There is some dispute over whether the final ascription should be to “King of the ages” or to “King of the nations.” A few older manuscripts do ascribe the song as being sung to Him who is “King of the ages,” but the preponderance of evidence is that John wrote the ascription to Him who is “King of the nations.” What is important is to note that on the whole, Paul provides us with a unique means of identifying the True and Living God. As an aside, it is perhaps of interest to note that the newer editions of the New International Version align with other translations in ascribing the praise of the Tribulation Saints to the “King of the nations.”³

However, though the original reading provided in the Revelation continues in doubt, Paul’s identifier is by no means out of line with what we are taught in the Word concerning the Lord our God. Throughout the Word, God’s position as King is stated and accepted as settled. God is eternal; He is also sovereign over all that He has created. Establish in your mind that when we speak of God’s sovereignty, we have in mind His power. In theological terms, we are referring to His omnipotence. It means that God can do as He wills.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version** © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² **The Holy Bible, New International Version** (International Bible Society, 1973, 1978, 1984)

³ **The New International Version** (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 Biblica, Inc.)

Various attributes belong to God because He is God, but when we speak of His sovereignty we are identifying the one characteristic assuring us that God is Ruler of all things. Whenever we speak of God's power and might, we are acknowledging that there are no external constraints on His decisions. Thus, the fact that God is All Mighty, or Omnipotent, means that He possesses power to do whatever He wills.

We witness references to the divine power of God throughout Scripture. One example is provided in the twenty-fourth Psalm. There, David writes of the LORD.

“The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,
for he has founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.”

“Who is this King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle!”

[PSALM 24:1, 8]

The Psalmist affirms that the earth belongs to the LORD, who is qualified to lay claim to this material world because He made it. So that none can claim confusion as to whom he refers, David clearly identifies that the LORD is the King of Glory—a term reminiscent of Paul's affirmation in our text.

In another of the Psalms, we read of God's power. The Psalmist states of God:

“Why should the nations say,
‘Where is their God?’
Our God is in heaven!
He does whatever he pleases!”

[Psalm 115:2, 3 NET Bible]⁴

The Psalmist makes a powerful statement that declares the absence of constraints on God's will. The Psalmist continues by pointing out that unlike the gods of the nations, constrained to do no more than those who make them do for them, the LORD God does as He wills, blessing those who fear Him and opposing those who reject Him.

Jeremiah, praying on one occasion, attests of the Lord GOD, “Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you” [JEREMIAH 32:17]. His affirmation in this prayer anticipates an exclamation of praise which the Apostle pens long years after, “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us” [EPHESIANS 3:20].

Let me suggest just a couple of other instances where we witness God's omnipotence. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, announcing that she would bear the Son of God, she questioned how such a birth could be accomplished: “How will this be, since I am a virgin” [LUKE 1:34]? After speaking of God's divine power, Gabriel concludes with this affirmation, “Nothing will be impossible with God” [LUKE 1:37].

⁴ The NET Bible First Edition (Biblical Studies Press, 1996-2006)

The words with which Gabriel allayed Mary's fears would be echoed by her eldest Son during the days of His ministry. On one occasion, expressing sorrow when a rich young man had rejected life eternal, the Master astonished His disciples when He taught them, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God" [MATTHEW 19:23, 24]. The disciples were incredulous, prompting this response from the Master. "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" [MATTHEW 19:26]. Jesus was testifying of God's omnipotence, especially as it applied to making people new.

I should suppose that it is necessary to say there are some things God cannot do. Long years ago, while ministering among the black churches of Dallas County, I often heard the choirs sing a song that presented the refrain:

"God can do anything, anything, anything,
God can do anything but fail;
He can save, He can keep, He can cleanse, and He will,
God can do anything but fail.

There are some things that God cannot do. God cannot deny His own will; nor can God do anything that would deny His own character. For this reason, whenever we speak of God's omnipotence, we must be careful to define His omnipotence as the ability to do all His holy will.

In this vein, God cannot lie. Paul opens his letter to Titus by writing, "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" [TITUS 1:1, 2]. He literally speaks of "the unlying God." It is an appropriate title for God, "The God who never lies." The author of the Letter to Hebrew Christians writes that in God's oath and promise "it is impossible for God to lie" [HEBREWS 6:18]. We are also taught that God "cannot deny Himself" [2 TIMOTHY 2:13]. James teaches us of God, "God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one" [JAMES 1:13]. Therefore, God can neither be tempted by evil nor can He tempt others to do evil.

Though God's power is infinite, His power is qualified by His attributes. What this means is that no single attribute can be isolated from God's Person; God is the self-existent One. He requires no mortal to affirm Him; neither does He require anything that we might offer. He is not moved by any inducement we could offer. MICAH 6:6-8 asks and answers this very question.

"With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?"

When we speak of God's exercise of His divine power over creation, we are speaking in particular of His sovereignty. However, it is important to note that God's sovereignty is the foundation for every other attribute attributed to Him. Arthur Pink is correct when he writes that God's sovereignty is "the foundation of Christian theology ... the center of gravity in the system of Christian truth."⁵

There is a sense in which each individual reflects God's sovereignty faintly. We are not omnipotent, so we cannot do anything we will; there are restrictions on our ability to act on our will. However, we do have wills; God created us with a will. In this, we reflect in faint fashion God Himself. However, unlike God, our will is not unfettered, it is not free; we are constrained by our weakness. Nevertheless, we express a measure of freedom in the sphere of our being within this universe wherein He placed us. In this context, there is one other factor that cannot be ignored—our wills are marred, spoiled by the fall of our first parents. Our wills are truncated, restricted and incapable of being fulfilled through our own efforts. It is precisely as James stated in his letter, "Your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain" [JAMES 4:1b, 2a].

Thus, we are rebels; from birth and by choice we rebel against God's will, by nature exalting our own will over what we know to be His will. We refuse to do what He commands. Even our yearning for freedom reveals our broken condition—the freedom we desire is in opposition to the freedom offered in God's Son. We defy His rightful authority over our lives, insisting that we have the right to do as we wish, rather than agreeing that we have the right to do as we ought. It is this fallen condition, witnessed through evil governments as they impose their wills over our wills, and seen in the continual efforts of wicked people who endeavour to compel us to fulfil their wills and seen in our own refusal either to seek God's will or to do God's will when we know what should be done, that creates such sorrow in our hearts and misery for all.

Because we are aware of our fallen condition, the words of the Master resonate in the hearts of His disciples. Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" [JOHN 8:31, 32]. When Jesus made this statement, those who heard Him, though they are said to have believed Him [see JOHN 8:30, 31], became angry and reacted with choler to what He said. Responding to their rage, Jesus testified, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" [JOHN 8:36]. It is only as He is accepted as sovereign in our life that we have hope of that freedom.

Though we do not have infinite power, we do have power in this world—physical power, persuasive power, power that arises from authority that God has constituted; in the exercise of such power in ways that are consistent with His will, we glorify Him because we are using the power He gives in ways that reflect His character.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY ACCEPTED — "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." Saying God is sovereign is one thing; living as though God is sovereign is quite another thing. Much of contemporary theology breaks down in living out what is professed. As already stated, the major reason contemporary theology fails is because men and women rebel against the knowledge of the Holy One. I cannot state emphatically enough that we are rebels by nature; we want to be autonomous. Even among the professed people of God, though we dare not deny the existence of God, we tend to either deny His sovereignty or we ignore Him in practise.

⁵ Arthur W. Pink, **The Sovereignty of God** (Baker, Grand Rapids, MI 1969) 263

Paul lived out the reality of God as sovereign over his life. Just so, each individual who will please God must live out the reality of God's reign over his or her life. I have painted with quite a broad brush in making my statement concerning contemporary theology not reflecting what is professed. In great measure, this dichotomy of profession and practise reflects a tension between civil religion and the Faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Civil religion is the common, virtually ubiquitous expression of the Faith that is found in essentially all evangelical churches. Church is where we go on Sunday morning rather than being who we are each day. Worship consists of what we sing rather than permitting ourselves to be lost in wonder at the knowledge of God's mercy and grace. We give God an hour rather than our lives. We have the liturgy memorised for most of our churches—announcements, a prayer, two songs, a hurried prayer asking little of God, the offering, two more songs, Scripture reading, the sermon, a closing hymn; with few variations, this describes an evangelical service.

The fifteen or twenty minute sermon presents some pious exhortations to be good people, though the preacher is careful not to be overly intrusive. Few in attendance will be caused any particular discomfort by what is said. We will glad-hand one another, leave for lunch (usually with a few select friends), go home and spend the remainder of the day doing what we want to do. During the following week, there will be little thought of what was said during the service. Perhaps we will see a couple of people we know from the church, acknowledge their existence and continue with lives that are indistinguishable from the remainder of the world.

The Faith is quite different from what I have just presented. Those souls convinced of the reality of the True and Living God hold Him in awe. They will, despite demands on their time from family and jobs, spend time in His presence. They will listen for His voice as they read the Word. They will seek to reveal His presence through building other believers, through comforting the heavy-hearted and through encouraging those who are growing discouraged. Christians committed to the True Faith are marked by lives that take care to fulfil the revealed will of Him Whom they call Lord.

They have read Paul's words in the Ephesian missive, taking to heart his admonitions. "This I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

“But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving” [EPHESIANS 4:17-5:4].

Saints imbued with the knowledge of the Holy One are conscious of their own disposition toward sin. They grieve over every failure, keeping short accounts with God, frequently bowing their head as they seek forgiveness for the sins that seem to plague their lives and often asking that He give them wisdom to confront even the routine aspects of life. These select saints are tormented by the wickedness that fills the world, compelling them to wade through the cesspools of sinful speech and wicked attitudes. They are rejected and sometimes ridiculed by those about them. They know from experience the reality of Peter’s instruction.

“Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” [1 PETER 4:1-11].

The civil religion of the day presents a God who is benignly disposed toward us. He asks little of us and never, ever demands that we inconvenience ourselves. In fact, we would resist most vigorously any suggestion that we should be inconvenienced. Services of worship are optional—we attend when we feel like it and if there are no other distractions. Should company show up, civil religion demands that we avoid attending the services so that guests or family members are not made to feel uncomfortable. We don’t really allow ourselves to think of the meaning of that passage that admonishes, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” [HEBREWS 10:23-25]. In fact, we don’t like to think about the Day drawing near—it would be inconvenient if our plans were disrupted.

It is only as our lives are permeated with the Spirit of God that we are enabled to live in light of His coming. Filled with the Spirit of Christ, we are equipped to live with anticipation that we shall shortly be done with this dying world. Infused with the Holy Spirit, we delight to live with the reality of the presence of the Risen Son of God.

And this reveals the difference between the civil religion of this day and the Faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. The civil religion has nothing of the Spirit of Christ, nothing of God who is sovereign, nothing of transformational power. The Faith of Christ the Lord rejoices in God who is sovereign, revels in the knowledge that the Spirit of God points us to the Risen Son of God, exults in the transforming power of the True and Living God.

I must point out a distressing truth—distressing to all who practise and delight in the civil religion of this day. When the Spirit of God is removed from this earth, when the ransomed hosts are raptured out of this world—caught up to heaven to be with the Lord—evangelical churches will still be found in our world. They will meet, sing happy choruses, read Bible passages and recite prayers, listen to sermons and do pretty much what they are doing at this time. They will be unaware that the faithful have been raptured and they have been left behind. Those going to church in that day will be like Samson, not realising that the LORD has left them.

The evidence that this is a sad reality lies in the response of religious people when the truth is preached. Like Amaziah confronting Amos, they bluster, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom” [AMOS 7:12, 13].

We who will honour God need to heed the apostolic encouragement given as Paul draws his First Letter to Timothy to a conclusion. “As for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen” [1 TIMOTHY 6:11-16].

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY EXPLORED — “To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” Doctrine is not sterile; that is, truth does not exist in a vacuum. The truths God reveals, especially truths concerning His Person and truths that reveal the attributes of the One we worship and serve will either bless or condemn mankind. The believer who has been transformed by God’s power is blessed in the knowledge of God. Certainly, we discover a new expression of freedom in accepting God’s rightful sovereignty over His creation. Does God’s sovereignty matter to us as followers of the Master? We might legitimately ask what benefits accrue to the believer because God is sovereign.

When the believer embraces the teaching that God is Sovereign, he or she will discover true freedom. The Christian will be enabled to rest secure in the knowledge that God is in control, regardless of how chaotic the world may appear. With the freedom experienced, the child of God will receive rich blessings that could not otherwise be known. What blessings?⁶ In the first place, *the Christian will discover deepened veneration of the True and Living God.*

Candidly, we cannot know the God of the Bible until we know Him as He presents Himself. Because God presents Himself as sovereign, what sort of God would He be if His will were constantly thwarted? What sort of god does one serve when that god is always struggling to find a way past our “free will?” Can you truly worship such a god? If God’s will is subject to our will, if His designs are frustrated and His purposes are checkmated by our will, He is not worthy of our worship; such a god only merits our contempt. Set against such a powerless, contemptible deity is the True and Living God. Remember, it was a vision of God—powerful and sovereign—that transformed Isaiah’s service and promoted him into prophetic ministry.

⁶ The listing of blessings is adapted from James Montgomery Boice, **Foundations of the Christian Faith** (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 1980) 122-3

“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!’

“And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts’ [ISAIAH 6:1-5]!

Again, *knowledge of the Sovereign God comforts us in the midst of trials, temptation or sorrow*. I have often quoted an old fundamentalist preacher who was wont to say, “I serve a God too wise to make a mistake and too good to needlessly hurt me.”⁷ I might also add that the God I serve is too deep to explain Himself. One thing is certain: trials will come to each Christian. Similarly, we are assured that we shall experience temptation and we shall know sorrow. Christians are not spared such pressures. However, Christians do not face these pressures alone. If God is sovereign, we are convinced that nothing comes into our life except it has been permitted by Him and for His purposes. Though we may not immediately know His purposes, we are assured that our lives have purpose and the pressures we face are for our good and for His glory. If God is not sovereign, then these trials, these temptations and the sorrows we experience are rendered meaningless and life is simply a tragedy in which we seek only to survive. However, the individual who knows God as sovereign does not merely grope blindly through life; the redeemed child faces the pressures of life with confidence.

The knowledge that God is sovereign lends meaning to the encouragement of the Word. Peter wrote his first missive to believers who were enduring incredible trials, reminding them that Jesus will return to receive us to Himself. These saints, though suffering greatly, were urged to persevere, knowing that God was working out His purpose in the midst of their trials. Peter wrote, “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” [1 PETER 1:6, 7].

In similar manner, Paul wrote the Thessalonian Christians, who were experiencing intense opposition and unimaginable pressures, urging them not to surrender to despair. Though their loved ones had suffered death, the Apostle encouraged these saints to remember that God is in control. There is a day coming shortly when Christ the Lord will return, bringing with Him those who have fallen asleep in Him. We who remain will be reunited with our loved ones at that time. His concluding words have meaning only if God is sovereign: “Therefore encourage one another with these words” [1 THESSALONIANS 4:18].

If God is sovereign, *we will be encouraged and we will find joy in evangelism*. Those opposed to God’s sovereignty often denigrate the believer who holds to the Doctrines of Grace, saying that they are not evangelistic. I say that knowing God is sovereign energises evangelism. Those who reject His sovereignty are the ones who see evangelism enervated.

⁷ Attributed to Robert T. Ketchum, a founder of the movement identified as the General Association of Regular Baptists in the United States

I know that I am appointed by God to this ministry of preaching and testifying to the grace of God. Therefore, each time I stand to preach, I know that His purpose is being worked out. I am confident that those whom God has appointed to life will hear and they will believe. Someone will be encouraged to receive Christ as Master over her life. Someone will lift his weary head, looking up to the Saviour. Similarly, each child of God witnesses to His grace and to His mercy knowing that God is at work preparing hearts and calling some to Himself. Rather than discouraging evangelism, the knowledge that God is sovereign encourages evangelism.

If God is not sovereign, then I am dependent on my own wisdom, my own strength, my own ability to counter arguments and to win the lost. Those who do not know that God is sovereign demure when urged to witness; they will not testify because they are not capable of countering the arguments they may encounter. If God is not sovereign, then why expose myself to ridicule and opposition presenting a message that is obviously unpalatable to the natural man?

Consider that the disciples who stood to witness at Pentecost were imbued with the knowledge of God's sovereignty. They had witnessed God's omnipotence when Jesus had conquered death and had risen from the dead. They had witnessed His ascension into the Glory. They had spent ten days praying—how I wish we could have heard their prayers! However, we are assured that they sought God's blessing and guidance, knowing that He was in control! They believed themselves responsible to see twelve appointed to serve as Apostles. However, they would not take it upon themselves to appoint one to take Judas' place. Rather, they were convinced that God alone could appoint to this holy office. This is evident from their prayer. "They prayed and said, 'You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place'" [ACTS 1:24, 25].

God poured out His Spirit and one hundred twenty disciples went into the streets of Jerusalem to call the city to repentance and faith; God energised their witness and brought conviction to the very people who had crucified the Master. Asking what they should do, Peter responded, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself" [ACTS 2:38, 39]. Note that the promise of God us is to "everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself." God is calling and we believers are honoured by being invited to work together with Him to accomplish His purpose. We are invited to share in His great work, knowing that He will accomplish all that He wills.

I suppose one of the greatest blessings—if not *the* greatest blessing—of knowing that God is sovereign, is *a deep sense of security*. If I must hold on to the end, I will despair. My dad and my granddad held to the thought that they must "hold on to the end" or they could be lost. On one occasion, my dad sought to convince me of the futility of believing in the sovereign God. I gently, though firmly, rebuked him by pointing to the Word of God.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" [JOHN 10:27-30].

My security does not lie in my strength, for I am weak. My security does not reside in my ability, for I cannot resist evil in my own strength. My security is not dependent on my wisdom, for I have no wisdom that can overcome that of this dying world. My security rests in God who is omnipotent, in Christ who has conquered death. Amen.

When we look to God as sovereign, we will discover His strength and power are given for our benefit. This is the basis for Paul's confident assertion, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" [**ROMANS 8:31, 35, 37-39**].

With the Apostle, each follower of Christ Jesus the Lord can exult, "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." Amen, indeed.