

## God Is King: The Sovereignty of God

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE PHRASE “God’s sovereignty,” what comes to mind? I asked this question of a Sunday school class recently and got a number of solid answers: omnipotence and omnipresence; maker and master planner; total and absolute control; comforting presence. All of these answers hit at significant aspects of the idea. However, I would suggest that we could sum up all of these by thinking about the word *sovereignty* itself. After all, the word derives from *sovereign*, which can denote a person who exercises supreme, permanent authority. To put it simply, when we talk about God as sovereign, we mean that God is King.

Our God is more than *a* king. Rather, our God is *the* King, the supreme King who created all things, rules and directs all things to their proper ends, and exercises his will supremely in every area of life. There are many places in Scripture that articulate this vision of God as the King, but one of the best is Daniel 4. In many ways, this is a strange chapter in Daniel; it presents itself as a kind of affidavit from Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon and conqueror of Israel and Judah. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream, which Daniel interprets for him. In the dream, God tells the king that though Nebuchadnezzar was great and his kingdom extended throughout the “known world,” he would be humbled until he learned “that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to

16

whom he will” (Dan. 4:25). A year after this dream, Nebuchadnezzar boasts in his own heart over his kingdom; immediately, a voice from heaven rearticulates what Daniel had told him. The king loses his reason, is driven from other men to live with field animals, and is made to eat grass like an ox; his hair and fingernails grow long and animal-like; and he is humbled. Finally, the king “lifted [his] eyes to heaven, and [his] reason returned to [him]” and this is what he confessed:

I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever,

for his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;  
all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,  
and he does according to his will among the host of heaven  
and among the inhabitants of the earth;  
and none can stay his hand  
or say to him, “What have you done?” (Dan. 4:34–35)

God the King stands over all other kings of this world; his will is supreme and no human can contradict or challenge his desires. One hymn text puts it this way:

O Father, you are sovereign  
in all the worlds you made;  
your mighty word was spoken  
and light and life obeyed.  
Your voice commands the seasons  
and bounds the ocean’s shore,  
sets stars within their courses  
and stills the tempest’s roar.

O Father, you are sovereign  
in all affairs of man;  
no pow’rs of death or darkness  
can thwart your perfect plan.

PRESBYTERIAN BELIEFS

All chance and change transcending,  
supreme in time and space,  
you hold your trusting children  
secure in your embrace.

O Father, you are sovereign,  
the Lord of human pain,  
transmuting earthly sorrows  
to gold of heav'nly gain.  
All evil overruling,  
as none but Conqu'ror could,  
your love pursues its purpose—  
our souls' eternal good.

O Father, you are sovereign!  
We see you dimly now,  
but soon before your triumph  
earth's every knee shall bow.  
With this glad hope before us  
our faith springs up anew:  
our sovereign Lord and Savior,  
we trust and worship you!<sup>1</sup>

As this hymn teaches us, God is the King over his creation. He brought the worlds into existence by his powerful word and as the Creator has rightful claim to the creation's obedience. God is also the King over every sphere of life. He guides and directs both the macro-story—the movement of human history—and our micro-stories—each of our individual lives; everything happens in accordance with his plan. Even the pain we feel and the sorrows we know come under the King's rule. Finally, God is the King over human salvation. God the King is unfolding a story, a plan, that involves the salvation of a people for his own glory and that focuses attention on the God-Man, Jesus.

This belief that God is the King raises some difficulties; we will treat these briefly in the proper place later in this chapter. However, perhaps the greatest difficulty is existential: the way we feel about God's

rule over every part of our lives. Even Protestant saints like Jonathan Edwards struggled existentially with the reality that God is the King. In a narrative of his conversion meant to encourage his son-in-law, Aaron Burr Sr., Edwards reflected on how he had long objected to the doctrine of God's sovereignty; in fact, he said that "it used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me." Yet there came a time when he was convinced that this belief was biblical and, hence, true. Edwards was never able to give an explanation for it, save for the "extraordinary influence of God's Spirit." Yet his mind was able to "rest in it" to such a degree that this belief became "a *delightful* conviction." Edwards would go on to claim that "the doctrine of God's sovereignty has very often appeared, an exceeding pleasant, bright and sweet doctrine to me: and absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God."<sup>2</sup> Even someone like Edwards struggled to understand how God could be the King; this was not only an intellectual struggle but a profoundly *personal* one. It points up to us, I think, that this belief that God is the King is just that: a *belief* toward which we will not necessarily reason our way. Rather, it is a belief in which we must rest.

#### GOD IS THE KING OVER HIS CREATION

From the very beginning of time, God the King has been working out a story, one that focuses on manifesting his glory in his creation. Ephesians 1 tells us that God "chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world" and that this was "according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will" (1:3, 11). Because of passages such as these, Presbyterians believe that "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass" (WCF 3.1). Right from the get-go, the issue of God's kingship over all his creatures and all their actions is joined (WCF 5.1). Is God truly sovereign from the beginning of time or is he not? Is God the one who began and who is directing human history, or are some other forces in charge?

That issue becomes particularly pressing when we talk about creation. As Presbyterians, we confess that “it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good” (WCF 4.1). When we confess this, we mean several things. First, we believe that God the King created all things in the world out of nothing. God spoke all creation into being by the power of his Word and Spirit (Gen. 1:1–3; John 1:3; Heb. 1:3). Next, we also believe that God the King created for his own glory. In creation, God highlights his power, wisdom, and goodness (Rom. 1:20; Ps. 19:1). Third, we mean that God the King *was* before anything else was. Before time began, God was; in fact, God is the one who created time as well as matter. As a result, God does not depend upon his creation; rather, God’s creation depends upon him. Finally, we can say that, because God the King created, he has ownership over his creation (Ps. 24:1–2). God has rights over his creation in the same way that a painter has ownership rights over a piece of art or an author has ownership rights over his manuscript.

All of these points argue that God the Creator is King over his creation; God is the “Sovereign Lord who made the heaven, and the earth and the sea and everything in them” (Acts 4:24). As creatures, we are dependent upon God and distinct from him. Even when we pretend to live our lives independently from God and ignore his will, still God is our King and his will is our law. All humankind is responsible to God and will be judged by God; this is right because God is the Creator and King over humankind. The apostle Paul makes the point that Gentiles, who did not have the written law of God, “show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus” (Rom. 2:15–16). The upshot of God’s sovereignty over his creation is that he is both King and Judge over it.

## GOD IS THE KING OVER EVERY SPHERE OF LIFE

The question that might arise from believing that God is the King over his creation is whether or not God the King continues his involvement with it. Is God the blind watchmaker, who, having once created the world and its laws, then leaves it to run on its own? Or does God involve himself directly in the day-to-day movements of his creation?

Presbyterians believe that, in fact, God continues to exercise his role over every sphere of life. One of the ways we typically express this belief is through the idea of *providence*. We confess 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. (WCF 5.1)

In other words, we believe that God the King is bound to and involved with his creation. The fancy theological words here are *transcendence* and *immanence*. We do believe that God is not like his creation; he is “holy” and “wholly” other; he is *transcendent*. But we also earnestly believe that God loves his creation and is near to it; he is intimately involved with it, guiding its affairs and governing his creatures; he is *immanent*. We want to say that providence has to do with four types or categories of divine activity: upholding, directing, disposing, and governing. God the King is *upholding* “the universe by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3) in such a way that, if he were to stop doing so, the world would cease to exist. Another way of putting this is that “in him all things hold together”; in a way that we don’t really grasp, God in Christ is sustaining the world so that we live and move and have our being “in him” (Col. 1:17; Acts 17:28).

God the King is also *directing* the events of human history. Most importantly, God orchestrated human history so that “when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal. 4:4). All of ancient

history led up to the moment of the incarnation of Jesus Christ: the preservation of the Messianic line, the administration of the old covenant and Jewish kingdom, the movement of world powers to return the Jews to Palestine, even the call for the worldwide census that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem from their native Nazareth—each event was part of God’s directing of human affairs. God the King continues to fit together his larger story of salvation with our smaller life-stories in such a way that it is a grand mosaic proclaiming his glory.

Further, God the King *disposed* events to turn out a certain way in line with his perfect and secret plan. God disposed that it would be Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau; Moses, not Aaron who would uniquely lead his people. God disposed that Pharaoh would react in certain ways so that God would demonstrate that he alone was the true God (Ex. 4:21). In ways that we cannot fully understand, God even disposed that Adam would sin in the garden of Eden and thus begin the entire story of redemption (WCF 5.4).

Finally, God the King *governs* human beings and their actions. We can say this because Presbyterians claim that no part of God’s creation is exempt from God’s providence. It is not as though Pharaoh was under God’s control, but Adam was not; or Cyrus was under God’s control, but Augustus Caesar was not. *All* of God’s creatures are under his control. Even inanimate objects and forces are under God’s control. David sang about this in Psalm 68:

O God, when you went out before your people,  
 when you marched through the wilderness,  
 the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain,  
 before God, the One of Sinai,  
 before God, the God of Israel.  
 Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad;  
 you restored your inheritance as it languished;  
 your flock found a dwelling in it;  
 in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.  
 (Ps. 68:7–10)

God was the one who caused the rain to replenish the land and to provide for the flocks; he is the one who controls the storms and the droughts of life. Nothing stands outside God's control.

This providential activity on God the King's part is rooted in his unerring foreknowledge and irreversible purpose. God's foreknowledge is not merely his looking down the corridor of time and seeing that something is going to happen. Rather, God's foreknowledge implies God's foreordination—God knows something is going to happen because he is the one who has determined such a thing will happen (Rom. 9:11). This foreknowledge is both exhaustive and unerring. There is simply nothing in human existence that takes God by surprise because God has purposed irreversibly that such an event would happen. As difficult as it is for us to understand, the evil that happens in our world is under God's control. Immediately, Joseph's words to his brothers should come to mind: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Gen. 50:20). In the same way, the central day in the Christian faith is one we call "Good Friday," a day in which an unmistakably evil action was used for God's glorious good purpose of saving his own. Peter himself noted this in his Pentecost sermon: "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Acts 2:23). Peter did not let the religious leaders off the hook—they had certainly done evil in crucifying the Lord of Glory; yet this happened in accordance with God's plan. And God was able to use this unmistakably evil act to bring about the ultimate good: the redemption of God's people.

One of the difficulties with understanding providence is relating God the King's governance of all things with responsible human agency. If God is sovereign, then in what sense are human actions free and, hence, morally accountable? In order to get at this, we have to step back to reaffirm that God's kingship over all his creatures is all-inclusive. Human beings cannot limit God's authority or his freedom. But even more, God's kingly authority *establishes* human existence and, hence, human choice. When God created

human beings and granted them dominion over the rest of creation, he delegated to them his authority to make decisions about creation. That delegated authority or rule did not come to an end with the fall of Adam and Eve; humans still have the authority to make those decisions and choices and to exercise rule (Ps. 8:6). Now, though, human beings must deal with an additional factor—the corruption communicated to us by virtue of our first parents’ sin. Hence, our minds are clouded by sin and our wills are bound by our own sinful self-interest. As a result, when humans make choices, not only are they limited by God’s prior delegation of authority and by his sovereign administration of his creation, but they are also limited by their own sinfulness.

There are some very practical implications that result from this broad understanding that God is King over every sphere of life. One thing we would want to say is that human history has both purpose and direction. This is certainly true for the big story that God is working out. God is guiding human history to a specific goal: the full and final salvation and liberation of his people and his creation (Rom. 8:18–30). But it is also true for our smaller stories. Events that happen to us are not purposeless, but full of meaning, granted to us from the hand of God. As a pastor friend of mine, David Dively, has well said, “God has made this moment for me and me for an eternity of these moments.” This is the case because our smaller stories are knit together by God into his larger purpose and plan to bring about glory.

Because this is God’s story, nothing happens to us by luck or chance. Indeed, one of the sins forbidden in the first commandment is “ascribing the praise of any good we either are, have, or can do, to fortune, idols, ourselves, or any other creature” (LC 105). Rather, we have the faith of the hymn writer:

Whate’er my God ordains is right:  
his holy will abideth;  
I will be still whate’er he doth,  
and follow where he guideth.

24

He is my God; though dark my road,  
he holds me that I shall not fall:  
wherefore to him I leave it all.

Whate'er my God ordains is right:  
he never will deceive me;  
he leads me by the proper path;  
I know he will not leave me.  
I take, content, what he hath sent;  
his hand can turn my griefs away,  
and patiently I wait his day.

Whate'er my God ordains is right:  
though now this cup, in drinking,  
may bitter seem to my faint heart,  
I take it, all unshrinking.  
My God is true; each morn anew  
sweet comfort yet shall fill my heart,  
and pain and sorrow shall depart.

Whate'er my God ordains is right:  
here shall my stand be taken;  
though sorrow, need, or death be mine,  
yet I am not forsaken.  
My Father's care is round me there;  
he holds me that I shall not fall:  
and so to him I leave it all.<sup>3</sup>

Our loving God and Father so directs our paths that, though our road be dark, he upholds us. We can trust that the path on which he places us is the proper one, and so we can be content in his providential leading. And our only hope is in his comfort, meditated by the Spirit and the Word, reminding us that God's care will never leave us nor forsake us. Human history has a purpose and direction: it will result ultimately in the full and final salvation of us and of the church as a whole.

PRESBYTERIAN BELIEFS

Although God the King is directing our stories and his larger story for his own glory, it may not be clear to our human eyes what God is doing in the daily events of our lives or in the broader sweep of history. As God told Israel when the people prepared to enter the Promised Land: “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29). It may be difficult to understand what God is doing in our lives; we may wonder whether God has a purpose in it all. We can rest certain that he does, but we may not be able to discern what that purpose is in this life. The same goes for understanding what God is doing in the larger sweep of contemporary events and recent history. It is very tempting for us to think that we can say what God meant in a particular war or in allowing the rise of a particular world leader. Stephen J. Nichols, a theologian friend of mine, once wrote a brilliant essay on the folly of attempting to name the Antichrist. Surveying church history from the early church forward, Nichols cataloged the many different suggestions that biblical students have made for who the Antichrist was, ranging from Constantine to the Pope to Ronald Reagan! Even when it comes to the study of history, some advocate a kind of “providential history” in which religious figures are divided up into righteous and unrighteous teams and the effects of their actions are granted theological significance. To be sure, we must seek to understand human motivations in the writing of history. But identifying certain events (ones we like) as “the work of God” while failing to recognize other events (ones we don’t like) as being equally God’s work ironically represents a significant misunderstanding of God’s providence. All of life is under God’s control; all of it is for the praise of his glory; but the *hows* and the *whys* may be harder to grasp in this age.

Finally, because God the King is governing every aspect of our lives, our daily work and callings are granted great significance. Our callings, our “vocations,” *are* the way God exerts his rule in this world. As a result, whether you are a housewife, a lawyer, a teacher, or a minister, what you do is vitally important in God’s scheme of things. You are extending God’s rule wherever you are, for you are a child and an

agent of God the King. Some Presbyterians argue that this means God's rule must be extended to every sphere of human existence, such as science, art, or politics. Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch Reformed theologian who founded the Free University of Amsterdam and eventually served as Prime Minister of the Netherlands, held that Presbyterian beliefs (summed up under the heading of Calvinism, after their most prominent developer, John Calvin) provided a worldview that could alone grant a coherent rationale for human endeavor. Kuyper famously expressed his belief in God's kingship over the world by proclaiming, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'"<sup>4</sup> He also claimed that God's sovereignty had to be expressed by "a *Science* which will not rest until it has thought out the entire cosmos; a *Religion* which cannot sit still until she has permeated every sphere of human life; and so also there must be an *Art* which, despising no single department of life adopts, into her splendid world, the whole of human life, religion included."<sup>5</sup> Kuyper suggested that Presbyterian and Reformed believers could construct a coherent "world and life view" that approached every sphere of knowledge from the standpoint of God's kingship and law. This understanding has led many Presbyterians to pursue their vocations under God's direction, seeking to extend his reign in every sphere of life.

#### GOD IS THE KING OVER HUMAN SALVATION

There is one further question that might come to mind: If God the King governs every aspect of our lives, does he also direct our stories of salvation? This is where the rubber often hits the road, for when most people talk about God's sovereignty, they particularly refer to God's right as King to save whom he will in the way he wills. The whole complex of theological words for this point—*predestination*, *election*, *foreordination*—serves as an important identity marker between Presbyterians and many other evangelicals. And yet, the truth that God is the King over human salvation flows naturally from what we have already seen: if God is the King over his creation, having own-

ership rights over what he has made; and if God is the King over every sphere of life, upholding, directing, disposing, and governing all his creatures and all their actions; then does it not follow that God demonstrates the fact he is King over his creatures by saving whomever he desires to save?

As we have already noticed, all human beings since the fall start their lives in rebellion against God. From the time of our first parents, Adam and Eve, humans have sought to live independently of God, making their own evaluations of what is good and evil. Because of this rebellion, God could rightfully damn all humans to experience his eternal wrath and justice. No one deserves salvation. The fact that anyone experiences mercy is solely because of God's grace. Not only this, but as the result of the fall, our wills are bent away from serving God. As Paul put it so memorably in Romans:

None is righteous, no, not one;  
no one understands;  
no one seeks for God. (Rom. 3:10, quoting Ps. 14)

Because no one seeks after God, and because our wills are set against God, someone outside of us needs to intervene if we are to receive divine mercy and forgiveness.

That is why Presbyterians confess that

those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto: and all to the praise of his glorious grace. (WCF 3.5)

Now, that section of the Westminster Confession of Faith sounds like it was written by a lawyer. Let's see if we can break it down into more

manageable ideas. The key thought is that God the King has chosen in Christ those whom he will save for his own glory. Everything else is descriptive of the way in which God the King chose: he did it before the foundation of the world; he chose according to his own irreversible purpose and his own good pleasure; he did this out of his freedom, not because of any obligation placed upon him by the creature; and this choosing has as its end goal the praise of God's glorious grace.

Another way of putting this might be that God the King has chosen us out of his own freedom and for his own purposes. The apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy 1:8–9, made this point: “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, *not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the world began*” (emphasis added). Here we have many of the components of God's sovereignty in our salvation: God did the choosing in Christ out of his own freedom before the world began and not because we placed God under obligation by our works. Another straightforward place where the Bible speaks to this is Romans 8:29–30, where Paul writes that “those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” Each of these texts claims that God is King over our salvation—he is the one who chooses us and he does so out of his own freedom.

Even further, God the King takes all the steps necessary for our salvation. As we confess, he has “foreordained all the means thereunto” (WCF 3.6). He was the one who secured the salvation of his people by sending Jesus to die on the cross and to rise on the third day from the tomb. He was the one who caused us to be born in a certain place and time. He was the one who brought us into contact with the gospel at the right time. He was the one who poured out the Holy Spirit to use his Word to call us effectively to faith in Jesus. He is the one who grants us every spiritual blessing in Jesus: justification, adoption, sanc-

tification, and the promise of glorification. If God did not do these things, no one would be saved. Truly, as the apostle John points out, “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

There are those who claim that Presbyterians cannot share the gospel effectively with their neighbors because no one can know whom God has chosen. But when you think about it, this is a weak objection, because the same sovereign God who chose to save also chose the way in which to save—by neighbors sharing the gospel with their neighbors, parents teaching the gospel to their children, pastors preaching the gospel to their congregations, missionaries declaring the gospel to people groups who have never heard it. That is what the Great Commission is all about: as you go through life, make disciples. Another reason this objection does not hold weight is that, though God knows whom he has chosen, we do not. Therefore, we are called to share the gospel without distinction and with everyone we meet. The apostle Paul, on Mars Hill, declared that “the times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed” (Acts 17:30–31). This was Paul’s message everywhere he went, in the synagogue and in the marketplace, on Mars Hill and on the Temple mount. He didn’t try to discern who the “elect” were; rather, he preached the gospel to all, believing that God was calling out his own in every group of people.

To be sure, sometimes our friends get themselves wrapped around the axle trying to sort out how predestination “works.” We confess that “the doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care” (WCF 3.8). Sometimes people have shipwrecked their faith because they have not been able to figure out whether their dying neighbor or their co-workers were elect. Again, this misses the point. The identities of those who were chosen before the foundation of the world are known only to *God*; what *we* know is this: “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Further, the belief that God is King in matters relating to our salvation is not meant to lead us to despair, but to assure our hearts. It should lead us to rejoicing. That is certainly the way Paul uses it in

30

Romans 8. Writing to believers who were experiencing the deep “suffering of this present time,” Paul tells them that nothing can separate them from God’s love, nothing can turn God against them (8:18, 31). Why? Because, Paul writes, those whom he foreknew he also called, justified, and glorified (8:29–30). As a result, we can rejoice in the “the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”—in him, we are more than conquerors (8:37–39).

Our rejoicing is rooted in an understanding that God as King does not *have* to save us. We, God’s creation, have rebelled against God; we seek to live independently from him; we do not seek God at all. But God sought us, sent his Son to die for us, and grants us his Spirit to turn our wills toward God. As Isaac Watts put it:

How sweet and awesome is the place  
with Christ within the doors,  
while everlasting love displays  
the choicest of her stores.

While all our hearts and all our songs  
join to admire the feast,  
each of us cries with thankful tongue,  
“Lord, why was I a guest?”

“Why was I made to hear your voice,  
and enter while there’s room,  
when thousands make a wretched choice,  
and rather starve than come?”

’Twas the same love that spread the feast  
that sweetly drew us in;  
else we had still refused to taste,  
and perished in our sin.<sup>6</sup>

Our salvation is not due to our own goodness or our own ability. Our salvation is solely the result of God’s mercy. This is undeserved

favor—this is *grace*. And it is grace rooted in God’s actions as King over his creation, working his will in providence and redemption.

»*Questions for Thought and Review*

1. Was there ever a time when you struggled with the belief that God is the King? What was the turning point in seeing this as a “delightful conviction”?
2. All evangelicals affirm that God created all things visible and invisible, but probably most have not thought about the implications to which this affirmation leads. How do the affirmations about God’s independence from his creation and his ownership over creation confirm or challenge your views of God?
3. Do you feel at times that God is distant from his creation? How does the affirmation of God’s providence comfort you in the midst of pain and struggle?
4. Why is the affirmation that “nothing stands outside God’s control” important? If there were people or forces outside God’s control, what would that do to your view of God?
5. How does “Good Friday” challenge your view of God’s control of evil? If God planned to bring the ultimate good out of such terrible evil, how does that challenge our understanding of the evil of our lives?
6. This chapter says that “God’s kingly authority establishes human existence and, hence, human choice.” How does this understanding revise the typical confusion over God’s sovereignty and human responsibility? If God did not establish human existence, how would humans make meaningful choices?
7. How does the Presbyterian commitment to God’s providential control over life provide us with confidence, assurance, and meaning as we look at our lives and human history? How do we relate our confidence that God is in control over all events in our lives with our inability to discern necessarily God’s intent in these events?

32

8. In what ways do God's rights as King in your salvation encourage you in God's grace? How does this strengthen your assurance in God's care for you?
9. How would you answer a friend who claimed that Presbyterians cannot share the gospel effectively with their neighbors because no one can know whom God has chosen?

»*For Further Reading*

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