

# The Ministry of the Church - Part 6

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*God's sovereignty gives us a respect for Him and a desire to cooperate with Him, leading to a working relationship with Him.*

**Duration:** 54:22

**Scripture:** Genesis 22:1-14, Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 3:5-6, Jeremiah 29:11, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, Philippians 4:6-7

**Topics:** "Church"

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## Description

The video is about a missionary in Arianjaya who faced difficult circumstances with the people he was trying to help. They were chronic thieves who stole everything from him, causing him frustration and almost a nervous breakdown. However, he learned to see the sovereignty of God and yielded to Him, which brought about a working relationship with God. The video also mentions the story of Moses, who spent the first 40 years of his life being trained in Egypt before his life radically changed. The speaker shares a personal story of how a seemingly mundane event, like a car breaking down, led to a significant turning point in his life.

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## Transcript

May we just have a brief time of prayer. I thank you, Lord. The sovereign God, I praise you, I thank you for your mercy.

I just ask that may I not diminish in any way, may I not ruin or wreck anything that you desire to do. And and may I be an encouragement to your people in Jesus name. Would it be simple to say that all of us believe in the sovereignty of God? I mean, don't we believe that God is sovereign? I mean, don't you believe that God is sovereign? Even he has this whole perspective of your life.

And then he even is sovereign in the daily circumstances. I mean, I just was listening to what Jack was saying. I say, you know, there's God's sovereignty.

There's there's I always remember one brother saying God always writes the last chapter. And I'm very thankful for that, because sometimes in the middle, you don't really know what's happening. Well, you know, I would just like to share something with you today.

It's going to be a little bit more of a sharing than a than a teaching. And I know that a lot of sometimes brothers don't like to give personal examples. And I really like personal examples because they encourage

me when I hear them from from saints where God's moving in their life.

So I'm going to use some. I just want to start off with just a little a little story. You know, it was about six years ago that I was in my family were in Ohio and I was actually a minister.

I was I was speaking regularly. And and it was interesting. I was speaking.

I didn't I was saved, but I didn't really see Christ. And I was preaching the gospel, I guess. It's kind of an interesting thing.

But in that period of time, God did something pretty amazing. Is he you know, we were we were we were like this. We had turned into something that was incredibly legalistic, incredibly exclusive.

I mean, we were trying to be what God was going to be doing in this generation. You know, it's interesting. Somehow in my mind, I thought we were something special.

You know, we were what God was going to be doing. And you know how many times that thought had transpired over the course of history by other? I mean, that wasn't a new thought. A billion people have thought that that they were what God was doing.

If you ever think that you almost always know you're on the wrong track. You know, it's that who can presume to be like we're with God's doing in this generation or something to that effect. But in any event, we had become out of this by trying to really be something for God.

We had become something that was that was it almost had become sterile. It was like sanitize. You know, we were suits to the meeting and we were all everybody, you know, everything was proper.

And we were avoiding all these things. And we only met with those who thought just like us. You can imagine that that number kept getting smaller and smaller.

So but but nonetheless, that was what was happening. So as it turned out, as it turned out in the midst of this, the Lord, in his mercy and grace. Just tore our whole lives upside down, showed us Christ.

And that just turned isn't that amazing? Your minister and he shows you Christ in a chain and it just turns your whole life upside down. Well, as that as it happened, that was kind of the precursor of God leading us to come in and move to Richmond. You know, that was a fairly substantial time.

I mean, we were leaving and this was this was what I had given myself for. You know, I had purpose and and I was going to you know, I was really going to fulfill God's plan. And and all this was done.

You know, it was done. I was leaving, leaving people I knew, leaving everything coming. Didn't didn't have a job.

And and basically it was a vulnerable time. And, you know, it's it's like the Lord, the Lord knows and he understands that, you know, we had visited this assembly one time. And we you know, we knew at some point the Lord was going to lead us out.

We didn't know where how that was going to occur. But as it came about, we had felt that this was his leading. And then we had come here one time to find a place to live.

And the Lord was so gracious to us in that time. But as it turned out, we had really not gotten to know many folks here. We had we had stayed at Alan and Tammy's house.

They were gracious to us and some other believers we had had lunch with and Mac and Stella. Actually, we were introduced to the disassembly from Brother DeVern. He put us in touch with Mac and Stella.

But, you know, God works in very unique ways and he does things beyond what you expect. And we had moved and, you know, we we drove the moving van and we had arranged there were going to be a number of the saints were going to help us unpack. And and we had gotten in about midnight that night.

And, you know, it's just you're kind of it's just like everything's, you know, it's new and you don't know what to expect. And, you know, so we we that morning I was up a little bit early and there was a knock at the door and I go to the door and there's this guy on a Harley Davidson motorcycle with a long beard. And he's got one of these black helmets on.

I said, well, he must have come to the wrong place, you know, and and he says he says, hey, I heard are you the people that are moving? And I thought, oh, man, what kind of place is this that we've come to, you know, the motorcycle gangs or something, you know, and I thought, oh, you know, and then I'll tell you. And this is kind of embarrassing, but just to give you, you know, but and and if the funny part of it is, you know, then before and this was Dennis, by the way, he's such a dear brother and he's so sweet. And God was breaking down these barriers in us.

And, you know, we're we've we've been a product of this environment and God just opened up and he's continuing to open up. But, you know, that day, this is this is so funny because Dennis is riding Lauren, Louise and Samuel on his motorcycle throughout the neighborhood. You know, I mean, like Paul, you know, she's about ready to come unglued, but she survived through it.

And and the Lord was really good to us. And something else that happened during that time, interestingly, and the brothers that came, it was 98 degrees or something. It was very hot.

All the brothers wore shorts. I thought, oh, well, you know, shorts, you know, you don't wear if you were a believer, you didn't wear shorts. You know, you are a man of God doesn't wear shorts.

The only the only buddy that had long pants on was the guy that drove the moving van and myself, you know, and they were all wearing shorts. And it's just it's kind of funny now that God there's there's something about trying to how would you say I'm going to take a little divergent turn here, but trying to be an expression of Christ without the knowledge that Christ lives within. And he's he's guiding you and he's directing you and he's your source and he's your provision.

I don't want to today I'm not going to share a whole lot about Christ as our provision, but I want to say that that's the foundational thing for everything is that he's given us everything that we need pertaining to life and godliness. I mean, he's given us everything. He's our life.

The scripture tells us in Colossians, when Christ, who is our life, is revealed, we shall also be revealed with him in glory. I really believe something that he's so much of our life that if he ever left us, we'd die. That's I mean, I never used to believe in I don't even understand eternal security, to be honest with you.

But I really believe that Christ is our life and and that if he were ever to leave, those who possess his life would perish instantly because he's our life. Well, all this is something there was just another incident too.

I'm going to speak of the sovereignty of God today.

Interestingly enough, it was about Thursday and I said to Paula, you know what, Paul? We were at the prayer meeting one day. I said, who's speaking Sunday? That's the sovereignty of God, you know, I didn't recognize. But but this has been something that was has been stirring in my heart for a while.

It's how does God work in our lives? I think that's really important to know. I mean, you know, God is at work in our lives to will and to work for his good pleasure. And I think that there's something that's very that draws you near to God when you see him actively working in your lives.

Now, I understand that there's times and seasons and and we go through different times where maybe it doesn't seem like it's evident. But overall, we all have some testimony of God actually doing some work in our life. And so I want to talk about that and why that's important.

I'm going to share some examples, some personal examples, some others and some scripture. And finally, and I think this is this is on a more practical level. How can we cooperate with the sovereignty of God? How do we as believers cooperate with that? Now, a definition of sovereignty, which will be which will be not surprising, supreme in power, superior to all others, one who possesses the highest authority, supremely efficacious.

Now, you know, all believers would agree and nobody would disagree if you're a believer with those definitions that God is supreme and he reigns. But, you know, the outworking portion of that, there's probably a lot of disagreement. And I think going back and I think of the best example for me is and I probably have used this before is is like Calvinism versus Arminianism, you know, the predestination versus the free will of man.

And if you ever try to understand that, basically it boggles your mind because you're trying to understand how God works, who is not bound by time versus man who were under the constraint of time. And and, you know, it you just can't I cannot I cannot grasp that. I've read some of these things and I really don't understand.

And and I think, you know, even if these men who were who were really men of God and they were trying to understand God, if they couldn't grasp it, how is someone like me going to understand? I don't have that kind of intellectualism. But, you know, I even thought about that, even if I could, what what is the real purpose? The real purpose is not to understand about God or understand these doctrinal issues. It's really to understand God and to and to know him.

Do you remember if any of you remember catechism? If I would ask this question, what is the chief purpose of man? Who could answer? Enjoy him forever. I think that's, you know, that's kind of a neat thing to glorify God and enjoy him forever. That kind of brings it right down to what our purpose is.

I don't think it's an intellectual understanding. And I know you'd agree with that. In Psalm 103, verse 7, you don't have to turn there, but it says this.

He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the sons of Israel. You're probably familiar with that verse, but his ways to Moses, his acts to the sons of Israel. You know, what would be the higher calling? It would obviously be to know God's ways.

But I want to tell you something that even Moses had to see God's acts. He had to see God actively moving in his life. And and I mean, look what happened.

I mean, it was it what if the burning bush was an act of God that Moses that that had an encounter with the Lord and it affected him? Now, you've got to see that Moses wasn't exactly the most willing person at that point in time, neither. But God had was sovereignly moving in his life. And Moses progressed from a point to getting beyond merely seeing the acts of God to beginning to understand the ways of God and really to understand or get to know God himself.

Now, interestingly enough, is that if you know that dispels you ever run into people say, well, if I see a miracle, I'll believe, you know, you know, that that that that could happen. But in and of itself, that is not necessarily going to happen because we have the history. Scripture tells us the children of Israel saw all kinds of miracles and they weren't able to believe they still persisted in unbelief.

But something about Moses and something about Caleb and Joshua, they were able to see God moving. And instead of getting deeper and deeper and deeper in unbelief, they were growing and progressing to where they basically were getting a working understanding of walking with God. And I think it led to an intimacy, a relationship with him is that such that God desires for us to have.

I mean, now, wouldn't you think that if God is sovereign and his and he's supreme, would he not be working in each of our lives to bring us to himself? Isn't that what he desires? I mean, what if we were to change the catechism question is what is God's what's the purpose of God? I mean, I believe God wants to just have relationship to love and have relationship with his people to make himself known. You know, one thing it is when God reveals himself to you, does that not do something to your heart? I mean, does that not stimulate something when you see a when you get some type of a revelation of God or a revelation of Christ or you see the sovereignty of God that does something? Now, some of the difficulties that we encounter in in God's sovereignty and his moving is that when you think about the overall sovereignty of God, you're talking about a lot of time. I mean, it's easy to read Genesis and read about Abraham and think, look at God, the Lord appeared to Abraham and the Lord.

But, you know, there was 25 years between about four of those chapters. How many things did nothing? Maybe nothing happened for several years at a time where he was just going on and living life and and and, you know, trying to do whatever he needed to do at that time. He was having conflicts.

There were struggles. He was learning. He was growing.

But it was important, and I think from Abraham's perspective, that we're able to connect the dots in such a way to see that if God is sovereign and he moved there, he's able to move in our lives now or he hasn't left me go or he's not going to leave me. You know, even before you were a believer, God was moving sovereignly in your life. Think of the example of Moses.

Now, Moses is just a child and they you know, the scripture tells us that his parents weren't afraid of the king's edict and they put him in this basket and the sister puts him in the river. And it just so happens that Pharaoh's daughter finds him. And it just so happens that she has pity on him.

Now, what was the edict? Any child, any male, pitch him in the river. So what was going on? Why did Pharaoh's daughter have compassion or pity on this Hebrew boy that basically the nation despised the Hebrews? They didn't even want to be with them. There had to be something of the sovereignty of God.

It just so happened that the sister was there and took the child and brought him back to his mother so the mother could nurse him until such time as he was weaned. Now, God had his hand on Moses even as a young child. He was sovereignly moving in his life.

I want to just tell you something and I'm going to share. About four or five months ago, we were at a youth meeting and Johnny Tran shared his testimony. I don't know if any of you have heard that testimony, but if you haven't, grab him sometime and ask him to share that with you.

Because one thing you'll see is that even when he wasn't a believer, the hand of God was on him and protecting him and directing him to the point where he would come to know the Lord. It's a really exciting thing. Now, your story may not be as exciting as that.

Mine was simply, I see one thing. When I had graduated from college, I was in Georgia and I had an intent. I was going to, after I had graduated, I was going to come home to Pennsylvania, spend a week, say goodbye to my parents, go back to Georgia and hang out.

I mean, it was 1974. It was a recession year. I couldn't find a job.

I had lousy grades. I got through by the skin of my teeth. And I really had no purpose or vision in life.

And I just thought, well, I'll just go back to Georgia and live with these guys and see what happens. On the way home, this is so boring and unexciting, but my car broke down. And it was in West Virginia.

And basically, I was able to get it started and limp it home. It was about 70 miles from Pittsburgh at that time. And I got it home and it was terminal.

And my mother said, she said, you don't have any money, you don't have any job, you don't have anything. Why don't you just stay home and at least we'll feed you and we'll take care of you here. And I don't know, I just thought, well, that seemed like a good idea.

And we hauled into, we got a pickup truck and her and my aunt and my mother drove down to Georgia. That was a time when it wasn't fashionable to ride with your parents in a pickup truck, by the way. So we drove down to Georgia.

I graduated, I went through the ceremony and we picked up the stuff and went home. That little event changes the whole course of your life. I mean, from there, I moved to Cleveland.

I meet Paula. My life has changed completely. And I see that even, and I know you all have stories.

They may not be exciting and they may not be like, maybe like Johnny had. But the reality is, is that God was moving in your life to bring you to Him, even as a child or whatever. He was doing something and it's important for us to see that God was active.

I think it's very healthy to review some of these circumstances. And, you know, sometimes when you review them, you even see things you didn't even see before. You see little things, little pieces.

God was doing that. No man could do that. It was God that was arranging those things.

If someone would have said to me, I've been here six years, but eight or nine years ago, you'd be in Richmond. I'd say, you're nuts. I'd never been in, I passed through it going to the beach one time.

You know, but, but God is, God is different. He's sovereign and He moves. And it gives you a respect for Him that He's in control of your life and He's directing.

It also gives you, even though we go through difficult times and we struggle, it also gives you a desire. Hey, can I cooperate with this? Can I walk in this so that, so that I can have this working relationship with God? Well, let's go back to Moses. The first 40 years, from God's, from His standpoint, not a lot's happening.

He's being trained up in the house of Egypt. He's being educated. He's being given the skills that the, you know, that they were teaching him then.

Apparently, they were fairly sophisticated in certain areas. But his life was going to change radically. He got a little bit of glimpse of God.

Now, would God use the first 40 years? Absolutely. I mean, apparently, we, we, He learned some skills there that were valuable to Him. God would use that.

And in many different ways, He would use that even though perhaps He appeared to be silent during that time. Now, the second 40 years, almost like, you know, when you think about it, not a whole lot happens. At least we don't see recorded in Scripture a whole lot happening the second 40 years.

Would God, would God use that time? Well, certainly, He's using that time. And if nothing else, Moses is unlearning some of the things that he's, you know, I'm sure he was taught to be strong and mighty and powerful in all these techniques and all these things in Egypt. And a lot of that was being washed away.

I find something in Christian life, it's really perplexing, but how much unlearning we have to do as Christians. We're unlearning, you know, I picked up so much stuff that I have to unlearn. But, but I, but that's part of God's process.

He's teaching us. Now, from God's viewpoint, was His sovereignty in Moses' life any less during the first 40 years or the second 40 years or the third 40 years? Absolutely not. He was, He had His hand on that man and He was moving in his life.

But from Moses' standpoint, you would think that, you might look at it and say, I'm in the desert, nothing's happening. I'm just going to, I mean, basically, would it not occur to you that basically you were going to live here and die in the desert? And that was basically the end of your life. God protected you from Egypt, you know, or, you know, everything.

It had been washed out to the point that when God did reveal Himself, Moses wasn't even ready to accept that revelation. But God was working in his life. Now, is God any less working on your behalf right now? It might seem to be that all around you is dry or barren or you're in a difficult place.

But God is still working. And I will repeat this, is to actually be open to seeing the hand of God working. You might have to look a little bit and you might have to be sensitive because sometimes it's easy for all of us just to walk right over some of these things that God's doing and not connect the dots, so to speak.

But when we get a picture, we see that even in the midst of this, God may be doing some things. Now, sometimes it's dry and we can't see anything. And then we just have to kind of, you know, when all else to stand just to stand.

You know, I think of some of these things and I'm going to go back to this time in Ohio. The Lord used the Lord. There was a there was a crisis that we went through.

It was the I think the greatest crisis I've been through in my life. And, you know, interestingly, probably two years before I even understood any of this, God was putting some materials in our hands. David Wilkerson published these books called The Refiner's Fires, and he had been searching and they had compilations of Brother Sparks and some of the Brethren, Stoney and others.

And I was reading those things and and and I mean, I was reading them and there were some parts that puzzled me. But I was kind of incorporating them into the into the doctrine that existed around me, if you will. I remember seeing something from some of the writings of Gene Edwards, and I read some of that stuff.

And that just I didn't I couldn't grasp any of that. So and and at the church building where I was on the shelf ten feet from my office was the normal Christian life. It had been there for years and years and years.

And all at this time, all that was there. And I look back, you know, and and when the time was ripe and it was through this crisis that caused us to to to really just say, God, you know, I mean, I thought everything was coming apart. You know, it was like my life is it's got everything's just going to be wrecked.

And and things began to happen. And those books that were formerly I had never read normal Christian life prior to that. But but these sparks things and they started to become living.

They were living. I was I was amazed at what I was seeing that I did the stuff that I had underlined before didn't matter so much. It was the things that I didn't understand.

If you ever want to have an experience, read some of the stuff you underline in the past. And, you know, you might know some of that stuff. I wonder what I was even thinking about.

But but see, and I don't mean please understand. I use these personal examples, but I've made enough mistakes and I've walked over God's sovereignty. And I've but it's it's that I think it's it's so important to be sensitive to these things that God's working.

Because when you start to see that, you see, even years before he was showing me this, he had already set the stages in place. Now, I'm telling you, he's doing that right now. I know he's doing that right now.

In all of us, he's doing that. He has he's setting the stages. And what's his purpose? Well, let's see.

There's two things from a standpoint that God is at work in our lives. And because of because of what Christ did for us in the Holy Spirit, we have this. I mean, the Holy Spirit is actively working to bring us into the purposes of God or better yet, to bring us to Christ, to draw us near to Christ.

We have the spirit of Christ inside of us, and the Holy Spirit is willing us to our Lord in not only just in in an understanding, but in a practical, realistic way that we can experience him. Now, you have all had experiences with God. Some of them are very, very exciting, and some of them are maybe maybe boring like mine.

But nonetheless, they're experiences. And God has worked in your life. And when you're able to look at these things and see that, you know, behind my life, God is actively at work.

It does something to you. It encourages you that that the Lord knows where we're at. Now, I remember and I could if we were to take time and I were to say, let's just share some experiences, there would be we could all be we'd be stimulated.

You know how God is working and what he's doing and how this happened and this and that. And I just remember something, even at the beginning of of this, when I come here and I've heard people share about the assembly. Would anybody not say that God was working in the early days of this assembly? I mean, the Lord was moving.

I mean, you hear the testimony. I've heard Llewellyn talk about it. I've heard other brothers share about it.

He was moving sovereignly. Nobody would deny that. I say to you, he's moving sovereignly right now.

He's still moving sovereignly in our midst. No less now. We may be in a more difficult point.

We may be in more difficult circumstances. We may not see it as much, but the Lord himself is moving sovereignly. And I think it behooves us to be open and watchful to see how he's moving.

My point is this. Three R's. Remember.

Remember what God has done. Rehearse. I really think there's I have that's been something that I've talked to my family.

I mean, we try to see how God's working and how he's moving when we have these circumstances. Not that we understand it. And you can't presuppose what God's going to do in the future.

But when you see him move, one thing it does to you, it says, you know, he's real. He is. He's directing.

He's in control. I may be in a barren time and I may be I may be grouchy or frustrated or whatever. Nonetheless, God's working.

God is at work in you rehearse. I really believe there's a lot of value in brothers and sisters sharing together. You know, when you talk and it seems to me mostly more on one on one or where you're talking and you're sharing about what the Lord's doing.

It encourages me. I've heard some stories recently that have encouraged me very greatly that God is moving. Isn't that so? I mean, I know it's it's it's something when it happens to you.

Obviously, it has a greater import, but it's also an encouragement when you hear someone tells you their story and he says, I was doing this or and God, God did something. He changed my heart or he he intervened on my behalf or he did this. I mean, that's exciting.

That's that's that's a living God who's working. And that that says to me is that that says, you know, there I really do want to know this God more. He's he's real.

He's he's alive. You know, I focus on this because it strengthens me and and and I see the hand of God and in some trying and possible, perhaps circumstances. Now, I'm going to share you another little story.

My my sister and her husband, this is I can't get into this detail, but they're they're meeting with the believers in the Beaver Falls Fellowship. That's a story in itself. There's so much that God has done to prepare them.

And and and but there was a there the Beaver Falls Fellowship has been really trying to reach out to the to the folks in the city. There has been real racial tensions. It's a it's a small town west of Pittsburgh.

And it used to be fairly prosperous during the steel mill days when all the you know, when all the production was going. But it's kind of a difficult time and there's racial tensions and they've been reaching out. And, you know, it wasn't a couple but a month ago, maybe a little longer.

This one young man, this young black man who has been going, his name is Marvis. And they were staying there for a weekend and he called and there were he was calling on the phone, talking to Greco's and there's gunshots coming. His aunt had just got shot in the back.

And there was this incredible I mean, you know, they were trying to figure out what to do. The police had blocked off the place and and and it was a pretty tense time. And a lot of the believers were there because they were having kind of they were they had been gathering together.

So they were praying. And as it turns out, as it turns out, the Lord, the Lord saved this woman. The bullet basically grazed off her back and didn't penetrate.

And she was fine. Now, what what I what I see is a couple of things is I want to share you the story. And you know how stories go.

They can get embellished as you go along. I try to be as faithful as I can. But this young man was baptized and he gave his testimony.

And basically, he said, I think I how old is he? Twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, maybe. But he it was it was somewhat difficult and he was taking some difficulty from from his friends and that to be meeting with these believers. And he said, one of the things that that turned it and my sister had said is that he went up to Nick Greco, who is about nine or ten years old or seven.

OK. And he said to him, he said to him, Nick, he says, look at my hand. He says, what's the difference between my hand and yours? And Nick said to him, what do you think I am, stupid? Your hand is bigger than mine.

Now, that did something to that young man that was powerful. It opened him up and his his aunt went to the meeting and testified and said, you know, I think the Lord's after she had been shot near on the back. She says, I think the Lord's trying to get my attention.

So that's that's easier. We can laugh about that. It's not so funny.

But but you understand what I'm saying is that God is sovereignly moving. And and these are the things they have labored for years. And and the one brother has a ministry there where they minister to people.

And and and perhaps it seemed like it was dry or barren. But who knows what the Lord can do, who can limit God's potential and what he wants to do and how he wants to bring reconciliation and healing. I mean, we could.

So what I'm trying to say is that it's exciting. But there were a lot of years where it didn't seem like one thing it was happening and maybe and it may still be a lot of years. But you know what? Regardless of the number of years, God is actively at work.

He's working in their lives and he's doing something just like he's working in your life today. Remember, rehearse and then finally rejoice. Rejoice in what God's doing.

Rejoice because God is bigger than your circumstances. You know, I remember something we used to say when I went after we had gotten saved. We're in the Catholic Church.

And there was a saying that coincidences are small miracles where God chose to remain anonymous. Did you get that? It's just it's like I mean, that may be. And I remember this other brother saying to me years ago, he says, you know, God does more things by accident than on purpose.

I think, I mean, we may not have that theologically correct, but there's a sense that this sovereignty of God that he's working on our behalf. Now, even if it was a long time ago, remember what God's done in your life. He hasn't brought you this far.

He didn't bring us out this far to take us back again. He brought us out to bring us in to the promised land. And I believe that that from our perspective is that we need to learn how to cooperate with God to further, if you will, recognize his sovereignty.

I really think we can hinder God's sovereignty. I think we can delay God's sovereignty. I think he still works on our behalf, but we in our own stubbornness or, you know, we can we can hinder that.

I want to look at a little bit at the children of Israel. Now, let's, was God moving sovereignly in the children of Israel when they had seen from the time of the plagues to the Passover to the Red Sea to being in the promised land? Who can deny that God was moving in their lives? Who can deny that? I mean, they were seeing things that we've never seen. They, I mean, tell me that wouldn't do something to you when you wake up one morning and every firstborn of Egypt's dead and your child's still alive because you put blood over the door.

I would have to do something or it's dark in it's dark in wherever and in Goshen, there's light. I mean, you have to be putting some of these together and saying God is working. But what was happening? What was happening? I see is that that they were focusing on the circumstances.

And I want to read you a scripture. They were grumbling and complaining. And by virtue of seeing all that, they were really missing, they were missing some of the beauty of what God was doing.

Listen to this, Numbers 14, 22 to 24. Surely all the men who have seen my glory and my signs, which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not listened to my voice. I, you know, I see that and I say, I'm glad that that number isn't cast in concrete because for me to have to put 10,000 or something.

But the reality is, is that they saw something mighty. They saw something that few people had ever seen before or even seen since. And instead of drawing near to God, they were complaining.

They were complaining against Moses. They were complaining against God. They were saying, you brought me out here to kill me.

Now, imagine that. Now, I mean, don't think we're not capable of doing that. We are capable of doing that.

But see, I think there's a distinct difference in the phrase, you brought us out in the desert to kill us versus, Lord, if you don't act on our behalf, we're going to perish. I mean, where are we going to go? You brought

us here. We're I mean, if you're thirsty, you're desperate.

If you're hungry, you can get desperate. But if you it's the approach, it's to say, God, now, did he not? What if you were to look back at the time in the wilderness where there wasn't water? Did he part the Red Sea? Did he do this? Did he do that? Did he do that? Is water, is anything too difficult for the Lord? At least allow the room for the possibility of God to move rather than to complain or to grumble. And I think that that would be, you know, to say we're real and maybe we even stumble and grumble, you know, but to repent and say, Lord, you're sovereign.

You didn't. You have great desires for us. You put us in Christ.

You have a wonderful inheritance for us. You're our hope of glory. I think the way that we approach this will make a big difference.

See, Joshua and Caleb got stronger and stronger and stronger. Now, interestingly, what did Israel see when they when they spied the land? Giants. What did Joshua and Caleb see? Fruit, land of milk and honey.

And he and they even said, you know what, God's removed the protection from those people. There'll be nothing in our sight because God's taken his covering over them. Now, I can tell you that that didn't just happen because they had a motivational meeting the night before.

It was a history with God. It wasn't someone that pumped them up and said, OK, now we're going to believe. OK, give me a B or something.

You know, it was no, it was it was they had had a history with God and he was working through them. And and they they saw it differently. It was the same events that the children of Israel saw that Joshua and Caleb saw.

They persisted in unbelief. They believed they entered. They didn't enter.

I mean, and that's, you know, I think the persisting is the is the key word here, because who among us hasn't complained or grumbled or griped or moaned or any other word? I mean, we're all capable of doing that. But we and we know that God's merciful. I don't want to I'm not putting I remember, man, another story is, you know, I heard the story of Dathan and Abiram and I, you know, I we were almost afraid to leave to be like you're Dathan and Abiram and you're going to thwart the testimony of God.

You know, and I don't I don't no fear in that is just to say that from our standpoint, if it just it puts this barricade up from us really seeing and receiving what the Lord wants to do. Now, see, it's easy to look at them. But I mean, we say I want to say something to you.

There's no boss. There's no spouse. There's no church assembly or church leader or there's no son, daughter.

There's no put in whatever blank you want. You fill it in neighbor, dog, cat, whatever. They can thwart the sovereignty of God from working in our lives.

It cannot do it. It cannot happen because the scripture tells us even if you're persecuted, God says you're blessed. Even if you're put in a place where somebody limits you, God's going to bring you into a large place.

So even when the circumstances are trying, if you are able to see God's hand through that, he has something for you that's going to be very, very pleasant. I mean, there's going to be something that he's going to bring you into. I'm not saying it's going to happen in a quick fashion.

Not saying I don't know God's timing, but I know this is that is that even if not just the fact that we respond rightly, God will do something in us. I could say to this that that whenever you take God's direction and do what he has for you, you're going to spiritually prosper. I can't I can't address the physical circumstances.

I just don't have that light. But I see the scripture saying that that really where God wants us to do is to is that when we have these circumstances and all these circumstances are different. But where should we be going? It's not to say that God isn't going to change your circumstances or move you out.

But here's where we should be going. Vertical. Our tendency is to go horizontal.

And I believe that was the difference between Joshua and Caleb and the children of Israel is they went vertical and they began to get life out of these difficult circumstances and saw God move. The children of Israel went horizontal and all they saw was death, that God was going to kill them. And, you know, this miserable, wretched manna he gave us, you know, and so I really see, you know, some of you have seen that video, the pineapple story.

If you haven't, I have that. It's a it's a wonderful video about this missionary in Erie and Jaya who goes through these circumstances that he goes to be a missionary and the Lord deals with him. And he he makes this classic statement.

He says, I could be a good missionary if it wasn't for you people. And and and and really, because these these people that he dealt with, they they had a they were thieves. They were chronic thieves and they stole everything from him and it got him so mad and frustrated.

And I mean, he was he almost had a nervous breakdown over it until he began to see God, the sovereignty of God and yield. And boy, I mean, all kinds of things happen when when he when that happens. But look at the circumstances.

Could you imagine a worse situation to be brought up in a in a in a in a religious atmosphere where the where the supposed men of God are committing adultery, where the leader is pretty much he talks about God, but he's pretty much indifferent. Man, I mean, what kind of a what kind of a who would want to put their that's where Samuel was, was that's where he grew up. OK, how about how about where there's idols all around and and, you know, idols and everything all, you know, you're even given a foreign name.

And you think, man, that's where Daniel was was was brought. They prospered in those environments. I don't say we actively seek that.

But what the point is, is that if God is sovereignly moving, if we learn to cooperate in his moving, I believe that we're going to prosper. The other thing is, is it like look at Saul and David, you know, David, his life is at stake and he could take a number of different courses. But because, you know, he I don't think he did everything right, to be honest with you.

But because he he had an intention of going towards God, the Lord did mighty things on his behalf. Now, like Caleb and Joshua, it's important to take a different approach. And I think if we take a different approach in this area, we'll see some powerful transactions.

And I want to share a couple of things. Also, there's two other areas before we close. And I'll do this very quickly is I think is that as we are sensitive, if you see the Lord moving in your life, that does do something to you.

And and when you're able to express faith, faith delights God. It's like to me, this is a simplified expression, but it's like I don't know how to love God so much. I can't see him.

I mean, I don't I can I can I have a better grasp of love going horizontally. And I almost think they're the same thing. And if faith goes vertically, it's that, Lord, I trust you.

I, I, I, I give you, you know, and it's it's it's it seems to me that that's what stimulates the heart of God and and and draws us closer together. It's real practical. There may be areas that God is speaking in your life and and and he's just he's just really looking for you.

He's he's there's been circumstances or whatever. And he's speaking. He's just looking for you to take a step and say, Lord, for your sake, I'll do this, whatever that may be.

I'm not going to put anything on. But, you know, I just tell you some personal things as I've had to go back because of the life that I lived before I was a believer. I've had to go back and do a lot of reconciling and restoring.

And those were some those were some hard circumstances. But I found something is those turned out to be some of the most incredible experiences that I had. I mean, I had experiences that where I thought people were going to just turn me upside down and chew me out.

And and they they were so tender and forgiving and kind and basically what I had done. And I say that even in any of this, as we as we're willing to say to take the step, I don't want to do this. Lord, it's against I don't like doing this.

This is not me, but for your sake. And I'm not saying go out on your own strength. We can't do anything on our own.

But, you know, if the Lord's tugging your heart, if he's bringing things up and if he's doing that, if you're willing to go out and say, for your sake, Lord, and you make restitution or you give or you do this or you do that or you forgive or you reconcile or you whatever, that you see something pretty mighty. The hand of God moving. Finally, the last thing is God in his sovereignty.

It's not only a overarching sovereignty, but God arranges circumstances in our lives. And he gives us these things. I call them divine.

I mean, you've heard that term divine appointments. I want to share with you a couple of things real quick. Now, we a month ago, Paul and I had gone to to Charlotte.

We were we were there was a speaker there, this author who had written books that they were really Christ centered books and they had ministered to us over the years. We've read them multiple times and we've kept up with this man and his ministry. And he was speaking in this Baptist church in Charlotte.

And we have friends down there. So we decided to go. And he was supposed to be there on Sunday.

And we ended up going to the meeting. And, you know, we were handed the program and I looked in the program and the pastor was of that church was scheduled to speak. I thought, you know, something's wrong.

You know, we find out that the man who was scheduled had had a heart attack and he wasn't able to come. He had had open heart surgery. Well, of all this, the music minister there came and asked us and basically said, you know, he apologized.

He says, we tried to get the word out and we put it on the local radio stations and what have you. And and I said, you know, that's that's no problem. And he said, he says, how did so we just felt like, well, I said to Paul, I says, you know, maybe God has something in store.

I don't I don't know, but maybe it was we just missed it. Whatever it was just to be a weekend, you know. And and at the end of that meeting and he he came back and he he started talking to us about how did you know this brother that wrote these books? And I just shared, you know, we had read those and we were really appreciative of the the easy manner in which he had portrayed his walk with Christ and how he he saw Christ as his life.

And and he he said, we started talking. He says, do you want to go to lunch? And I thought, you know, I just I didn't want to presume or didn't want to be open. And I asked Paul and as it turned out, his wife was going home and that afternoon and he was he he's he had requirements to be at the church building that day.

So we end up going to lunch and he pours out his heart of his struggles. And his struggles are were similar, perhaps to ours in a different way. But but he he had been to a point where he was in such depression that he had separated from his wife.

And and then he saw Christ and the Lord had just brought him out and restored their marriage. And and he was seeing Christ and where he was in this circumstance. Now, it was it wasn't Christ really as life isn't wasn't being upheld.

And and so we we talked and we went back to the the church building and he he wrote a couple of songs and we sang these songs. And we ended up just sitting there for a couple hours and worshiping with this man. And and it was like I was thinking, you know, this is kind of one of these things where the Lord does something beyond what you understand.

So happens that where we were staying with these friends, he lived on the other part of town, about thirty five, thirty miles away or whatever. And we went the next day and we met his wife and his family. And there was this this instant fellowship.

You know, it was like he made this statement. And it and it really it really amazed me because he said, you know, 24 hours ago, I didn't even know you. You know, we didn't even know you existed.

And and and it wasn't like it was like for whatever reason, God arranged this. And we were just kind of there. And and and from his perspective, he said that we really helped him.

But but I tell you something, he helped us much more because, you know, you go through these times and you're discouraged or you may be down. And and you see, Lord, you know, I didn't even understand this. I didn't know what was going on.

But you had something and we've shared back and forth. We've emailed and I'm sure this relationship, I believe that it's going to continue because something was established there by the hand of God. And to me, that was so exciting because it just gives me this perspective again is that, Lord, we need to be expectant, not it's not going to happen all the time.

I go through times where nothing happens, but to be at least expectant. And when you're expectant, you see things, you see things. I could if it weren't for time, I could share with you stories of what's happening.

And, you know, Laura shared something that we shared something and even Samuel and things that, you know, now I'm trying to be tuned into this to say, Lord, where this might go right by me to say, Lord, you are working, you are doing something. It's real. You're real.

And and I want to I'm stubborn and I can be resistant, but I really do want to learn how to walk with you. And so that's the that's the this message is that I just want to say something to you all is God is sovereign in your life. He's working actively, whether it's dry, barren, difficult, whatever.

He's moving in your life. He's arranging for he he the Lord has good for you. He has plans for you for good.

He wants to work in your life. He wants you to walk with him in such a way that life becomes an adventure. I've just seen things about different encounters that we've had that were they're fairly out of the ordinary.

And I'm just watching them that the Lord wants to he might want to move in these people's lives. There's a bunch there's a few of them going on, you know, they may not materialize. But it's kind of exciting because it's like, Lord, you're doing the work.

I just have to be open. I go on my daily routine and I do these things. But if I'm open, I may see the hand of God.

And when I see the hand of God, you can't have a revelation from God and not be delighted when you see him. He even if it's a conviction, the end of it will be delight because he's cleansing something from you. That's been that's been baggage.

So I hope that that's an encouragement. I trust that we'll see that, that the Lord, he's real to us. He's moving actively.

So what I wanted to do in ending, there's a little song, a little chorus that I'd like to sing. And this will be like the sovereignty of God, me singing because it's, I mean, Louise is going to come up and help me with this. But this song, I really didn't have this intention.

But this morning I was, I think, shaving or something. And this song came to my mind. And I think it's just do any of you know this song? He is able.

Oh, good. So you can sing it if you know it. Would you come up, please? And would you play it through one time, Laura?

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