

“But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.” (Job 23:13.) “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan. 4:34-35.)

There is an army in heaven, what do you think of that? The Sovereignty of God, by Authur W. Pink is a book we have used for many years. Arthur W. Pink was one of the most prolific Christian writers of the 20th century. He maintained a monthly magazine called Studies in the Scriptures, written almost solely by his own pen for thirty years, wherein you get glimpses of his various pastorates and wide travels. He was born in Nottingham in 1886 and preached his first sermon there in about 1908. He also ministered in the United States and Australia, and in the 1930's he returned to his country and lived out his days, greatly discouraged after dealing with a little church in Kentucky. He died in the Island Of Lewis (In Scotland) on July 15, 1952, just after mom and I got married. There is now a book, The Life of Arthur W. Pink by Iain H. Murray.

“And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain. And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all. But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do?” (Num. 23:18-26)

“Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.” (1 Chron. 29:11)

The “Sovereignty of God” is an expression that once was generally understood. It was a phrase commonly used in religious literature. It was a theme frequently expounded in the pulpit. But no more. It was a truth which brought comfort to many hearts, and gave virility and stability to Christian character. But, today, to make mention of God's sovereignty is, in most quarters, to speak in an unknown tongue, and it is a universally hated doctrine of scripture. Were we to announce from the average pulpit that the subject of our discourse would be the Sovereignty of God, it would sound very much as though we had borrowed a phrase from one of the dead languages. Alas! that it should be so. Alas! that the doctrine which is the key to history, the interpreter of Providence, the warp and woof of Scripture, and the foundation of Christian theology, should be so sadly neglected and so little understood. The Sovereignty of God!

What do we mean by this expression? We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the Godhood of God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that God is God! To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Most High, ***“doing according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou?”*** (Dan. 4:35.) To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purposes, or resist His will. ***“But our God is in the heaven;; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”*** (Ps. 115:3.)

“Keep silence, all created things, And wait your Maker’s nod; My soul stands trembling while she sings The honors of her God. Life, death and hell, and worlds unknown Hang on this firm decree; He sits on no precarious throne, Nor borrows leave to be. Chained to his throne, a volume lies, With all the fates of men. With every angel’s form and size, Drawn by the Eternal pen. His providence unfolds the book, And makes his counsels shine; Each opening leaf, and every stroke, Fulfills some deep design. Here he exalts neglected worms To scepters and a crown; And there the following page he turns, And treads the monarch down. Not Gabriel asks the reason why, Nor God the reason gives; Nor dares the favorite angel pry Between the folded leaves. My God, I would not long to see My fate with curious eyes, What gloomy lines are writ for me, Or what bright scenes may rise. In thy fair book of life and grace, O may I find my name Recorded in some humble place, Beneath my Lord the Lamb!” (Isaac Watts)

To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is ***“The Governor among the nations,”*** (Ps. 22:28), setting up kingdoms, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as pleaseth Him best. Appointing whom He will to accomplish such matters, and finding His servants right in the middle of it all.

“Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.”(Jer. 1:9,10.)

“And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.”(Eze. 2:1-10.)

I love you.

Amen.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26)

At Lk. 2:25, Simeon called Jesus the consolation of Israel. When He was on earth, He must have been the consolation of all those who were privileged to be his companions. We can imagine how readily his disciples ran to Christ to tell Him of their griefs, and how sweetly He spoke to them, bidding their fears be gone. Like children, they would consider Him as their Father; and to Him every want, every groan, every sorrow, every agony, would at once be carried; and He, like a wise physician, had a balm for every wound; and would dispense some mighty remedy to allay all the fever of their troubles. How excellent it would have been to have lived with Christ. But now He was about to die. Great prophecies were to be fulfilled; and great purposes were to be answered; and therefore Jesus must go. “...*It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you;*”(John 16:7)

The Comforter that His disciples had come to rely upon was to go. But hear how kindly Jesus speaks: “*I will not leave you comfortless...I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.*” (John 14:16-18) Dwelling in them (and us) forever. He would not desert his children, and leave them fatherless. Even though He had a mighty mission which filled His heart and hand; so much to perform — so much to suffer, that we might suppose His whole soul would be focused upon the sufferings to be endured. Yet before He left, He gave soothing words of comfort; That He will send them (and us) another Comforter — one who shall be just what He has been, yea, even more; who shall console us in our sorrows, remove our doubts, comfort us in our afflictions, and stand as His shepherd on earth, to do that which He would have done had He tarried with us.

The Holy Ghost as the Comforter is the subject of this talk – a few remarks on differing translations of the word that the 1611 Authorized Version renders as ‘Comforter’ may help further illuminate his character. The Greek word for ‘Comforter,’ left wholly without translation, is ‘Paraclete:’ “*But the Paraclete, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*” (John 14:26) Although this word ‘Paraclete’ has as its most common meaning ‘Comforter,’ it has two other meanings, which each bear mention.

The Greek ‘Paraclete’ is sometimes rendered *monitor* or *instructor*. “*I will send you another monitor, another teacher.*” Jesus Christ had been the official teacher of His saints while on earth. They called no man Rabbi except Christ; they learned their doctrines directly from the lips of Him who had perfect knowledge. When Christ was to leave, where shall they find the great infallible teacher? Would Christ set up a pope at Rome, to whom they (and we) would go, and who would be their (and our) infallible oracle? Christ said no such thing. He is the infallible paraclete, or teacher, and when He is gone, He would send them (and us) another teacher, and He shall be the person who is to explain Scripture; and shall make them (and us) understand what they (and we) could not discover, had it not been for his influence.

No man ever learns anything aright, unless he is taught of the Spirit. There is no doctrine of the Bible which can be safely, thoroughly, and truly learned, except by the agency of the one

authoritative teacher. There are no infallible commentators; no man teaches with infallibility; but the Great Teacher, who shall instruct us, the sons of God, and shall make us wise to understand all things - He is *the* Teacher. It matters not what this man or that man says; God's children rest on no man's boasting authority, and will not be carried away with the craftiness of men, or sleight of words. The authoritative oracle is the Holy Ghost resting in the hearts of his children.

Frequently, 'paraclete' means *advocate*. The Holy Ghost can be said to be such, in that he is an advocate *on earth* to plead against the enemies of the cross. How was it that Paul could so ably plead before Felix and Agrippa? How was it that the Apostles stood, not at all awed, before the magistrates, and confessed their Lord? From age to age, God's ministers have been made fearless as lions and their words like the language of God - but how? It was not the man who pleaded, but it was God the Holy Ghost pleading through him. The Holy Ghost is the great counsellor who teaches us how to advocate his cause aright.

The Holy Ghost is also the advocate *in men's hearts*. We, who are the advocates of the truth, are often very poor pleaders; we spoil our cause by the words we use; but mercifully, the brief is in the hand of a special pleader, who will advocate successfully, and overcome the sinner's opposition. Do we know of even once that he has failed? God has, in our hearts, convinced us of sin; the Holy Ghost has proven our guilt to us; he has successfully advocated Christ's righteousness. And he has fetched hell's drum and made it sound about our ears, convincing us of the judgment to come.

The Holy Ghost also advocates *our cause with Jesus Christ*, with groanings that cannot be uttered. We wish to speak, but the very desire chains our tongues. We wish to pray, but the fervency of our feeling, deep within our hearts, curbs our language. There is a groaning within that cannot be uttered. Who can utter that groaning? Who can understand it, and who can put it into heavenly language, and utter it in a pristine, celestial tongue, so that Christ can hear it? God the Holy Spirit; he advocates our cause with Christ, and then Christ advocates it with his Father. He is the advocate who maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered.

Now we come to the translated word of the 1611 Authorized Version - 'Paraclete' as '*Comforter*.' Let us examine some characteristics of the Comforter that are undergirded by scriptural authority and by the experiences of our own hearts.

First, that the Holy Ghost is a very **loving** Comforter. We are in distress, and need consolation. Some passer-by hears of our sorrow and essays to cheer us; he speaks soothing words, but he loves us not; he is a stranger; he knows us not at all; he has only come in to try his skill. And what is the consequence? His words run over us like oil upon a slab of marble— they do not break our grief, because he has no love for us. But let someone who loves us dear as his own life, come and plead with us, then his words are music; he knows the password of the doors of our hearts, and our ears are attentive to every word. There is a voice in love, it speaks a language of its own; idiom cannot mimic, nor can wisdom imitate, neither can oration attain unto it. The love of God alone reaches the mourning heart. How much does the Holy Spirit love a saint? He has loved us from the council halls of eternity, and he still shall love us; surely he is the person to comfort us in our distress, because he loves.

Second, he is a **faithful** Comforter. How bitter, to have a friend turn from us in our distress, or to have one who loves in prosperity, forsake us in the dark day of our trouble; but such is not the Holy Spirit. He ever loves, and loves even to the end — a faithful Comforter. Now in trouble, a while ago we found him a sweet and loving Comforter; we obtained relief from him when others were but broken cisterns; he sheltered us in his bosom. Why would we distrust him now? Away with our fears; for he is a faithful Comforter. We may say; “I have distresses greater than you can conceive of; wave upon wave rolls over me, leaving me breathless.” He will be faithful to His promise. Or we may say, “I have sinned.” Yes we have, but sin cannot sever us from his love; he loves us still, and comforts us faithfully.

Third, he is an **unwearied** Comforter. Sometimes we meet a person in distress, but with starts and stops, we may find the source of distress quite a moving target, and become, through the effort, tired and despairing ourselves. We meet with persons whom, for the time, it is impossible to comfort. “O, I am the man,” say they, “that has seen affliction; pity me, pity me, O, my friends;” and the more we try to comfort such people, the worse they get at that hour; and, therefore, out of all heart, we leave them to wander alone among the tombs of their former joys. But the Holy Ghost is never out of heart with those whom he wishes to comfort. He pursues us; and though we say in our weakness and unbelief that we will not be comforted, he says we *shall* be, and when he has said, he does it; he is not to be wearied by all our sins, neither by all our murmurings.

Fourth, the Holy Ghost is a **wise** Comforter. Job had comforters, and he spoke the truth when he said, “**Miserable comforters are ye all.**” (Job 16:2) However wise they thought themselves, they could be of no comfort, not finding the cause of his grief and sorrow. They thought he was not really a child of God — that he was self-righteous, giving him the wrong diagnosis. It is a bad case when the doctor mistakes a disease and prescribes the wrong treatment, and so perhaps kills the patient. Sometimes, when we go and visit people, we mistake their disease; we want to comfort them on this point, whereas they do not require any such comfort at all there, and would be better left alone, than spoiled by such unwise comforters as we, at times, are. But the Holy Spirit is wise! He takes the soul, lays it on the table, dissects it in a moment, finds out the root of the matter, sees where the complaint is, and applies the knife where something must be taken away, or puts a plaster where the sore is; and he never mistakes.

Fifth, he is a **safe** Comforter. All comfort is not safe. Many have been ruined by the cry of “**peace, peace,**” when there is no peace; hearing gentle things, when they ought to be stirred to the quick. Satan will sometimes come to men’s souls as a false comforter, but the Holy Spirit’s comfort is safe — we may drink this cup of consolation to the bottom, as there is nothing in it to intoxicate or ruin. It is safe. *Sixth*, he is always a **successful** Comforter, never attempting that which he cannot accomplish. *Finally*, he is an **ever-present** Comforter. Our Comforter dwells within us; the earnest of our inheritance - and when we need comfort in our distress, the word is near to us; it is in our mouths, and in our hearts. The Holy Spirit is an ever-present help in time of trouble. Christ said:

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”(John 14:16-17)

I love you. Amen.