



Ministry in the Will of God Part 2

March 1, 2026 Romans 15:22-33

(Video 40:42; Audio 17:14)

I'd like you to turn, in the book of Romans, to Romans 15. Romans 15. I said that I would repeat this passage of scripture to reorient you to it one more time again because we didn't get to it before we celebrated the Lords table and the abbreviated time we had last week. The focal point of our passage this week and for a week or so still to come is Romans 15 verses 20, really 22 to 33. Let me read it for you just to orient you to the passage one more time. In verse 22, I'll pick up there, ***For this reason...*** for what reason? Paul has just told us that God laid upon him His will that he would minister to the Gentiles. He wanted to go to a place where another man's foundation had not been laid, meaning what? It's okay to build on another man's foundation, but he was called to take new ground, to plant new churches, to lead the God, take the gospel, I should say, to the Gentiles. And he wanted to go to Gentile regions with the gospel, what he was specifically called to do. So he says in verse 22, ***For this reason I have often been hindered from coming to you;...*** Hindered how so? Because he was ministering the gospel where he was and yet he wants to get to Rome. ***...but now with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain- for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while- but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their,*** the Jews, ***spiritual things, they are indebted,*** they, the Gentiles, are indebted to ***minister to them,*** the Jews, ***also in material things. Therefore, when I have finished this and have put my seal on this fruit***



of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

You read that and you say, okay, so what? What possible bearing could that be on my life? It's just a series of disjointed statements about Paul's plans. Right? Wrong. Many passages of Scripture, as we said before, have explicit teaching. Do this, don't do that, go here, go there, whatever. This has implicit teaching. And when you start dealing into the details of it, you see why the Spirit of God put this in sacred Scripture for our instruction.

Now a key passage, as you know, a key phrase is in verse 32. He uses that phrase, **by the will of God**. And we have been looking at what it means, what are the character qualities of one who ministers in the will of God. Don't check me out because I said minister. Everybody in this building that knows Christ is a minister. You have a ministry of reconciliation, sharing the gospel with the lost. You have a ministry of encouragement, stimulating believers within the family of God to love and good deeds. And we've done that ad nauseum, but I bring that to your memory. So what does it mean to minister in the will of God? What does it look like? Because I want to make sure I'm in the very center of the will of God. Why? Because the most safest, comfortable, greatest place to be is the place of maximized blessing. And that is in the center of the will of God.



We started out last time, a couple of times ago, maybe by saying that one key aspect of knowing you're in the center of the will of God is sensing God's good pleasure in what you're doing. Knowing that you are doing exactly what God has called you to do. How do I know? Number one, be in prayer for it. Number two, we're going to see a great aspect of that coming up today in just a moment.

But we saw that Paul was a man who ministered with precision. He had focus, just like the Lord Jesus Christ. He didn't try to be all things to all people. He had, look at the Lord Jesus Christ. He had a narrow window of time, three years. He had a narrow geographical area, that little area around the environs of Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and Galilee and that area of the world right there. He had a narrow focus, the kingdom of God. He had a narrow message, repent and believe, the gospel, the narrow way. Remember, we talked about all that. He had a narrow group of people, small, 12. One was even a traitor. He focused on three, even of those. And His focus, His precision, what's He say on the cross? It's finished, it's finished, it's done. He didn't heal everybody. He didn't preach to everybody. He only came to do the will of the Father. Ministry, to be effective and to be in the will of God, needs to be focused, needs to be precise. And that was definitely key in Paul's mindset.

But now he comes to a second character quality, if you will, and that is the one I really wanted to get to today. And I was telling some people before our worship time started this morning, it's amazing how you can be in this kind of a passage of Scripture, if you will, working through and, well, Communion Sunday or this or whatever and time delays. Don't let you get to a particular point or topic you were going to get to until the following week. And it's amazing to me how many times when that happens, world events, events in our personal life, events in the life of our church, other things that are happening seem to line up to where it is exactly what we need to look at to instruct our hearts, to comfort our hearts, to encourage our souls,



and what we're dealing with in life. And that is exactly what happened today. How so? Because another character quality of one who ministers and knows they're ministering in the will of God is they **have a security, a trust, a confidence, an assurance, get this, on the providence of God.** On the providence of God in your life.

Well, where are you getting that? Verse 22, ***for this reason, I have often been***, there's a key word, ***hindered from coming to you.*** *Hindered*, it's a very interesting verb. *Egkoptō* [G1465], *Egkoptō* in the Greek. It literally means to cut out or to cut in. It has the, that idea, etymology, it's sort of a fortress. And the best non-biblical usage of the word is that, you remember in feudal days, you remember you used to see, you know, knights in shining armor, so to speak, and they would have castles. And around castles, they would cut a trench, a moat. And this word actually means to cut a trench across in order to bar access or to hinder or to delay. And of course, that's exactly why they built moats around castles, was to hinder the attack on the fortress. That is exactly what this word means. It means to cut a deep trench. And so what he's really saying, sort of a Politan paraphrase is: *you know, Paul says, I've always seemed to have a big trench in the way that prevented me from coming to you.* As a matter of fact, it's in an imperfect tense there. It means it's a continual type of hindrance. It's a continual type of big trench. And it's also in the passive voice. It means it's happening to him by another outside force. And we know that outside voice is God. One commentator paraphrases it this way: *I've wanted to come for a long time. I've wanted to be with you for a long time. Behind that, I've wanted to be with you and beyond you to go to Spain for a long time. But God has always cut a big trench in my way and filled it with my ministry to the Gentiles. So I've never been able to get past that.* That's what's running behind that phrase, *hindered* there.

Now, again, it leads into a concept of the providence of God. Go to Acts 16. Acts 16. Let's see a little bit of how this providence works. Go back to the book of Acts, chapter 16. And I want



you to take a specific reference in verse 6. Verse 6. Paul is on his missionary journeys. He's traveling, okay? In verse 6, it says, **and they**, Luke is writing this, they **passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia**; How did the Holy Spirit do that? I don't have a clue. We don't know. Scripture doesn't tell us. But he was forbidden to preach the word in Asia, okay? Verse 7, **and when they had come to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, And the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them**; By the way, notice, Holy Spirit, Spirit of Jesus, same thing. How did the Spirit of Jesus not permit them? Answer, I don't know. It doesn't tell us, okay? Obviously, though, God was sovereignly working. **and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas**. Now watch this. You're about to read a passage of Scripture that is the turning point of world history. This is referred to by theologians as the Macedonian vision. Verse 9. **And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: A certain man of Macedonia**, what's that? That's Greece, okay? **was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."** He's trying to go east. This guy is saying, no, come west. Come this way. And Paul obeys the vision because he was hindered from going to those other places. And he follows this vision to go to Macedonia. Verse 10. **And when he had seen the vision, immediately we**, Luke's included, **sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them**. Verses 9 and 10. You need to mark that in the margin of your Bible. That is a turning point in world history. Why? If the guy in Macedonia, the vision, if you will, from the Lord doesn't say, hey, Paul, come this way. Come to Greece. Come to, towards France. Come towards Italy. Come towards Spain, ultimately. Come towards England. Come towards Western Europe. He was going to go to the Middle East, the other direction, if you will. And if, but what? The gospel goes west instead of east at that point. Well, so what? Friends, bombs might be raining down today on the United States instead of, from Iran, instead of vice versa.



If the world order had been, had totally been changed, the gospel goes west. And then what ultimately happens? Fifteen, sixteen hundred years later, people from that area of Europe cross the Atlantic, and they bring the gospel, if you will, to the shores of North America. And the gospel goes west. You ever wonder in political, they're talking about, well, you know, the mindset of the east and the mindset of the west is greatly shaped by where the gospel of Christ has gone, where the word of God has gone, where the light of the gospel has gone. And that's exactly the switch, I should say, not exactly. It happens right here at this particular point in Scripture. They go the other direction. It's a part of the providence of God. The Spirit would not allow them to go. Again, how did that happen? We don't know. And so, God is constantly working these things out.

So, I wanted to underscore this concept of the providence of God. Because those who minister in the center of the will of God, your heart is comforted so much. I've had this conversation with three different couples just this past, and individuals, I should say, this past week about how knowing that God is sovereignly in control of the affairs of the world, of the affairs of your personal life, is such a comfort. He's providentially ordering the circumstances of your life. There are no accidents. There are no accidents. Let me give you a good definition again of providence. By the way, providence of God is God's dealing with His creation. And we're going to discuss that in detail. It's a subset of the overall sovereignty of God. God is sovereign over everything. And when it comes to His creation, He is sovereign and dealing with it interactively to accomplish His purposes in every minute detail. And that's referred to as the providence of God. It is defined this way: God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that He: 1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which He created them. We talked about that many times in the past. Water acts like water, always acts like water. Rocks are always hard. Dirt always does what dirt does. Air does what air does,



etc. 2) He cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinct properties to cause them to act as they do. He keeps them doing what He created them to do. Animals, plants, human beings. Oh, wait a minute. Don't we have decision-making powers? Aren't we making real decisions? We're not robots. No, we're not robots. Yes, you're making real decisions. Yes, they have real consequences. Yes, man is held morally accountable for them. But you will never make one decision that isn't totally controlled by the sovereignty of God. Not one. But I've made some mistakes and I've committed some sin. He's sovereign over your sin. Satan, Luther said, is God's Satan. The evil one can do nothing to you outside of the purview and the permission of Almighty God. Greater is He, by the way, who is in you than He who is in the world. You don't need to succumb to any of it. 3) God directs them to fulfill His purposes.

Okay, let me give you a few. We've spent a lot of time on this in the past, so I don't want to go into some of the things we've already covered. But it'll comfort your soul when you get a grip on this. I've been dealing, you know, certain pastors over the life of their ministry, people get known for certain things, you know, the famous pastors. Chuck Swindoll, if he's known for anything, the guy has, still has, a tremendous ministry of encouragement. If you grabbed R.C. Sproul, it would most likely, I think, be the holiness of God. The holiness of God just flows all through his ministry. If you get our friend, the late John MacArthur, it's clearly the authority of Scripture and making sure that the purity of the true gospel is preached and caught correctly. And I'll tell you what, if I had to have a stamp on, on, on my life, I would want it to be the, the sovereignty of God. That God is totally, because you know what, it blesses my soul more than anything else. I mean, obviously, other than my relationship with Christ, anything else about God in the Scriptures, knowing that even my failures, He will take and use for His glorious purposes. He, Romans 8:28, He's working out everything for your good to those who



love the Lord, to those who are called according to, everything isn't good, but He's working it out for good. There's unbelievable comfort in that. Let me give you a few. Hebrews 1:3. Get your hip waders on. We're going to cover a lot. But I assure you on the, on, as Lord my witness, if this building were empty right now, I'd want to share this with my own heart. Hebrews 1:3 says Christ *is*, get this, quote, upholding the universe ***by the word of His power***. That word *upholding* there is *pherō* (G5342) in the Greek. It means to bear or to carry along as if you pick somebody up and carry them to another place. And it isn't just carrying them. It carries with it the idea of sustaining, interacting as He carries. He is literally holding the universe by the word of His power, by His power. And it means, like I said, more than just sustain. It has the sense of purposeful control over the thing being carried and sustained. Colossians 1:17. Paul says, Christ said, ***in Him, all things hold together***. Everything in this world would go away in that quickly if God stopped holding it together through Christ. Everything. Everything. And by the way, when it says all things, it means all things. All created things, including you and me. Acts 17:28, the one we were talking about the other night. In Christ, ***in Him we live and move***, do what we do, ***and have our being***, have our very existence. 2 Peter 3:7. Peter says that even the heavens and the earth that now exist are being held together until the day of judgment. Here's one. Job 34:14 to 15. Those of you who've lost loved ones, as we lost last night, listen to this verse of Scripture. ***If he should gather to Himself His spirit*** (spirit there is referred to Himself), ***and His breath***, he breathed on the dirt and gave Adam life. God is the author of all life. He's the author of every pregnancy. He's the author of all life. He says, if he should take back his spirit to himself and gather to himself his breath, ***all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust***. Our dear cousin, John Rack, in effect, God took his earthly breath back. And God called John, the spiritual John, the real John Rack, to live with Him forever in His glorious heaven last evening. And that's what he did with your loved ones



as well. Psalm 104:29. ***Thou dost take away their spirit and they expire.*** He preserves life and when the time is right in His economy, he takes it back. Ephesians 1:11. He concurs. We said he works with his creation in every detail. Paul says God accomplishes all things according to the purpose of his will. He brings about all things, all things, according to his own will. No event takes place outside of the will of God. Again, we're not marionettes on strings. We're not robots. You say, I don't understand how I can make real decisions. By the way, one of your real actions is prayer. We're going to be talking about prayer in a couple of weeks. How prayer factors into ministry in the will of God. How does that work? He factors in our prayers. He wouldn't ask us to pray without ceasing and to do something that had no effect. And yet it does. Well, wait a minute. If He's in control, if he's accomplishing his purposes, how in the world does my prayer or lack of prayer affect that? Because God's Word says it does. And because His ways are not your ways. His ways are not my ways. He's wholly other. We don't get it. Quit trying to figure it out. Just believe it and act upon it. He is totally, totally sovereign. Psalm 135: 6. ***Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and on earth, in the sea and all the deeps.*** Psalm 135:6. Let me give you another one. By the way, this one has always got to me, probably because of my family background. There's no such thing as random luck or chance. Do you know every roll of the dice, every spin of the roulette wheel in Vegas right now, every draw of a card over at some casino on the Indian reservation, every one of those things is totally within the sovereign will of God. There isn't one maverick molecule. There is no such thing. Well, where are you getting that one at? Well, write down Proverbs 16:33. ***The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly, W-H-O-L-L-Y, wholly from the LORD.*** There's no such thing as luck or chance in life. In your believer, in your believer, in your life, believer, there's no such thing as luck or chance. That should bring such



a comforting wave of solace to your soul. You're not a victim of chance. You're literally a child of God who's working out everything for your good and His glory.

Now, the situation in Iran right now is the thing that really got me going. People are nervous. People are worried. What's going to happen? Lives are lost. What about this, regardless of your view on certain things? Almighty God is totally sovereign in the affairs of nations. Well, write down Job 12:23. We read, God ***makes the nations great***. And guess what? ***then He destroys them; He***, get this, ***enlarges nations***, and He, get this, ***then leads them away***. Job 12:23. In a very real extent, the leadership in Iran has been led away. Portions of Ukraine have been dominated by Russia. All the other wars, other things that are going, do you know that as evil and as wicked and some of these things are in terms and sinful and man's selfishness and all of that and Satan inspired and on and on and on, Almighty God is in control of all of it. Aren't you thrilled to death to know that everything that's going on, God's in control of it? Not you, not Trump, not Khomeini. God's in control of it. It's all happening, and you get to see it played out on the world stage. This is so fantastic to me. Write down Psalm 22:28. We always think of Psalm 22 in the guise of, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And that is indeed what Jesus cries out on the cross earlier in that Psalm. But Psalm 22:28, has a great passage of, is a great portion of Scripture. What's it say? ***For the kingdom is the LORD'S And He rules over the nations***. We mentioned Acts 17:28. But you need to listen to Acts 17:26 and 27 that precede it. What does Acts 17:26 and 27 say? Well, let me read it for you. I'll start with verse, actually I'm going to start with verse 24 of Acts 17. ***The God who made the world and all things in it, since He's Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Neither is he served by human hands as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things;*** He gives you life, continued life, breath, and every other thing. Randy Walter, I know you love that passage of Scripture. I do



too. We've talked about it many times. 1 Corinthians 4:7. **What do you have that you did not receive?** Starting with your life, with your breath, and everything on top of it. He, and now listen to verse 26. **And he made from one**, from one body politic, from one group of people, Tower of Babel here, think of, okay. He made from one, what? **every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth**, here we go. God, **having determined their appointed times**. We're not done. **And the boundaries of their habitation**. Does the Word of God support borders? Sure they do. Boundaries of their habitation. The borders of nations are determined by Almighty God. Wait a minute. Russia's trying to change the border of their nation and take a, and change the border of Ukraine. And some people, and Iran's trying to do this, and, and Oman's trying to do that. God is in control of all of it. You're watching the world order be reset by Almighty God before your very eyes on your television screens. You're looking at the Word of God played out in real time. It's unbelievable to me how fantastic this is. So, just to stick with nations a moment, I wanna stick with nations, I'm gonna skip that. Proverbs 21:1. What's Proverbs 21:1? **The king's heart is like channels of water in the hands of the Lord; He directs it whithersoever He will**. Wait a minute, the king's heart, the ruler's heart, the leader's heart, Donald Trump's heart. God directed Trump's decision-making. Khomeini's hardened heart. Khomeini's refusal to negotiate. Khomeini and his cohort's approach to things. God controlled his heart. God controls the hearts. Here's one for you. Just, I want to speed this up a little bit. Ezra 6:22. It says, the Lord **turned the heart of the king of Assyria towards** his people so that, he aided **them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel**. Ezra 6:22. A heathen pagan king is turned to aid the Jews in building the temple. Ezra 1:1. But it's not just the heart of kings He influences. Listen to Psalm 33:14, and 15. I'm going to turn to that one. Psalm 33:14-15. He says, **The LORD looks from heaven;** verse 13. **He sees all the sons of men;** Psalm 33:14. **From His dwelling place, He looks out on all the inhabitants of**



the earth. Get this, verse 15. **He**, God, **who**, this is fantastic, **fashions the hearts of them all.** Don't miss that passage of Scripture. Psalm 33:15. God fashions the hearts of them all. Trump, Vance, Khomeini, Netanyahu. Name somebody. God fashions the hearts. Well, just the born-again believing Christian. No! Fashions the hearts of them all. And you need to understand the word *heart* in Scripture. It's the location of our innermost thoughts and desires. God gives people the desires of their hearts, fashions their hearts, molds their hearts. He who fashions the hearts of them all. **He who understands all their works.** Verse 16. **The king is not saved by a mighty army.** Uh-uh. The horse and rider are prepared for battle. Victory comes only from the Lord. **The king is not saved by a mighty army. A warrior is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory; nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.** What do we do? Verse 18. **Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope for his loving kindness to deliver their soul from death, to keep them alive in famine.** That's the vagaries of this life. What are you and I supposed to do in the midst of all of this? Verse 20. **Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. For our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy name. Let thy lovingkindness, O LORD, be upon us according as we have hoped in thee.** Philippians 2:13. One of my, I hit it, I think, every other week. **For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** He's the one that brings it about. Well, the obvious ones. Joseph, what's it say? You meant it to me for evil, but God meant it for good. You know, he gets thrown in prison, goes to all of this stuff, sold into slavery. He's 13 years in the prison. He's interpreting dreams for the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker, and on, and on, and on, and so forth. And then what happens? Ultimately, he gets put in a position of prominence so that when his brothers come down and the entire Jewish people, if you will, are suffering from a famine, he's in a position by the providence of God to bless them. And what's he say there in Genesis



50? You guys meant it for evil. God meant it. God meant that evil for good. God controlled that evil. And of course, I know you're familiar with Job 1. Where you been, Satan? Oh, I've been roaming around the world, etc. And he says, well, have you considered my servant Job? And God gives Satan permission to do things to Job and his family, and so on, all within the will of God. Satan is God's Satan. Yes, the world is in the lap of the evil one. Yes, he has great power and great sway, but never, ever get sidetracked into thinking that somehow God is not in control of all of that. Because He is. He is.

So, okay. Sometime, we won't do it now. Exodus 14. Exodus, well, you know, Pharaoh hardened his heart before God hardened it. No. It says directly, I am going to harden Pharaoh's heart. God hardens Pharaoh's heart Himself. God hardens Khomeini's heart for His purposes. God will harden or soften a leader's heart for His purposes. Psalm 105:25. **He turned their hearts**, this is talking about the Egyptians. He even turned the hearts of the Egyptian people **to hate his people**, to hate the Jews. And they followed him, if you will. Here's one of the, I was mentioning this to somebody before the worship service as well. You want to write down Joshua 11:20. The Canaanites attacked Israel. And it says in Joshua 11:20, it was the Lord's doing to harden their, to harden the Canaanites hearts. That they should go against Israel in battle in order that they should be utterly destroyed. God wanted to bring judgment on the Canaanites. He works to harden their hearts, to get them to attack Israel, so he can use Israel to bring judgment upon them. You don't have to be a Rhodes Scholar to figure out that God apparently is bringing judgment on the leadership in Tehran as I preach this sermon. Because Almighty God is working out every detail in life. And please don't get me wrong. The nation of Israel doesn't do everything right. The nation of Israel is no more God's spiritually chosen people. They forfeited that long ago. They are God's chosen people politically still. He has a distinct role for them. And in time prophecy as a nation, they're going to come to know their



Messiah as their Lord and Savior. But let me tell you something. They definitely are being used by God in a powerful way as He resets, hits the reset button on the world order over and over and over again. I love what some dear friends told me before the service again. They said, you know, every time Israel gets attacked, they win a real quick victory and they establish another holiday. So there you go. By the way, how ironic today is the Feast of Purim. Isn't that amazing? And think about this. You talk about Esther, let's just talk about Netanyahu. Let's plug in the United States President. Let's plug in whoever the leader of Saudi Arabia is right now that's joining in the attack and some other Arab countries. What does Cousin Mordecai say in Esther 4? Oh, perhaps you have attained royalty for such a time as this. Meaning what? You got this position, maybe, for just this time. You're seeing that played out in real time. You can walk out this door, go home. You can click, don't do it now, click on your phone. And you can watch these verses of Scripture played out in real time.

Let me give you a couple of more. These are so fantastic. Samson's demand to marry a pagan Philistine woman. What's it say in Judges 14? I think it's 14:4. **was of the LORD, for He, the Lord, was seeking an occasion to go against the Philistines. At that time, the Philistines had dominion over Israel.** Yeah, it's Judges 14:4. How about the sons of Eli? Sons of Eli are wicked and they commit sinful things. And they don't hearken to Eli voice. It says in 1 Samuel 2:25, although they were rebuked for their evil deeds, it says, quote, **they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was, get this, LORD desired to slay them.** 1 Samuel 2:25. Here's one that always bothers people. 1 Samuel 16:14. Doesn't bother me at all. Says Saul, it says the Lord, quote, sent **an evil spirit from the Lord** to torment Saul. An evil spirit from the Lord. Yeah! He controls the forces of evil even to work out his perfect will. There's on and on and on we can cover and go through so much of this. But I wanted you to be comforted by those verses and seeing that these things are being played out in real time. Shimei comes out and



starts yelling curses at David. Some of David's security team wants to go out and nail Shimei. He says, no, no, no, no, no. Don't do that. Why? For the Lord has bidden him. The Lord caused Shimei to go out and curse David? Absolutely. That's exactly 2 Samuel 16:11. And it just goes on and on and on. Oh man, here's a great one. Turn over to 2 Samuel 24. Go to 2 Samuel 24 real quick just to make the point. This is really good. 2 Samuel 24. At least I think it's really good. 2 Samuel 24. David commits a sin. By the way, he's going to number his troops. Why is numbering his troops sinful? Well, obviously they were aware it was sinful. They were told not to do it. It makes him rely upon physical forces and his own fleshly power and his pride and not the strength of the Lord. Okay? So that's what's running behind this. 2 Samuel 24:1. ***Now again, the anger of the LORD burned against Israel.*** God's upset with His children. He wants to chastise them. ***And it,*** God's anger, ***incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah."*** God's anger. God caused and incited David to commit a sin that God did not want him to commit; to number the, the forces. Look what, and, and ***The king said to Joab,*** verse 2, ***the commander of the army who was with him, "Go about now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and register the people, that I may know the number of the people.*** Now, it's obvious they weren't supposed to do this because even Joab says, hey man, you know, respectfully king, this is the wrong thing to do and you know it's wrong. Look what Joab says. ***But Joab said to the king, "Now may the Lord your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are, while the eyes of my Lord the king still see; but why does my Lord the king delight in this thing?"*** In other words, he's graciously trying to say, back off king, don't do this. David persists. God incited him in his anger. Now, David takes account because God wants to chastise Israel and He's going to bring judgment and punishment upon His people as a result of what their king, David, does. That's why God is ruling in the hearts of leaders. Now, but they're still accountable. How do you know? Look



at verse 10. **Now David's heart troubled him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done."** I thought God incited him to do it. God's totally in control in causing him to do it. And yet David is accountable for it. There it is again. How do you explain that? I don't know. It's clear that the word of God says it. And so he said, **"I have sinned greatly in what I've done. But now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of thy servant for I have acted very foolishly."** Now, I wanted you to go there because this is one of those rare places in scripture where you see it in vivid relief. Flip over to 1 Chronicles 21. You've got to go a few books to the right. Go to 1 Chronicles chapter 21. This is the parallel account of the exact same incident. But, and remember what our topic is here: The providence of God, the control of God. See, to me, miracles, turning water into wine, parting the Red Sea, that isn't near the miracle that literally sustaining, orchestrating, controlling every thought, every decision, every roll of the dice, every everything, in every human being, in every animal, in every plant, in every everything, in the entire created universe, and orchestrating it perfectly, millisecond by millisecond, to accomplish exactly what the mind of God wants done, that is the greatest miracle of all. That's just unbelievable. And when you realize it's taking place, and it's real, and you can trust in it, because you know Christ as your Lord and Savior. You know the God that's doing this. He knows you. He wants your best. It will lead you and carry you through the most amazing heartache, the most amazing vagaries of life. It'll keep the joys of life in proper perspective. The parallel passage. Have you got there? Second, 1 Chronicles 21. Now, we just read a passage of Scripture that said that God's anger incited David to do what he did. Look at verse 1, chapter 21, 1 Chronicles. **Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.** Wait a minute. Satan moved David to number Israel? I thought God's anger. God controls Satan. Satan is God's Satan. Satan's not, there isn't one, again, our friend R.C. Sproul, there's not one



maverick molecule in the universe. There's not one that's outside of the constant sovereign control of God. And then you see, you read on, ***So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, "Go, number Israel..."***, on and on and on and on and on. And look at verse 3, and ***Joab said, "May the LORD add to his people a hundred times as many as they are! But my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why does my lord seek this thing? Why should he,*** meaning David, ***be a cause of guilt to Israel?"*** Joab knew he was sinning. And yet David persists and does it because, see, God is the primary cause, but He many times uses secondary causes. Satan, the natural order of things that He's created, the laws of nature, and so on and so forth.

Well, you know what? That's great when it comes to world events and world nations and so forth. But what about my individual life? I know God's carrying out the big things, but what about my individual life? Matthew 6:11, when you pray, pray such as this, ***Give us this day our daily bread.*** You know what that tells me? God orders your daily bread. God controls your daily. That's why I had Ben Click (thank you, Ben, by the way) read that passage in Matthew. Consider the birds of the air. Consider the lilies of the field. They don't toil. They don't spin. Your heavenly Father feeds them. I tell you, Solomon, in all his glory, wasn't arrayed as regally as one of these. And they're just going to be cast up and thrown in the fire and burnt. He says in Matthew 10, there isn't one sparrow that flits to the ground that your heavenly Father doesn't know it. Take heart. You're worth more than many sparrows. God's totally in control of the details of your life. Philippians 4:19, what's it say? God will supply your every need. Three times in that chapter alone. He says, be anxious for nothing. Be anxious for nothing. Be anxious for nothing. Matthew 6, don't be anxious for what you're going to eat. Don't be anxious for what you're going to drink. Don't be anxious for what you're going to wear. Your heavenly Father knows that you have needed these things. For these



things the Gentiles eagerly seek. What are you and I supposed to do? Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. What? Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Strive to live in personal holiness of life. And then get up and do the next logical thing. Trusting in My providence, My sovereign providence that rules over you. If you start to go somewhere else, I'll build a trench around you and hinder you so you don't go there and you go where I want you to go. Psalm 32:8, ***I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.*** Jeremiah 29:11, ***I know the plans I have...*** again, last week we said this ***...for you.*** For you! By the way, plans for your welfare. Plans for your, to give you a future and a hope. That's why we don't grieve as those who have no hope. Because he's given us a hope. Let me give you a few more. You know Psalm 139:16, every one of your days was numbered before there was one of them. Job 14:5. Man's ***days are determined*** and ***the number of his months is with You; and [his limits] you have [set]*** appointed his boundaries ***[so] that he cannot pass.*** Job 14:5. You're not going anywhere God doesn't want you to go. And you'll will and desire to go places that he wants you to go because he's working his will in your life. And then you'll will and desire to go places that he'll keep you from going because He's working your will in His life. Because up to this point in time, Paul says, He's hindered me. He's hindered me. Just a couple more. Galatians 1:15. Paul says, God set me apart before I was born. He says to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:5, quote, ***Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you.*** I set you aside for these purposes. We already talked about Ephesians 2:10. The good works He's foreordained that we would walk in them and so forth. Jeremiah, excuse me, here's one. Proverbs 16:9. ***The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.*** Even success and failure. What about my failures? Psalm 75:6 and 7. Success and failure comes from God. ***For not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the [desert] wilderness comes***



[exaltation] the lifting up. But it is God who does what? Who [is the judge;] executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another. Almighty God is the one executing judgment in Iran at this hour. Not the United States. Not Israel. No human being in the first instance. God is carrying out His purposes. Whatever they may be. And again, 1 Corinthians 4:7. Everything you have comes from Almighty God.

I, as Brian comes to lead us in a closing hymn, let me just underscore one thing. I've been so comforted again in my life by a deeper and deeper, even in the last few months, a deeper appreciation for God's providential dealings in every detail of my life. I shared with you about Teri and I moving out here 45 years ago this May in the Jartran rental truck and so forth, and then losing my job. I had been a slave, if you will, to judges' trial calendars and appointment calendars and motion practice and deadlines and appointments. All of the 50 plus years of my life that I have been practicing law, and still am. There was one period of time, one 90-day window from October of 1983 to the end of December of 1983 when I literally was out of work, out of work out of a job. What are we going to do? And it was in that only time in 50 years, in that 90-day span, is when we discovered my dad had been diagnosed with cancer. And for the only time in my entire adult life, I had 90 days with nothing to do. It was that 90-day period. And Teri and I were able to tag team and go to the MD Anderson Cancer Clinic in Texas and then to my father's boyhood home in southern Illinois and so forth and to minister with him and be with him. And God in His graciousness allowed me to sit there weeks on end, reading the scriptures into the ear of a dying dad and a later a comatose dad, and given me the incredible privilege of seeing him wake up and give clear evidence that he'd come to faith in Christ. Now he was one of God's elect. God was going to get him saved because he was one of His elect. But you see how God, who not only ordains the ends, He sovereignly, providentially ordains the means to those ends. And He, what I thought was the biggest



vocational loss and tragedy in our lives to that point, was the greatest blessing from God's hand imaginable; to give us that 90-day window with the freedom to go minister to my dying dad. And I dare say, getting to share the word of God across the bed from my father was my brother who sat there week in and week out and heard the word as well, and who I hope one day will come to know the Lord as well. What's the point? Nations, wars, boundaries and borders, your life, your burning the toast to your burning the midnight oil, every detail in your life, is under the control of a sovereign God who loves you so. That should bring a tremendous comfort to hurting hearts, hurting hearts, hurting hearts this hour. It should bring a tremendous comfort to all of God's children.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for this time in your word. Thank You that ministering in the center of Your will not only is to be focused and precise, but it is a ministry that is trusting continually in Your sovereign providential care. We thank you for these truths. I thank You for the privilege of getting to share many of them for a second or a third time here with our own church family. May you use these truths, Father, to enliven our step, to humble our hearts, and to encourage us with a boldness for Your gospel to live for Your glory. We ask it all again in the matchless name of Jesus, our Christ, and all God's redeemed people said, amen and amen.