

Immerse Day 62 :: Lots

Whenever we start to talk about God's sovereignty we get ourselves in a lot of trouble. The balance between God's control over the workings of the world and our free will is a tricky one. Lean too far to one side of this debate, and you get a God in complete control, who has pre-programmed everything, already written the book, and we are just characters following the plot with no free will to change anything. Lean too far the other way and we have complete freedom to obey or disobey God and He is left with no power to enforce His will. As a youth pastor, I worked under a pastor who was a staunch Calvinist. And as such, he took the idea of God's sovereignty very seriously, to the point where for years we met at Panera every Tuesday morning to debate this aspect of God's nature. It was good theological wrangling, but underscored the difficulty surrounding the theology of God's sovereignty.

In the Old Testament, as in the New, we find an illogical muddling of this idea. We find a God who is in complete control, to the point where anything that happens was assumed to be God's doing, even if it was completely out of His nature. Yet we also find a constant stream of human disobedience to that very will. Sovereignty vs Free Will, battling it out in the pages of the scriptures we look to for answers.

Sorry, folks, but I don't have an answer for you today. But I had to bring this to the forefront because of the regular references to two things most of us have never even heard of before, two things that regularly dictated the behavior of God's people. They were called the Thummim and the Urim, and they show up once again in our reading today.

Back in Exodus when God described the breastplate worn by Aaron and the subsequent high priests after him, the Thummim and the Urim were said to be placed "in the breastplate", similar to the precious gems that represented the tribes of Israel. While the bible doesn't tell us what these literally were, most presume them to be a white and a black stone with writing on them. These stones were used to determine God's will. Put in a pouch, they would bring a guilty person before the priest who would then randomly reach in and pull out a stone. If it were white, that was God's judgement that the person was innocent. If black, then guilty. Um, yeah. Check out 1 Sam. 14:41 for a *Lottery* style use of these to determine the guilty party in a case against King David himself.

Our reaction to this will tell us a lot about our own views of the question of God's sovereignty. Can, would, God control the choice of stone so that we can use them as an infallible means of seeking God's will? If we believe God is sovereign and in control, then of course and we have no problem with this. If we believe God is NOT affecting every movement or choice we make, then we have a BIG problem with this, especially in capital crimes.

So where do you stand? Is God in control enough that we can "cast lots", draw a stone, or flip a coin and trust that God will affect the outcome? Or do we have to guess, use our best judgement, and hope to God we choose correctly?

