OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF LOSING CONTROL  
Series: “Freedom From Your Fears” - Part 9 of 10

INTRODUCTION

- What is your yard looking like?
- Not your yard at home.
- The yard of your life.
- The relationships, responsibilities, commitments, problems and hassles and all that stuff that is growing there.
- No doubt, like me, you've got a big yard with a lot going on.
- If you're like me you'll probably find at least some of the time, it's completely out of control.

- I thought this week about overcoming the fear of losing control.
- I saw three different styles people use to manage their lives.
- Three kind of ways we go about tending the yard of our lives.

1. The first type of person I'll call the control freak.
   - This is the time management type.
   - You've got the biggest day-timer money can buy.
   - You go to bed at the same time every night.
   - You get up at the same time every morning.
   - You exercise for forty minutes a day.
   - It only takes twenty to burn fat but you're so organized you've got forty.
   - Every night you give each one of your children fifteen minutes of undivided conversation.
   - The average parent only does seven and a half but you're so organized you do fifteen.
   - You have the mentality that if everyone could just get on to a tighter schedule life could be controlled.
   - So you go about some bizarre measures to control everything and everybody.
   - But that's your style.
   - You're a control freak.

2. The second type of person I'll call the short cutter.
   - Your life is basically out of control and you know it but you try to overcompensate with speed and savvy.
     - You're always working the angles.
     - You realize if you procrastinate on one thing, you can get another thing done and maybe get back to the first one before the deadline arrives.
     - Someone may even pick up the responsibility for you.
     - If you manipulate a little, you can get out of some things.
     - You're always working the angles to try to stay ahead of the game.
     - You're life is churning at 1000 rpm's and it looks like you're in control and you know you're not.
     - You are a short cutter.

3. The last type I call the binge and purgers.
   - Your life is out of control.
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- You know it.
  - You go with the flow.
  - Why bother even trying any more.
  - You've got whole areas of your life that are completely undisciplined.
  - You let it go until it gets so bad and you feel like you just got to purge, so you go to mens conference or ladies’ conference.
    - You go and say, “I'm going to get a spiritual high that's going to last the rest of my life. I'm going to come home and I'm going to get control of things.”
    - You get your act together and make the commitment and you come home and for the next few days you act like a control freak.
    - Then all that momentum of your past, all those consequences you're still reaping from your past binges begin to catch up with you.
  - Now, two weeks after men’s conference your life looks almost the same as it did before.

- The problem with being out of control but thinking you're in control, with pretending that you can be sovereign over your life, is you're always one step away.
  - If you're a control freak, you're always one tragedy, one unforseen circumstance away from being out of control.
  - If you're a short cutter or a binge and purger you're just one seminar away, one spiritual high away from getting your act together.
  - You're one step away from loosing it all the time.
  - Or one step away from getting it.

- There's a better way.
- The answer ultimately to overcoming the fear of loosing control is not self help or more self management.
  - It's self surrender.
  - It's saying, “I'm giving it up. I can't control this thing but I'm turning it over to the one person who can. God almighty.”

- I want to give you a crash course in God's sovereignty.
- I'd like to build a picture for you of how big God is and how qualified He is to run your life.

- God's sovereignty is His kingship over everything based on His infinite power, wisdom, and authority.
- It's God being God.
- God's kingship over everything based on His infinity, His infinite power and wisdom and authority.

- God's sovereignty over nations. “This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men…” Daniel 4:17
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• **God's sovereign over people.** “There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.” Proverbs 19:21

• **God's sovereign over circumstances.** “The Lord works out everything for his own ends, even the wicked for a day of disaster.” Proverbs 16:4

• **God's sovereign over nature.** “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” Revelation 4:11

• I probably should have added a fifth category.

• **God is sovereign over spiritual powers.**
  • Ephesians 1:21 tells us that Jesus sits enthroned above all principalities and powers that's in the natural realm and that's in the spiritual realm.

• **God is sovereign over all of it.**
  • He made it all.
  • He's in charge.

• Is God really in control?
  o This is where providence comes in.
  o When you get a feel for how active God is, not just in the big picture but in the details it will knock your socks off!
  o God is providentially in charge of everything.
  o Providence is not Christian luck.
    ▪ That's what most of us think.
  o Something good happens to me and I'm a believer so I don't just chalk it up to chance, God did it.
  o God was provident there.
• That's true but it's way bigger than that.

• Hebrews 1  “Jesus upholds all things by His powerful word.”
• In Colossians 1 it says the same kind of thing, “Jesus is before all things and in Him all of creation holds together.”
• Acts 17  “In God we live and move and have our being.”
• God is passionately into the details of life.
• The fact that this whole place holds together, the universe holds together, the fact that you're alive here today is because Jesus.
• Right now and at every moment, is actively uphold all things by His powerful word.

• All the hairs on your head are numbered.
  o That doesn't mean that God knows how many hairs you have.
  o He does, but it means that He has assigned a number to each one of your hairs.
    ▪ Jesus said that.
  o Every hair on your head has a number.
    ▪ If you're loosing your hair or pulling out your hair because you're loosing control, God has to recelebrate your head!
    ▪ Because every hair has a number.
That's how into the details He is.

- Jesus said a bird doesn't fall without God's will being involved.
  - Jesus said take the most common of all birds, the sparrow.
  - You can buy two of them for a penny but not one of them dies apart from God's will.

- The Bible says that dewdrops don't just happen.
  - God fathers the dewdrops.
  - They are birthed by God almighty who is into the details.

- The Bible says that sunrises don't just happen, but that God gives orders to the morning and causes His sun to shine.

- Storms don't just happen.
  - The Bible says that God calls up clouds from the ends of the earth.
  - He cuts a channel for the thunderstorm and a channel for the rain that falls.

- The Bible says that rainbows don't just happen.
  - Rainbows have less to do with light refracting through water than it has to do with God wanting to remind you of a covenant He made in the Old Testament to His servant Noah.

- The Bible says that animals don't hunt their own prey.
  - The Bible says that God hunts the prey for the lioness.
  - The Bible says that animals out in the forest don't just copulate and have offspring but that He midwifes the birth of animals.
  - The Bible says that when the doe gives birth to the fawn that God is there overseeing the process.

- The Bible says that God is looking over all the details of your life.
  - He has set out for you the exact number of days that you should live.
  - You can read it in Acts 17.
  - That for all people everywhere, God has determined the exact length of their life.

- And not only that, He's determined the place you should live.
  - You might have thought you went out and bought your house and you made the decision.
  - God was in that decision too.

- He determined the length of your days and exactly where you should live.
  - If you catch hold of that truth, that God's not just presiding over the big picture but that He is passionately into orchestrating the details of all of life.

- That's a truth that will set you free from having to control your own life.
  - I'm not qualified to control my own life but God sure is.
    - He can do it.

- How do we respond to that picture of God?
- I like the way Psalm 115:3 sums it up, “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”
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- Not just sometimes but all the time, everywhere, at every moment.
- How do you respond to that?

• Basically what we need to do is get out of control for good.
  • We've got to respond to God's sovereign claims on our lives and yield control to Him.
• As you set here today, God's got an awfully big claim on your life.
  • Half or more of who you are today, you had nothing to say about.
  • You were handed a package from your parents -- a physical and psychological package that you can't change.
  • The software was programmed into you and you're running on it ever since.
  • No amount of psychotherapy or self help or exercise or plastic surgery can change it.
  • You are you and you've always been and you had nothing to say about it.
  • God's got a claim on your life.
• How are you going to respond to it?

There are three basic things I think we need to do in response to God's sovereignty.

I. We need to COOPERATE with it.

• God's sovereignty allows me to participate in a life full of certainties.
• This is a mystery.
• Are you a robot?
• Did God program everything and you have no free will? No, not at all.
• The Bible says that God is sovereign over all the details and yet somehow you're still a moral free agent with choice and responsibility.
• In God's universe, both of those principles operate.
• We don't know how to reconcile them.
• We're too finite to know that.
• But they both operate.
• So you have a role.
• You have a response to make to God's sovereignty.
• The first response is to cooperate with it.

• Ephesians 1:8-10 (The Message) “He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in Him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth.”

• That is a certain life.
• Most people think life is uncertain.
• We've got good news for them.
• Life is certain!
• We don't know all the certainties but God does.
• He has let us in on a whole lot of them.
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- We know what life is about, as believers.
- Life is about loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself.
- It's about glorifying God with your life and sharing the good news with people in a lost world.

- We know how everything is going to wind up.
- We know Jesus is coming back, justice is going to be served, and you're going to receive your ultimate and final salvation.
- You're going to party in heaven with God for all eternity.
- We know a whole lot of His program to get us there.
- We know that He's trying to conform us to the image of Christ.
- He's making us like Jesus.
- He does that by putting us in a family of believers where we can share our gifts together.
- He also does it through problems and difficulties that come in and test our faith and build our character.
- We even know that when life gets out of control and we're not even sure what God is doing we sort of know what God is doing.
- That's the whole lesson of Job.
- Job was a righteous man.
- He had no need for any tragedy to come into his life to teach him a lesson.
- He was righteous and blameless and humble.
- Yet, God in His sovereignty, allowed Satan to wipe Job out.
- He lost ten children to death.
- He lost all his wealth.
- He lost his health.
- And Job never knew why.
- But we do.
- God put it in his word for a reason, so that we would know.
- All God was doing with Job was making a massive display before all heaven and hell of how faithful a person can be and how he can keep a person in His grip.
- Job never renounced His faith.
- God got in Satan's face and said, “You're trying to kill this guy's commitment but you can't. I'm too big! And Job is too tightly in My grasp. You can't take it away.”

- Life is pretty certain.
- We don't know it all but we know a good bit of what's going on.
- That calls us from us two specific responses. Obey and pray.
- We obey in response to God's sovereignty.
- “In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths.” Proverbs 3:6
- We pray in response to God's sovereignty.
- “I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.” Psalm 57:2

- When I obey I align my actions with God's will and sovereignty.
- When I pray I align my own will and my own thoughts with God's will and sovereignty.
- The fear of loosing control, the stress that comes from that comes from two different agendas operating.
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• I've got mine and God's got His.
• They are cutting across the grain of each other and creating friction and difficulty and stress and fear.
• But when I cooperate with God's sovereignty and I obey and I pray, just like Proverbs 3:6 says, "He directs my paths..."
• He makes things a whole lot smoother than they would be otherwise.
• James 4 says, "When you say today or tomorrow I'm going to go do something, you boast and you brag."
• Instead, James says, you say, "God willing, this afternoon I'm going to the beach...God willing, tomorrow morning I'm going to go visit a client..."
• That's how in tune with His will we're called to be.

II. A second response we make to God's sovereign claims on our lives is we CONTEMPLATE it.

• God's sovereignty allows me to relax and see the big picture.
• If you're like me when difficulties strike and your life is going out of control you make two responses: anger and action.
• When something bad happens my initial reaction is, "What is going on here? Why is this happening?"
• My second response is to take action.
• I want to jettison that problem out of my life.
• I want to smooth over that hassle as fast as I can and get it out of there.

• Two better responses are: rest and reflect.

• Biblical illustration: King David was traveling along one time at a time of turmoil in his life.
  o Things were out of control.
  o His son, Absolom, prince of Israel, led an insurrection, and was trying to grab the kingdom for himself.
  o David is traveling with some of his companions and a punk of a guy named Shime-i comes out to meet him.
  o This guy Shime-i, while this little civil war is going on, is pelting David with rocks and calling out insults.
  o "You're a man of blood! You're getting what's coming to you! You're a warrior! You've caused a lot of grief in other people's lives and now it's all coming back on you. Get out of here. You're cursed. You're a man of blood."
  o Abishai, one of David's right hand men, responds with anger and action.
  o He says two things (2 Samuel 16): "Why should this dead dog curse my Lord, the King."
  o And then he says, "Let me go over and take off his head." That's action.
    ▪ I'm going to jettison this problem right out of your life.
  o David, a man after God's own heart, turns to Abishai and says, "Sometimes you and I have so little in common. Let's not do anything. Let's not get angry. Let's rest. Let's not take action. Let's reflect. How do I know that God didn't send Shime-i into my life to tell me something I need to hear?"
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- Shime-i, was still responsible for his actions and he was still wrong for doing it but David saw God behind it maybe sending him a message he needed to reflect on a little bit.
- There was truth in what Shime-i said.
  - God didn't allow David to build the temple because he was a man of blood.
- He was a warrior.
- There was some truth in what Shime-i was saying.
- David was wise enough not to take action and get angry but to rest and reflect on what God might be doing with this circumstance.

* A third response we need to make is critical.
  - It's like a guy who was confronted with God's sovereignty, he stormed out of the church, went home and fell down his stairs. He got up, brushed himself off and looked up to heaven and says, “I'm glad that one's over.” Like, God's just laying in wait. He's waiting to ambush me with a truckload of pain. I'm glad that one is over, I'll move on to the next one.

  - That might be the way it is if all we had to do was cooperate and contemplate but there is a third response that is so key to God's sovereign claims on your life.

III. **CELEBRATE God’s Sovereignty**

- You can look back, if you're a Christian, and you've been through some good times and some bad times but can't you look back and see that God was in control of it all the way?
- Aren't you thankful for it?
- Aren't there some tough lessons you've learned and some tough rows you've had to hoe that you're glad God gave that to you because it worked some character into you?
- It gave you a bigger image of God than you had before.
- We need to celebrate God's sovereignty.

- God has sovereignty planted my two feet right here to speak to you today.
- I was born in central California.
- My parents were two very different people.
- My mom was from Oklahoma.
- My dad came from Arkansas.
- And here I am -- a California transplant in Michigan!
- I choose to believe there is a God who sets in heaven and He does whatever He pleases.

- When I was four years old I went around saying I wanted to grow up and be a preacher.
- Where does a four year old kid get that idea?
- If that doesn't come from God....?

- We need to celebrate this sovereignty of God over our lives.
- Tell of moving from California to Kentucky to Michigan…

- A lot of you have the same kinds of stories you could tell.
As you look back over your life you've seen God's hand in it all the way.
His handwriting is all over it.
You celebrate God's sovereignty.
He's led you to this point safely and He's making you into the image of Christ.
Why fear the future?
Why fear loosing control?
He's just going to keep you on the same program He's got you on.

Some of you need to get on the program.
You are not qualified to run your life.
If you think you can get it all under control it's not ever going to happen for you.

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

Are you afraid of loosing control of your life?
I'm afraid of being in control of mine.
I can't do Romans 8:28.
I can't work all the things in my life for good. But God can.
I hope today your image of God has been expanded just a little bit.
Christianity is about serving a big God.
Not a knee high God or a head high God or even a sky high God.
It's about serving the most high God who sees the big picture but is passionately into the details of your life and He wants to run it for your good.

CLOSING

Abdicate the throne!
Get out of the cockpit.
Get off the bridge!
God's the only one who can control your life.

“Our God is in heaven and He does whatever he pleases.”