

Amos
Part 2: The Purpose of Biblical Prophecy
Proclaim God's Sovereignty

Introduction: For the last three weeks, we have looked at the passages in Amos that reveal the HEART of a prophet, and as such, we have seen the kind of heart we, who are children of God and commissioned to go make disciples, should have as well. Today, we begin part two of our study of Amos – The PURPOSE of Biblical Prophecy.

Remember, Biblical prophecy is first and foremost a matter of “truth-telling.” Biblical prophecy sometimes includes “future-telling,” but it’s always “truth-telling.”

Ultimately, the prophets were anointed by God to do what Jesus commissioned all who are in Him to do—proclaim the truth and encourage people to align with it! Therefore, in this part of our study of Amos, we will explore the central truths about God that Amos proclaimed and the actions people were to have in response to those truths not only for us to better evaluate our understanding and response to those truths, but to also consider how we as followers of Christ and thus ones commissioned to “proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9) are communicating them to one another and a world far from God!

To begin the second part of our study of Amos, we are going to look at the most obvious truth about God Amos proclaimed—God is SOVEREIGN. All of the prophets had a strong purpose to help people truly understand this.

But, before we get into exactly what Amos said about the sovereignty of God, let me make sure we all understand what that term means and implies in a generic sense. For sovereignty to exist, the following three characteristics must be fully present:

- **Independent of external authority.** – A sovereign nation is not governed by another nation. A sovereign king is not governed by another king. For instance, in the Roman Empire, the emperor would occasionally grant the title of king to a person who governed specific areas of the empire; however, these kings were not sovereign, as they were subject to the Emperor's authority. Despite being given a kingdom for them to own and rule, they did so under the constant external supreme authority of the Roman emperor.
- **Independent of any internal authority.** - A sovereign king is only sovereign if they are the one with the authority over all who live in the kingdom. If there is someone else within the kingdom whom they must obtain permission from to make a decision, then they, by definition, are not a sovereign ruler. For instance, the King of England is no longer sovereign because a previous king decided to give up their sovereign power to rule England. As a constitutional monarchy, England is a sovereign Kingdom, but its King is not sovereign. The authority to rule England is in the hands of the people who elect officials to represent them in parliament. The

King has no authority to override the laws passed by Parliament or run the government, and as such, he is a “sovereign” in name only.

- **Ability to fully impose its will.** – Sovereignty is more than a title or even a legality; it’s an ability. As such, a sovereign is not a sovereign who doesn’t possess the tangible power to fully implement their will. Therefore, a nation that cannot enforce its laws is not a sovereign nation. Even if a king is declared to be a sovereign, if that king can be conquered by those within the kingdom or by forces from outside, then that king cannot truly be considered sovereign. It doesn’t matter how much pomp and circumstance surrounds a king, nor how many legal documents that king may hold in their hands declaring they are sovereign, if they lack the tangible ability to fully impose their will on their kingdom, then they are not actually sovereign.

Now here’s the irony in all the “sovereignty” that mankind likes to think it can attain: at the end of the day, nobody is by definition sovereign other than God, and the prophets intended to make sure everybody understood that central defining truth. Nothing could be more foolish than running around declaring you’re in charge when in fact you are not, except actually thinking you are in charge when you are not!

We as human beings are constantly imagining ourselves to be in charge; to be in some way sovereign over whatever the “kingdom” is that we think we rule. This human characteristic is the root of every sinful thing we do! Therefore, it’s no surprise that one of the primary purposes of biblical prophecy is to wake people up from living in a fictional reality that they are somehow sovereign and to declare the truth about the sovereignty of God, so that we can not only fully understand that we are not, but also stop acting as if we are.

Specifically, Amos clearly proclaimed three clear characteristics of God’s sovereignty.

Proposition: There are three clearly communicated characteristics of God’s sovereignty in the book of Amos.

The first clearly communicated characteristic of God’s sovereignty in the book of Amos is that,

- (1) **God created and commands the universe, and the universe obeys. (4:12-13; 5:8-9)**
 - A. In the creation and control of the universe, there is no external or internal authority that God answers to, and He has the complete ability to fully impose His will exactly how He wants it to be done. Look at what Amos wrote,
 - B. 12 “Therefore thus **I will do to you**, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!” 13 **For behold**, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought, **who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth**— the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name! (4:12-13)

1. "Amos likened God's terrifying approach in judgment to the darkening of a storm. The One who formed the mountains and created the wind now covered those high places with churning clouds. The early dawn turned back to eerie darkness as black swells unfolded to shroud the earth. ... God had revealed His thoughts to man; His intent to judge had been made known (Amos 3:7). Now, as the Lord God Almighty, Commander of all forces in heaven and earth, advanced against them. Their judgment was inescapable."¹
 2. Amos is telling the arrogant leaders and people of Israel, who, in their economic and military success, have begun to see themselves as truly being the ones who run things, that they are getting ready to experience the judgment of God. The authority and ability of God to create the universe and impose His will on and through it testifies that the judgment He has issued on Israel will happen just as He ordered it to happen. As God controls the universe, they have no authority or ability to stop it because, at the end of the day, they are not sovereign; God is. In the face of God's will, they are totally helpless, and in this case, it's God's will to judge them for living as if they and not God were sovereign; that they thought they could rule themselves and even control and order God rather than being ruled and ordered by God!
 3. Another example of this sovereign characteristic of God is in Amos 5.
- C. **8 He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is his name; 9 who makes destruction flash forth against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress. (5:8-9)**
1. "... He is the one who controls the seasons. The constellations Pleiades and Orion were associated with the New Year and the change of the winter and summer seasons which, of course, affected the agricultural cycle. The earth and its seasons, upon which Israel is dependent, are dependent upon the Lord God. Furthermore, it is the Lord who is in control of the earth's days and nights. Every day all of creation is dependent upon God's consistent rule. Also, the Lord is in control of the waters on the earth either for the provision of life through the rains or the destruction of life through floods. It is this God whom Israel must prepare to meet. It is this God who is coming to judge His people. It is this God who has exhorted His people to seek Him and live. It is this God who is in control of the future. Israel thought it could be in control. Its recent military victories and its impressive defensive fortifications convinced Israel it was invincible against its enemies. ..." ²

¹ Sunukjian, D. R. (1985). [Amos](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 1437–1438). Victor Books.

² Betts, T. J. (2011). [Amos: An Ordinary Man with an Extraordinary Message](#) (pp. 94–96). Christian Focus.

2. "... In Amos' day, in order to defend against the Assyrians' massive battering rams, the walls of the cities took the form of offset-inset walls, where one section stuck out and then the next section of wall would be set back. These angles in the walls allowed the defenders more control over their positions in combat. Archeologists have discovered cities in Israel, such as Dan, Hazor, and Megiddo, which had this kind of fortification. They did everything possible to defend themselves against their enemies. During times of peace these fortifications were used to store the people's goods. Many of their city walls were casemate walls. Casemate walls appear to date back to about the time of Solomon. Casemate walls were actually two walls going around the city with a space of about five to six feet between the two walls. If an enemy approached the city, the people filled in the space with earth and rocks. When the enemy breached the wall they were met with the earth and gravel coming down through the hole. In order to continue through the breach, the enemy would have to deal with the rubble and attempt to break through a second wall while at the same time deal with the defenders attacking them. These casemate walls were divided by partitions with small chambers used for storage during peacetime. Therefore, as the nobles of Israel gazed at their magnificent fortifications, the walls not only reminded them their lives were secure but also their material possessions appeared to be secure. ..."³
3. "...The people are not in control of their lives; they are not in control of their possessions; and they are not in control of their eternities. Instead of being independent, Israel has been altogether dependent upon the Lord, even though Israel has failed to recognize this truth. The Lord, who is the creator and sovereign over His creation, is in control of all that concerns Israel. It is the Lord who made Israel, and it is the Lord who will bring her down. ..."⁴
4. The point is that God, not the Jewish people, is in charge of the Universe, and as such, if God says He is going to do something, no matter what it is He has said He is going to do, it's going to be done precisely how and when He has ordered it to be done. We are not sovereign; only God is! The only thing more foolish than saying you are sovereign, that is, that there are no external or internal authorities in your life and that you have the power to implement whatever you will to happen, just as you will it, is actually believing that to be true!
5. However, in declaring God's sovereignty over the universe, Amos is highlighting another very clear characteristic of God's sovereignty.

³ Betts, T. J. (2011). [*Amos: An Ordinary Man with an Extraordinary Message*](#) (pp. 94–96). Christian Focus.

⁴ Betts, T. J. (2011). [*Amos: An Ordinary Man with an Extraordinary Message*](#) (pp. 94–96). Christian Focus.

The second clearly communicated characteristic of God's sovereignty in the book of Amos is that,

(2) God determines when and how He punishes sin, and it happens exactly as He commands. (3:1-2; 5:18-20; 9:1-9)

A. 1 Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: 2 "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." (3:1-2)

1. God was not only saying I have always been your authority and therefore I have the legal right to issue consequences to you for rebelling against my sovereignty, but I also have the moral right to do it. Behind this statement lies the underlying truth that if God had not chosen them to be His people when He chose their forefathers, Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, to bless them in the way He did, then they would have nothing. However, in specifically extending that forward, Amos declares God's Word that if God had not brought the Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt, they would still be slaves in Egypt with nothing but forced labor to show for their existence as a people! The point is that God has made it abundantly clear in numerous, unavoidable, and unmistakable ways that He is the ultimate reason for their prosperity and even their existence; thus, the punishment He was going to inflict on them was not only within His legal right to do so but also morally just.
2. Finally, it was not only God's moral right to judge the people in the manner He was judging, but it is in His sovereign ability to implement that judgment exactly how He chooses! **"I WILL punish you ..."** (3:2).
3. "God has ever known all men so as to give what is needful to preserve life. God has, therefore, made his sun to rise on all the human race, and has also made the earth to produce food. Then as to the necessities of life, he performs the office of a Father towards all men. But he has known his chosen people, because he has separated them from other nations, that they might be like his own family. Israel, then, is said to be known, because God favoured them alone with a gratuitous adoption, and designed them to be a peculiar people to himself. This is the knowledge of which the Prophet now speaks. But by saying that they *only* רק, *rek*, had been *known*, he shows that they had been chosen through God's singular favour, for there was no difference between the seed of Abraham and other nations, when regarded in themselves; otherwise this exception would have been superfluous. For if there had been any superiority or merit in the people of Israel, this objection might have readily been made, "We have indeed been chosen, but not without cause, for God had respect to our worthiness." But as they in nothing differed from other nations, and as the condition of all was alike by nature,

the Lord upbraids them with this, that he had *known them only*; as though he said, “How has it happened, that ye are my peculiar possession and heritage? Has it been by your merit? Has it been, because I was more bound to you than to other nations? Ye cannot allege these things. It has therefore been my gratuitous adoption. Ye are then the more bound to me, and less excusable is your ingratitude for rendering to me so unjust a recompense.” ... And the same thing also appears from these words, *of all the families of the earth*; as though God had said, “There were many nations in the world, the number of men was very great; but I regarded them all as nothing, that I might take you under my protection; and thus I was content with a small number, when all men were mine; and this I have done through mere favour, for there was nothing in you by which ye excelled others, nor could they allege that they were unjustly rejected. Since then I preferred you of my own will, it is evident that I was under no obligation to you.” We now then understand the design of the Prophet’s words. He then subjoins, *I will therefore visit upon you your iniquities*. God declares here, that the Israelites would have to suffer a heavier judgment, because they acknowledged not their obligations to God, but seemed wilfully to despise his favour and to scorn him, the Author of so many blessings. Since then the Israelites were bound by so many and so singular benefits, and they at the same time were as wicked as other nations, the Prophet shows, that they deserved a heavier punishment, and that God’s judgment, such as they deserved, was nigh at hand. This is the substance of the whole.”⁵

B. 18 Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light, 19 as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. 20 Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? (5:18-20)

1. The arrogance of the Jewish people led them to believe that they could withstand God’s judgments. We are going to discuss the terror of the judgment of God on sin more in a few weeks, but for now, I want you to see how Amos confronted the arrogance that they had the power to withstand it; that it wasn’t that bad; that they had enough sovereignty within themselves to mitigate the intended full effect of God’s judgment!
2. Amos issues a terrifying truth to those who think God is not sovereign enough to impose His judgments upon them fully. In thinking you have the power to escape the fury of a lion, you ran right into the greater fury of a bear! In thinking you escaped both by running into a house, you got bitten by a serpent that was living in the house you presumed to be safe.

⁵ Calvin, J., & Owen, J. (2010). [*Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 199–203). Logos Bible Software.

3. In other words, the terrifying fury of God's wrath is unavoidable. There is no fortress you can build and no place you can hide to escape it. He is the sovereign ruler over everyone and everything. As such, His judgments are not only legally binding in a technical sense, they are also fully executed as He has issued them!
 4. In the last chapter of the book, Amos became particularly specific about the sovereignty of God and its implications for His authority and power to issue and implement inescapable judgment. Amos wrote,
- C. **1 I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said: "Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake, and shatter them on the heads of all the people; and those who are left of them I will kill with the sword; not one of them shall flee away; not one of them shall escape. 2 "If they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them; if they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down. 3 If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and take them; and if they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them. 4 And if they go into captivity before their enemies, there I will command the sword, and it shall kill them; and I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good." 5 The Lord GOD of hosts, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell in it mourn, and all of it rises like the Nile, and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt; 6 who builds his upper chambers in the heavens and founds his vault upon the earth; who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the surface of the earth-- the LORD is his name. 7 "Are you not like the Cushites to me, O people of Israel?" declares the LORD. "Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir? 8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," declares the LORD. 9 "For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the earth. (9:1-9)**
1. "... Those that escaped the collapse of the temple would be slain by the sword, every last one of them. Not one would escape. The sinners would not have a "fugitive" who would flee or "a refugee" who would escape (9:1b). Using hyperbole Amos underscores the fact that none would escape no matter what efforts they might make. ... Some may have thought that Yahweh was impotent outside Palestine. Even on foreign soil, however, he was sovereign. Again the point is that there would be no escape. Wherever they were Yahweh would set his eyes upon them "for evil, and not for good." He had taken these sinners under his special superintendence for evil, i.e., to punish them (9:4)." ⁶

⁶ Smith, J. E. (1994). [*The Minor Prophets*](#) (pp. 200–203). College Press.

2. "The kingdom—the monarchy—would be utterly destroyed from off the face of the earth. The northern kingdom was destroyed in 722 b.c., the southern kingdom in 586 b.c.. The "house of Jacob," the descendants of Israel the Patriarch, would not be totally destroyed along with the kingdom. Thus a remnant would survive the destruction of the monarchy, and that remnant would include some from both Israel and Judah (9:8b). Amos used the illustration of a sieve to make clear what the coming destruction of the kingdom would accomplish. A sieve is ordinarily constructed in such a way that the good grain is retained while the light grain, the dust, and chaff fall through to the ground when the sieve is shaken. Yahweh would sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like grain is sifted in a sieve. "Yet not the least kernel will fall upon the earth." The good grain would remain for a time in the sieve (the exile) while the bad would fall to the ground (i.e., perish). The basic idea here is that in exile Israel would be purged from her ungodly members, but not one truly righteous person would be lost in the process (9:9). Lest there be any misunderstanding of the illustration of the sieve illustration, Amos added a clear explanation. "All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword." The "sword" represents a violent death, perhaps by the army which would destroy the sinful kingdom. Amos immediately qualified his "all" by limiting the threat to one class of sinners: "those who say, the evil shall not overtake us." Presumptuous sinners always seem to think that they will escape any judgment which God may pour out."⁷

The third clearly communicated characteristic of God's sovereignty in the book of Amos is that,

- (3) God decides who and what is blessed, and it happens exactly as He determines. (2:9-11; 9:11-15)**

- A. 9 "Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars and who was as strong as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath. 10 Also it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. 11 And I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?" declares the LORD. (2:9-11)**

Note: "2:9. Instead of announcing the punishment immediately after the accusation, as was done in the judgments against the seven other nations, God heightened Israel's guilt by setting her rebellion against the backdrop of His own gracious acts toward them. Israel's existence as a nation was only because of His intervention. By themselves they could never have conquered the Canaanites.

The Amorite (cf. v. 10; note comments on Gen. 14:13-16), as the most

⁷ Smith, J. E. (1994). *The Minor Prophets* (pp. 200-203). College Press.

formidable, stands for all the nations in Canaan at the time of the Conquest (cf. Gen. 15:16–21; Josh. 24:8–15). The inhabitants of the land were the greatest of men, **tall as the cedars and strong as the oaks** (cf. Num. 13:28–33; Deut. 1:26–28). Yet God uprooted them, totally destroying them, both **fruit above** and **roots below**. 2:10. The Exodus from **Egypt** and God's preservation of Israel during **40 years in the desert** evidenced His kindness and good intentions toward her. (On **the Amorites** see comments on v. 9.) 2:11. God also **raised up** spiritual leaders for the nation. **Prophets from among** their own **sons** conveyed His words to them, and **Nazirites**, who consecrated themselves by vows for limited periods of time (cf. Num. 6:1–21), portrayed the depth of commitment that all Israel was supposed to share.⁸

- B. 11 "In that day **I will raise up the booth of David** that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, 12 that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name," declares the LORD who does this. 13 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; **the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.** 14 **I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities** and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. 15 I will plant them on their land, and they **shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,**" says the LORD your God. (9:11-15)

1. Verse 11 tells us the context is the "booth of David," meaning the prophecy's application is not for the northern tribes but for Judah. Judah, like the northern tribes, would be conquered and placed into exile, but unlike the northern tribes, God was going to restore the tribe of Judah as a place for people from every tribe in Israel to return if they chose to do so. As such, even though Jerusalem, "the booth of David," including the temple, will be destroyed by the Babylonians, they will eventually be restored. While the Jews were in exile in Babylon, the Persians conquered the Babylonians. The leader of the Persians, Cyrus the Great, would eventually allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and the rest of the city. Cyrus even ordered local officials in Babylon to provide financial support for them to carry back to Judah.
2. The outlook for Judah was much different than what was promised to the northern tribes. God would miraculously bless them. This will be the second time God himself brought the Jewish people out of captivity and set them up to prosper! However, in all the straightforward promises in this passage that we can look back on and see come true, verse 15 becomes a little confusing.

⁸ Sunukjian, D. R. (1985). [Amos](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 1431–1432). Victor Books.

In 70 AD, Rome did what Jesus prophesied they would do. They destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and sent the Jewish people into diaspora. That diaspora lasted until May 14, 1948, when the United States President, Harry Truman, officially recognized Israel as a sovereign geopolitical state. In 1949, they were formally admitted to the United Nations. So what's with the 1,878 years of having no land to call their own? I thought once God sent them back to Judah, they wouldn't be uprooted again? Doesn't verse 15 insinuate that once God restored them, they would never again lose their land; that they would never again not be a geopolitical state that thrived in every way? Bentley explains it this way,

3. **"Some believe that this verse and Romans 11 speak of a coming time when the present-day nation of Israel will return to the Lord and be planted securely in their own territory. However, there is a spiritual meaning here that applies to Jew and Gentile alike. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are God's Israel. They will never be uprooted from the land God has given to them. That land is heaven and glory. How do we know that these things are true? We can be certain because it is the word of 'the Lord your God' (v. 15)."**⁹
4. Bentley gets his conclusion from passages like 1 Peter 2:4-10 that show the promise of an eternal Kingdom that is not related to a person's biological association with Abraham but rather their association with Jesus; that is, if you have been adopted into the household of God through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, whether Gentile or Jew, you are in a Kingdom that will last forever because it is ruled by the only Sovereign King who can issue such a blessing! Bentley, as I do, sees the fullness of Amos 9:15 not in what happened when Cyrus the Great gave the Jews the opportunity to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem, but in the temple and the kingdom that God built through His Son, Jesus Christ—the Church. Peter wrote,
5. **4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." 7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you**

⁹ Bentley, M. (2006). *Opening up Amos* (pp. 119–120). Day One Publications.

were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:4-10)

Challenge: Are you submitting to God's sovereign authority or foolishly acting as if you are sovereign?

Sometimes we view God's sovereignty through the lens of our own feeble attempts to act as if we have it. We become particularly confused by our delusions of sovereignty when things are going well. We start feeling like life is like a horse that we are riding, telling it where to go and how fast to get there. We have this grandiose concept that we are truly in charge of this powerful force called life, and as such, life goes right where we want it, when we want, and how we want it, that is, until the powerful horse called life decides he doesn't feel like letting us think we are in charge anymore!

I'll never forget the first time I rode a horse by myself. I had been on a horse on two previous occasions, but both were under the supervision of somebody else. On those occasions, I didn't saddle the horse or even attempt to lead it somewhere on my own; instead, my horse essentially followed the horse that the person in charge of the ride was on.

The entire situation got started because I did some work for Brody Holloway on a 200-acre ranch he managed in Altavista, VA, called Cross Creek Ranch. It was a working ranch tied to a Christian youth camp and conference center called Master's Inn Ministries, which ultimately became the place where Brody's vision for Snowbird Wilderness Outfitters in Andrews, NC, was conceived.

Anyway, as a payment for helping Brody and his staff deworm 50 cows and their yearlings, I told Brody I just wanted to be able to ride some horses from time to time. Because I asked with such confidence, he assumed I knew what I was doing, as did I! A foolish person once said, "Never let the facts get in the way of a confident opinion," and I was living that foolish advice out! I had no clue about riding horses, but I wasn't interested in the consequences of considering that fact, because I was confident!

A few weeks later, I showed up at the ranch, coincidentally, at a time when nobody was there. Brody had told me I didn't need to ask to ride, but to just show up and go for it. So, I got a horse to go on a ride that I thought would end with me in the back of the ranch under a big oak tree, hanging out with the horse, reading my Bible, and spending time in prayer.

The instant I got on the horse, the horse took off running like it was trying to win the Kentucky Derby. I wasn't outfitted as a jockey or a cowboy, but rather, I was outfitted in the dress slacks and dress shirt I had worn to the office that day (I was a Graduate Assistant to the president of the seminary at Liberty), my brand new watch, and my basically new book bag with a bottle of water, some snacks, a notebook, my bible and some pens in it. However, that didn't get in my way at all. When that horse took off, I was instantly living a childhood dream! I've seen all kinds of westerns; I grew up watching reruns of the Lone Ranger. One of my all-time favorite movies is Pale Rider.

As that horse sprinted through the winding trails on the ranch, I never once thought anything other than, "This is awesome!" Finally, after continuously running through the trails in the wooded part of the property as well as some of the pastures, we popped out in the very back of the property where the big oak tree stood in the middle of the beautiful green pasture that I planned on tying up the horse (which I had no idea how to do) and hanging out under the tree reading my Bible.

But we ran right past the tree. I couldn't get the horse to stop, and now the horse was headed for a thicket of trees that were clearly going to slap me in the face if we ran through them. So out of nothing but ignorant instinct, I grabbed the right rein with both hands and pulled the horse's nose all the way back to his front right shoulder to try and get it to stop. But, instead of coming to a stop, the horse instantly reacted with what's known as a "crow hop," followed by a hard snap to the left with its hips. The g-force of that action broke the saddle and caused me and the saddle to go flying off the horse to the left, as the horse, without losing any forward momentum, immediately straightened itself right back up and continued running. The horse never looked back. Unbeknownst to me, at this point, it was on a mission to get back to the barn.

I went flying across the ground at about 30 to 35 mph! I busted my nose and my lip, sprained some ribs, shattered my watch, destroyed my book bag, and ripped holes in my pants and shirt. The horse was gone, and I was lying in a field bleeding, with the breath knocked out of me, a mile away from the barn.

Soon thereafter, Brody and his team returned to the ranch house and barn, where they saw my parked car and an Arabian horse standing by the main gate, covered in sweat, with the reins hanging from its mouth and no saddle. As they scratched their heads trying to figure out what in the world was going on, somebody spotted me walking across the main pasture headed towards the barn with blood all over me, carrying a destroyed book bag in one arm and dragging a broken saddle with the other. Let's just say they laughed so hard for so long I thought they were going to have a stroke!

The moral of the story is that I thought I was in charge of a 1,000-pound animal made of nothing but muscle. I had no clue how to be in charge of such a beast, but I foolishly acted as if I did, and the results almost got me killed. As is fitting, the thought that I could have been killed that day didn't enter my head for another ten years, when I was in my 30s!

In the same way, we foolishly think we are in charge of life and that somehow we, not God, are sovereignly in control. We want God to be sovereign when we've made a mess of things and need Him to fix it. But, the rest of our lives, if we are not living in an abiding relationship with God through Jesus Christ, no matter what we say with our mouth, we tend to drift into living as if we are the independent authority who can implement our will as we choose; that we answer to nobody but ourselves, so much so that when we stand before God the only thing He's going to hold us accountable for is if we did what we thought we should do. But the fact of the matter is that we are in no way sovereign over anything.

There is only one who is sovereign, and to live in any way other than total glad submission to Him is the definition of foolish.

19 The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. (Psalm 103:19)

21 Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand. (Proverbs 19:21)

36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:36)

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. (Revelation 20:11)

Are you going to live in response to this truth or in defiance of it? Are you living as if somehow you think you are in charge and have the right to do what you want, or that He is in charge and you will be held accountable to what He wants? Who do you think you are, who do you think He is, and how do you think that's going to work out?