

Understanding God's Sovereignty in the Storms of Life

Saturday, October 12, 2024 08:00am CT

HOST: David Wheaton:

Understanding God's Sovereignty in the Storms of Life. That is the topic we'll discuss today right here on The Christian Worldview radio program, where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host. *The Christian Worldview* is a listener supporter radio program, and our website is thechristianworldview.org. God created the universe and every living thing. There is no being greater than God, and thus he is sovereign overall, which definitionally means possessing supreme or ultimate power. We see God's sovereignty, his rule, his control all throughout scripture, from the parting of the Red Sea to prophecy-fulfilling events of Christ's life, death and resurrection, to nations rising and falling. We marvel and praise God for his sovereignty when he ordains events that save or bless. But then we question God's sovereignty when the storms and sin and chaos of life cause suffering and pain.

So for example, how do we reconcile God's sovereignty in devastating hurricanes like Helene and Milton, or when we learn a trusted preacher like Steven Lawson has not been living above reproach, or when a godless civil leader may rise to power? Grant Castleberry is the pastor of Capital Community Church in Raleigh, North Carolina and the Bible teacher of Unashamed Truth. He joins us today to explain God's sovereignty in light of these challenging current events. Grant will also tell us about a new Christmas resource that he and his wife designed to be used by families in the lead-up to Christmas titled *Manger in Danger*. Let's get straight to the interview with Pastor Grant Castleberry.

Grant, it's so good to have you back on *The Christian Worldview Radio Program*. I want to start out by getting a definition of what the sovereignty of God, what that actually means. That phrase or that word is used a lot, a well-known verse in Psalm 103:19 says, "*The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and his sovereignty rules overall.*" Could you give a working definition of what God's sovereignty is or some clear examples or passages in Scripture that will help us understand it?

GUEST: Grant Castleberry:

First, let me say, David, thank you for having me back on the show and so appreciate you and your ministry and your faithfulness in the midst of just really turbulent times. So thank you for being a faithful Christian voice, and I love to talk about God's sovereignty because God's sovereignty is such a comfort for me. I think it's a comfort for every Christian. God's sovereignty is an attribute of God, and as you just read in Psalm 103, when we talk about sovereignty, we're describing God's rule as Lord over His creation. And that would be a short definition of the sovereignty of God is God's rule over his creation. God rules because He's Lord, God is King, and God rules over all of what He has created. R.C. Sproul used to say, "If God is not sovereign, God is not God."

If there's one maverick molecule in the universe, then God is not sovereign. So God is sovereign over all things. I remember having discussions with other Christians when I was in the Marine Corps and they said, "Well, is God really sovereign over everything?" And I would always turn to the same verse. I would turn to Ephesians 1:11 which says, "God works all things according to the council of His will." And it was amazing the reaction when I would show people that verse in scripture, they said, "Wow, that's in the Bible?" Yeah, that's in scripture. And Hebrews 1:3 says, "Christ upholds all things by the word of His power."

So the Bible teaches this general rule in Lordship of God over all things, and that includes little things, that includes the leaves that are falling from your tree, that includes the rainbows in the sky, that includes big things like elections that we're about to face here in November. So it's a comfort to know that God is sovereign, that things are not happening whimsically or haphazardly. That as Paul says in Romans 8:28, that God works all things together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. So we affirm God's sovereign rule over all of history.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Would it be accurate to say that God either causes everything or allows everything to happen? And when I mean everything, I mean the good things and the unimaginably difficult things?

GUEST: Grant Castleberry:

Absolutely. That's what we mean by God's sovereignty. And when we say that God is sovereign over all things, that means the hard things too. Things like sin, things like suffering, things like evil. Now that doesn't mean that God is the author of evil or that God causes sin, but yet God ordains everything that happens to come to pass, and God has ordained those things to happen. Now, God uses primary or secondary causes in order to achieve his purposes. A primary cause would be where God directly does something. A secondary cause would be where God removes his hands and allows something to happen. For example, with Job, God allows the devil to inflict the evil that he does upon Job and his family, but as Spurgeon said, "The devil is God's devil." God allows that to take place. And you say, "Wow, well that's really hard to grapple with."

But the comfort again for the Christian is that if God is not sovereign, then we cannot believe that his promises will indeed come to pass in the future. We cannot bank on Christ's second coming if God is not sovereign, because some demon could foil God's plan technically. I often tell people, my dad, who was a believer, was killed in a plane crash when I was two years old. Tragic event. You take a step back at the time, my mother was widowed age 24. How could a good God allow that to happen? And God used that event when I was a boy later on to bring me to faith in Christ because I had an existential crisis about missing my father and asking questions like where he was. And then when I came back in high school to visit my father's memorial marker in South Carolina, would've never gone back to South Carolina, I met my wife.

So God providentially uses that terrible event ultimately for my greater good and his ultimate glory. And so God plays the long arc of history. God allows sin and evil into the world sovereignly because he's ultimately working history for his ultimate glory. If there was no sin, there could be no cross. If there's no suffering, there could be no display of God's divine mercy and grace and redemption in the end. And so this world, Jonathan

Edwards used to say is the best of all worlds because it's the world that God designed to bring the most glory to His name. Those are huge theological thoughts, but I think for the Christian, it helps bring perspective on the suffering and the sin that we experience in this world.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Grant Castleberry is the pastor of Capital Community Church in Raleigh, North Carolina is also the president and Bible teacher of Unashamed Truth. We've talked about the sovereignty of God, what that actually means. Well, our topic today is understanding God's sovereignty in the storms of life, and let's apply what you just told us, what God's sovereignty is to some different issues going on. Let's start with a literal storm. These hurricanes going on, and I know this has been maybe not right in Raleigh, but just to the west of you. In North Carolina, there's been tons of devastation there from Hurricane Helene. It's all over the national news and now another hurricane, Hurricane Milton has slammed into the west coast of Florida causing all kinds of devastation. What are you hearing, Grant, about the devastation and loss of life to the west of you in North Carolina from Hurricane Helene?

GUEST: Grant Castleberry:

It's just devastating the reports that are coming out. And part of it is the communication has not been good just because all the infrastructure was largely wiped out and a lot of the towns that are up in the mountains are difficult to reach. To get from one town to the next, they might be five miles apart, but you might have to drive over a mountain and it's a long way to actually travel. But we had some church members that were up in the mountains when the storm hit and they basically said they survived. Their house was fine, but people were killed in their town and they were having to go around and basically with chainsaws, remove the debris to help people get out of their homes. I think about 230 or 240 have already been reported dead in North Carolina, and that number is growing because sadly so many bodies are being recovered from the mud and in bodies of water, but lots of people are missing and the stories are just absolutely devastating, quite frankly, about families being separated.

I saw a story today about a family on a river and they heard a loud noise and the eight-year-old son and the mother and the father went to the back of the house to look and the father ran away to get something to try to block the water coming in. And he turned around and the mom had been basically knocked into the flowing river and the eight-year-old son and the dad watched their mom swept away and drowned. So you hear these stories and it makes you take a step back, at least it has for me, and just appreciate life, appreciate another day that God's given me and appreciate the time that you have with your own family. These tragedies can happen in a moment's time and we need to be prepared.

So it's very sobering, very tragic, the situation. And I will say churches have mobilized, our church has mobilized, churches across the state have mobilized. And praise God for ministries like Samaritan's Purse, which is doing outstanding work. The North Carolina Baptists are doing great work and churches are sending people and supplies by the truckloads up there. So we sent several truckloads this past weekend, and so the Christian community is really doing what it can to help. Sadly, FEMA has not delivered and in many communities is nowhere to be found. It's really Christians that are coming to the aid of these people.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Very interesting. Grant Castleberry with us today on *The Christian Worldview*. Grant, let's talk about God's sovereignty in the midst of something like this, because you see the comments online or by people, the left will blame these super storms like Helene or Milton on man. Man has caused climate change so that the storms are getting more severe. Those on the right, on the far right, let's say will blame it on geoengineering, they'll call it, that the government has manipulated weather and in the effort to stop climate change or whatever they're trying to do has caused problems and makes these storms stronger. I don't know whether that's true at all or not, but I've read some of that. Maybe you have, too. But from a biblical standpoint, Grant, how do we understand these storms in light of God's sovereignty over all things including the weather?

GUEST: Grant Castleberry:

In a general sense, God is of course sovereign over all weather. God's sovereign over all things. At the same time, storms, calamities, disasters in scripture are attributed to the fall. They are a result of the curse. Paul talks about in Romans 8 that God subjected the creation to futility in hope. Creation itself is under the curse. So these cataclysmic storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, brushfires, earthquakes, volcanoes, all of these things are a result of the fall and a sign of God's judgment on mankind as a result of sin. And of course, the first major storm that is recorded in scripture is the Great Flood, the judgment of Noah. You see in the book of Jonah that God sends a storm to discipline Jonah and again, God sovereignly brings the great fish that swallows Jonah, and God also can bring storms to alleviate drought. For example, in First Kings, Elijah prays and there's a cloud, a really small cloud, and then God brings that.

And so yes, I think there's comfort for the Christian and knowing and understanding that God is sovereign over all these storms, yes, they are a mark of God's judgment. In fact, Jesus even says that these calamities are birth pangs for the coming of the end, but yet they also, in a transcendent sense, demonstrate to us the awesome power and majesty of God as well. I say that reverently and I know that storms bring great hurt and pain to people's lives, but at the same time, there's that sense of the awesome power and wonder that happens when we encounter a great storm. And Martin Luther famously when he was riding a horse, was caught in a lightning storm and it terrified him and he said, "God, if you'll rescue me," or he actually cried out to St. Anne and he said, "St. Anne, if you'll rescue me, I'll become a monk." So there's this sense where these storms remind us of the awesome power of God and that we are to fear God.

But I will say for the Christians that are hit by hurricanes and going to be dealing with the aftermath of Milton and those that are dealing with the aftermath of Helene, there is that sense where we can trust that God is even working in the hurricane, for the Christian, ultimately for good, and that could be for the Christian community to demonstrate our hospitality and love for one another. God could be redirecting our lives or our churches in ways that we had not previously thought about. But God uses these circumstances in our lives, in our churches, in our businesses, in ways that ultimately work for the good of the Christian.

So there is that comfort even in the midst of disaster and perhaps losing lives and losing goods, worldly goods, that God is working these things for our spiritual edification. And that's what Paul says in Romans 5, that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. So these

things, God works out for our good even though it's hard to necessarily see that in the moment that we're going through the suffering.

HOST: David Wheaton:

That's well said, and the only thing I would add for the non-believer is what Jesus said in Luke 13 when questioned about the seemingly random deaths of 18 people when the tower in Siloam collapsed. Jesus didn't give reasons but rather exhorted those living to repent lest they die unexpectedly without having trusted in Christ. Grant Castleberry is our guest today here on *The Christian Worldview*, the pastor of Capital Community Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. We have links to him on our website, thechristianworldview.org. We'll pause briefly to tell you about some ministry resources and updates, but stay tuned. Next segment, we'll discuss God's sovereignty in regard to the disheartening fall of revered preacher Steven Lawson. Did God ordain that as some have mocked, how could God work anything good out of a situation that has brought shame to the name of Christ? I'm David Wheaton. You are listening to *The Christian Worldview Radio Program*.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Welcome back to *The Christian Worldview*, I'm David Wheaton. Be sure to visit our website thechristianworldview.org, where you can subscribe to our free weekly email and annual print letter, order resources for adults and children, and support the ministry. Our topic today is Understanding God's Sovereignty in the Storms of Life, and our guest is Grant Castleberry, pastor of Capital Community Church in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Grant, most Christians, at least conservative evangelical Christians have heard the news about Pastor Steven Lawson and his fall through what's been unspecified but some sort of moral failure. You've heard lots of Christians talk about this and think through it, and here's a man who is 73 years old and has carefully studied and preached and taught the Word of God for decades and affiliated with many ministries that I know you and I both respect from Grace Community Church and John MacArthur to Ligonier, and directed his own ministry, OnePassion, and many other places that he was involved in over the years and highly respected. You're a pastor, you lead your church and you pursue the same course from a standpoint of daily study, weekly preaching of the Word of God. Tell us how the importance of watching over your heart with all diligence is so key as to explain how a pastor/preacher could fall into this kind of sin that he surely knew was not the right thing to do.

GUEST: Grant Castleberry:

David, when I heard the news about Lawson, I was shocked and just gutted. I used to go to Steve's Bible study in Dallas at Herb's Coffee off Greenville Avenue. When I pastored at a church in Dallas, I was on staff there and I would, Thursday mornings, occasionally go over there and Steve was always very kind to me, and afterwards, we would talk about preaching and ministry and Jonathan Edwards. We both have a mutual love for Jonathan Edwards. And like you, I've looked up to this man as a stalwart defender of truth and a proclaimer of the gospel. And men like R.C. Sproul and John MacArthur entrusted this man with their ministries. Steven Lawson was on the board of Ligonier Ministries and a teaching fellow, so R.C. Sproul had

handed that teaching baton to him, and he was also the dean of the Doctor of Ministry program at the Master Seminary. So John MacArthur had invested great trust in him at the Master Seminary.

And so what we are witnessing is just a catastrophic dropping of the baton and I think that needs to be emphasized that this is historic, this is epic. I've never in my life seen a fall this cataclysmic. It is truly, truly monumental. And so I emphasize that because we must not make light of this or minimize it, I've lost sleep over it. I've just been so saddened and at the same time frustrated at the hypocrisy that I think is there, and you ask how does this happen? I once read a study that Howard Hendricks, who is with the Lord now, but he did a study of 246 men who had fallen in ministry, and he said that almost all of them had ceased spending daily time with God in his Word and in prayer.

Second, most of them had no accountability. Third, he said that all of them, at some point along the way, and this is obvious, had violated the Billy Graham rule, were they had started associating counseling meeting one-on-one with a woman who was not their spouse, and then fourth, almost to a man, they all said that they didn't think it could happen to them. So they thought they were impervious to temptation and falling. So you ask how does this happen with somebody like Lawson? Well, I think you go back and look and you say clearly there was a disconnect between his public ministry and his personal walk with God. That he was not growing spiritually at the height that he was preaching to others. Paul says in Romans 2, to teachers, "you, who teach one thing, do you do the very same thing? You who tell others, 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery? You who tell others not to steal, do you rob temples?" And there was a disconnect in his heart between who he was and what he preached, and clearly, he did not have the accountability in his life that was needed.

And in hindsight, Steven Lawson was the preaching pastor of Trinity Bible Church and that's where my sister was. My sister has been a member at Trinity Bible Church. She just moved to Corpus Christi from Dallas, so she was under Steven's ministry for two years, but I always had a little bit of a check that he was the preaching pastor and not an elder and not shepherding, and there's something about God's design roles that he's given us as pastors and as elders that we are to, Ephesians 4:11-12, pastor and teach. It's not just teaching, we're to shepherd as well, and there's an accountability there in the local church that you're there with the people where you're supposed to be doing what you're supposed to be doing. So that accountability wasn't there. Then clearly, he crossed the line in terms of his communications and affiliations with a young woman that he should not have crossed.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Well, that was very, very sobering the way you said that and very truthful. Thank you for that. Grant Castleberry is our guest today, the pastor of Capital Community Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. I want to get into God's sovereignty in a situation like this, but just a follow-up to that question, Grant, how do you think this has been handled? There was an early statement early on by his church, Trinity, and by OnePassion, the ministry that he led, but there's really been complete silence since those initial statements.

Is this purely a church issue? It's been said, "Well, the elders of his church need to deal with this. They're looking into this and this is a church issue. And those of you on the outside, we've made our statement and that's it." Or Grant, do you think the wider Christian community, I mean think of all the people he wasn't... As you just mentioned, he wasn't just, he was a preaching pastor like you said of Trinity Church in Dallas, but his ministry was international. He preached at conferences all over the world, resources, books, and he was in films and so forth. Does the wider Christian community deserve more of an explanation or is this purely a matter for his local church?

GUEST: Grant Castleberry:

It's interesting that you asked me that question because over the weekend, I wanted to write down the thoughts that were in my mind and on my heart, and I'm not sure if I'll ever actually publish this at Unashamed Truth, but I actually addressed this question. So it might be better for me just to read this paragraph that I wrote this weekend, so I don't mind saying this publicly. I said, "In addition to the tragic nature of these things, perhaps of even greater concern is the lack of public confession and repentance from Lawson. For a man who spent thousands of hours in front of the video camera, Lawson's silence is deafening. How we respond to our sin reflects the genuineness of our faith. As Christians, we are called to confession, 1st John 1:9, into personal repentance, Acts 11:18 and 17:30. Nobody preached this more fervently than Steven Lawson."

"For that reason, Lawson owes the thousands of men and women, and boys and girls who followed his teaching and ministry, an apology. They need to see that the great preacher of repentance is now walking in repentance. No, we do not need to know the specific details of his sin, but we do need to hear that he repudiates his sin and is seeking to walk in the light and accountability at Trinity Bible Church. I have been praying that he comes forward soon with humility, transparency, and a true heart of repentance. Until he does this, I fear for his soul. The Bible warns against those who teach against adultery yet commit adultery, Romans 2:21-22. Jesus warned about those who did mighty works for the kingdom but failed to do the will of his father in heaven, Matthew 7:21-22. I'm not pronouncing an anathema on Lawson, but I am concerned that if he does not respond with public confession and repentance, the very fate of his soul is in jeopardy."

HOST: David Wheaton:

Yeah, those are again sobering words and I agree with what you're saying. Sometimes we can put our own timing on things, but I think people have been pretty patient here for two or three weeks and we don't know what's going on behind the scenes, at least I don't. And it's troubling that there hasn't been more, like you just said, a public confession and a repudiation, to use your word, of what took place. And I think we all need to be praying that if that is not in his heart at this point, that he would be so convicted and come to that point of repentance. God's sovereignty we're talking about today, God can even work good things out of this. I know just even in my own life finding out about this and thinking about it, as you have Grant, has been a lot of self-reflection.

Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. Being circumspect about my own life in the Word. Is my heart humble? Is the spirit leading me? Do I have any relationships or anything in my own life that Satan could use to get me off track? So there are some good things that God can work in the midst of a really devastating

fall like this. But you read online in social media and I'm sure you've seen all these posts, there's been a lot of people on social media commenting on this, and you'll hear some of the mockers say, well, "Lawson was a Calvinist, so God predetermined everything or he ordained this, what happened to him. God could have kept him from this sin and didn't."

How do you understand God's sovereignty in a situation like this, Grant, considering there's many examples in scripture where let's say the contrast of King David when he walked out on his roof and saw Bathsheba bathing, he just went right ahead, fell into adultery, whereas Joseph in Egypt just immediately responded with, "How could I do this great evil and sin against God?" Is it possible even to understand God's sovereignty in allowing... God certainly didn't cause Steve Lawson to do this. Steve Lawson has personal responsibility for this, but is there something we need to understand about God's sovereignty as to how God would allow a man who had very faithfully preached the Word of God for decades to fall into a sin like this?

GUEST: Grant Castleberry:

One of the presuppositions that all of those naysayers that are saying, "Oh, Lawson's a Calvinist who believes in God's sovereignty and then God's sovereignly ordained this," the presupposition that they're bringing is that this is ultimately going to be a net-zero or a negative for Steven Lawson, when in reality, this is a mercy from God that God exposed the sin before he was taken on to glory. That he is now 73 years old and he's been hiding this sin for five years apparently, and that's five years where he has not been walking in fellowship with Christ. Just because you're a Christian doesn't mean that you are abiding in Christ. Jesus talks about in John 15, "Abide in me and I in you," and He says the way that that happens is you obey My commands. He has not been walking in fellowship with Christ, so this is a grace and a mercy from God, and now he has the opportunity to repent and to have restored fellowship with Christ which brings true assurance.

Can you imagine being on your deathbed knowing that this is in the closet and not being confessed to the Lord? So for the sake of Lawson's own soul, I actually think God is sovereignly working. I pray and hope that he's a believer and God has been working this for his good and the good of his family. And then I think as you just said, this is a huge warning sign and a sober wake-up call for so much of the church to take stock of our lives and to put our external guards up, but also ask those hard questions of the heart.

Are we really fostering a deep devotion to Christ? Am I in the Bible every single day? Am I on my knees every single day? Am I really walking in communion with Him, or is my ministry just kind of this external programmatic show? Again, to quote Howard Hendricks from TTS, he used to say that, "Your ministry can't be a cistern. It must come from a flowing stream, and that flowing stream is your personal devotion with the living Christ." So it's a huge reminder for us and God's glory that we have to stay close to Him and put up our guard. In that way, I think God is waking up a whole generation of pastors and ministry leaders.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Grant Castleberry, pastor of Capital Community Church in Raleigh, North Carolina is our guest today. We have links to him at thechristianworldview.org. We'll take a short break to tell you about some ministry resources, but next segment, Grant will offer insight on the Christian conference circuit that some have said is leading to

a lack of local church accountability for pastors who travel. He will also offer insight on God's sovereignty in this upcoming election and tell us about a new Christmas resource for families in the month of December called Manger in Danger. I'm David Wheaton and you are listening to The Christian Worldview Radio Program.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Our topic today is Understanding God's Sovereignty in the Storms of Life, and our guest is Grant Castleberry, pastor of Capital Community Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. Grant, in the aftermath of the revealing of the news of the disqualification of Pastor Steven Lawson, there has been a lot of discussion about what's called celebrity evangelicalism, like the Christian conference circuit where you have pastors who are away from home, they're not daily engaged as shepherds in their local church, as you just described a few minutes ago. There's this celebrity culture selling resources and speaking in big platforms and picture selfies with kind of the celebrities of the conservative evangelical community.

What are your thoughts on that whole criticism that the celebrity Christian culture leads to this? I think back, just to give a little personal example, I've been to the Shepherds' Conference many times, and by the way, just in talking to you today, it reminded me that I had met you for the first time at Shepherds' Conference this year, and it was during Pastor Steven Lawson's message on Friday afternoon at Shepherds' Conference, we were sitting just one row apart from each other and he spoke, I believe on hell. And I remember afterwards, we talked for a second, we just thought, "Wow, that was an extremely powerful message." How do we think through, Grant, this criticism that there's too much of a celebrity conference circuit? Is there validity to that? I mean, I think of how I've been impacted very positively by going to the Shepherds' Conference, and yet I see some of those criticisms that they're valid.

GUEST: Grant Castleberry:

I'm not ready to vilify conferences per se because I think the Lord can use conferences for great good and the Lord has used conferences to edify so many pastors and ministry leaders and Christians, and also provide an opportunity for fellowship with like-minded believers. So there's I think a lot of benefit from conferences. I personally enjoy attending them, but one of the negative sides of conferences is that celebrityism that you're talking about. It's one thing to appreciate a man in his ministry, and I think that's biblical. I think there's a sense where even Paul says, "Follow me as I follow Christ." There's a sense where you can look up to people, that you remember your leaders who taught the Word of God to you, Hebrews 13, I think. There's that sense where we honor those who teach the Word of God, but we can't put them on a pedestal to the extent that we base our entire Christian life upon them.

Paul warns against that in 1st Corinthians 3, where the Corinthians were saying, "I'm of Cephas, I'm of Apollos. I'm of Paul, or I'm of Jesus." And Paul just cuts that completely off at the base and says, "No, it's God who gives the growth. Christ is the one who gives the glory. We are but servants for the kingdom." And so there's that sense, as Alistair Begg has said, "The best of men are men at best, and we are all clay pots being used by the master." So where celebrityism has caused damage is where people have looked to people as kind of the embodiment of their Christianity and base their entire Christianity on one person, and where

that environment, I think unless a person is very humble and very spiritual, it is easy in that environment to become prideful and to believe your press, and that can be a very dangerous thing for anybody to constantly be hearing praise and pats on the back and a long line of people wanting to take pictures with you. That is a very challenging temptation to withstand in terms of the temptation of pride that could be there.

And in terms of what you're talking about traveling, I think there's something to be said about the majority of the time if you're a pastor being there, especially on Sundays, to preach in your church, to be there with your people, that you primarily understand yourself to be a local pastor. At the same time, I think there's times where you can't just make legalistic rules about these things. I'm studying Martyn Lloyd-Jones for my PhD, and he traveled quite a bit during the week to do evangelistic messages in different places over England and greatly helped people, but normally he would be home at night, would come back in the evenings or would spend one or two nights away. So long times away from your wife are certainly not helpful. So I don't want to throw out the baby with the bath water and say all conferences are bad and all book writing is bad. There's also for sure lessons to be learned here and certainly pride to be resisted.

HOST: David Wheaton:

And just to be clear, I'm not ascribing blame to the Christian conference circuit that led to Steve Lawson falling into this sin. That's definitely not what we're saying. That was a very well-balanced answer that you gave there, that there's great benefit in these conferences, but it comes back to the hearts of those who attend them as well. Not holding those who we know are gifted preachers by God in too high esteem, that again, they're men and they've been gifted in this way. And to keep that in our own hearts in perspective as well.

Grant Castleberry with us today on The Christian Worldview. The whole country, and really the whole world is focused on this upcoming election in a few weeks in early November. November 5th is election day. People are already voting in many places. We have discussed this a lot on this program leading up all different angles of it and so forth. I've been asking those who come on just to frame how you are helping your own people in your own church, how are you shepherding your church with this upcoming election, how to think about it, the state of affairs in our country right now, what's at stake? And even maybe preparing them in advance for whatever eventuality happens as to how, look, we're to keep running the race on the narrow road and this doesn't change God's plans. How are you shepherding your people at this point?

GUEST: Grant Castleberry:

So much of what you just said is what I'm doing, and our congregation, probably just because we preach the Bible, we're a very conservative congregation, so we have some leading conservative voices in the state of North Carolina that are even members of our church. And so we understand that Kamala Harris is the most pro-choice, most pro-transgender candidate that's ever been on the docket. And so I would be shocked and really mortified if one of my members voted for her. Now, that's not saying that I give a full endorsement of Donald Trump either because I don't think that he's a Christian and certainly, his most recent compromises on abortion are really, really sad quite frankly, and Melania's as well.

But clearly, the choice this November I think in terms of the Christian worldview is obvious that you have a very extreme candidate who is pushing for ungodly positions and a candidate that is more in line with what Christians believe in terms of closed borders, in terms of conservative economic principles, in terms of appointing justices to the Supreme Court that are going to uphold the decision regarding Roe v. Wade and all those things. So in terms of the politics, I think it's pretty clear, but what I'm emphasizing with my people is that the big picture here is ultimately as with all things spiritual, and our nation is in a very spiritually dark place, very spiritually dark place. In fact, the fact that Kamala is even on the ballot is indicative of that.

So what our nation really needs is reformation and revival. Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil and heavenly places. And we desperately need the churches to come to a place of repentance and to plead with God to work in our country through the proclamation of the gospel. Politics is downstream from culture, and culture is downstream from religion, and what American needs is religion, Christian religion, true Christian religion, true gospel preaching. So if there's going to be a change in our country, it's ultimately not going to be at the ballot box, it's going to be at the pulpit, it's going to be in the pew in prayer meetings as people come back to love and revere the living God.

HOST: David Wheaton:

Yeah, thank you for that perspective. That's the biblical way to look at this coming into this election. I'm want to close today, Grant, by talking about a resource that we are featuring as we head toward Christmas to help listeners do what you just said, what can bring reformation and revival into a family. So much of Christmas is about materialism, consumerism, things that have nothing to do with the birth of Christ, Santa Claus and parties and drinking and everything else. It's so easy to get distracted this time of year, and you and your wife, GraceAnna, have created a resource. I'm going to let you describe it. It's not just a book, it's actually a resource. It's something that's done in the days and really the month of December leading up to Christmas, it's called Manger in Danger, and we're going to be offering this to listeners, but I thought since you're on and you and your wife put this together, that you talk about why you created it and the purpose of it.

GUEST: Grant Castleberry:

The general impetus behind it was we didn't want our kids doing all these secular games like Elf on the Shelf or that sort of thing. We really wanted to put Christ front and center at Christmas in all of our traditions. And so my wife just had this idea, she called it Manger in Danger, where when the kids get up every morning, she takes a manger and hides it, and then the kids come downstairs and when they wake up, the first one who finds it for the day wins. And she called it Manger in Danger just out of the theme of Satan, through Herod and others trying to kill the baby Jesus and the flight to Egypt and all of that that happened and the Nativity story, and of course, God providentially protected His son until the point of crucifixion. So from a sovereign sense, He wasn't in danger, but from man's perspective, Satan and the forces of evil were trying to kill the baby Jesus.

So there's some symbolism there in terms of the name, but it was a way to put Christ in the Christmas story front and center with our kids. And then somebody had the idea of let's make this available to other families. So GraceAnna and I kind of put it together with the PDF last year and a lot of families were interested in it. And then 316 Publishing, Gary Kim and others came to us and said, "Hey, we want to make this available to

families across the country." And they actually engineered a wooden manger that's small enough to hide. And then I wrote a family devotional with 25 devotions for every day in December leading up to Christmas, including Christmas day, that you can do in about seven minutes each day after you play the game. And the devotions are just loaded with the deity of Christ and the gospel on basically every page.

So it's really a great way to get the gospel to your kids through the narrative of the Christmas story. And it's also a great evangelistic tool that if you have family in your company or a family member that you want to give the game to, the book is basically a gospel tract that is loaded with truth that you are giving them. So we're excited just to see the spiritual impact that this is going to have on children. Children are our greatest mission field, and their hearts are so tender, and they're receptive to truth. So I'm just so excited to see how the Lord is going to use this game and this tradition, but really the truth that comes with it.

HOST: David Wheaton:

We're really excited about it as well, because for many years on this program, we try to encourage listeners to make Christmas meaningful about the purpose of Christmas, the coming of the Son of God into the world, and this is just a fantastic way to do that. If you're a parent or you're a grandparent, this is something we really recommend you get and do for those days, not just something you do on Christmas morning or Christmas Eve, but this will get your hearts and your minds focused to where it should be as you head toward Christmas. So we're so appreciative that you put this together, Grant, you and GraceAnna.

Thank you also for coming on the program today and answering some really difficult questions. God's sovereignty is one of the big questions I think that people are always trying to understand. We probably can't perfectly understand it, His ways and His thoughts are higher than ours, but I thought you did really an excellent job today. So thank you for coming on The Christian Worldview, keep standing firm in Christ and as you preach to your church, all of God's best and grace to you and your family as well.

GUEST: Grant Castleberry:

Absolutely. As always, it's a pleasure joining you and so thankful for you. Keep on.

HOST: David Wheaton:

I'm really grateful for Grant Castleberry and the work that God has done in his life. You can find links to his church and his ministry at thechristianworldview.org. Also, if you have children or grandchildren aged four to 12, or are friends with an unbelieving family, we highly encourage you to order Manger in Danger. Our family is going to use it starting December 1st. Now Manger in Danger retails for \$40 plus shipping. You can order it online, by phone or through the mail for a donation of \$30 or more to The Christian Worldview, and our contact information will be given immediately following today's program.

Thank you for joining us today on The Christian Worldview and for your support of this non-Profit Radio ministry. And thank you to our board and staff, Brodie and Kelly, Alicia, Rich, and Rosie, and Ben, who contribute so much each week. Let's remember what scripture says. The Lord has established His throne in the heavens and His sovereignty rules overall. For that, He's to be trusted and praised. Until next time, Think biblically, Live accordingly, and Stand firm!

The mission of The Christian Worldview is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. We hope today's broadcast encouraged you toward that end. To hear a replay of today's program, order a transcript or find out "What must I do to be saved?" Go to thechristianworldview.org or call, toll-free, 1-888-646-2233. The Christian Worldview is a listener-supported, non-profit radio ministry, furnished by The Overcomer Foundation To make a donation, become a Christian Worldview Partner, order resources, subscribe to our free newsletter, or contact us, visit thechristianworldview.org, call 1-888-646-2233, or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota, 55331. That's Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota, 55331. Thanks for listening to The Christian Worldview.