



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Equipping & Encouraging Believers
In Prayer

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IF GOD IS SOVEREIGN, WHY PRAY?

If God is sovereign, why pray? If God is going to do His will no matter what, why should I even pray? If God knows everything that will happen, why pray to Him about people and circumstances? Maybe you have thought these things but never expressed them. Some believers are kept from a powerful and effective prayer life because of a faulty view of God's sovereignty. They do not pray fervently and faithfully because they don't believe that their prayers will make any difference. Their reasoning is, "God is all-powerful. He has His will. He works out His will whether I pray or not. It doesn't really matter if I pray or not." Because of this belief, their prayer lives are nominal and sporadic.

The sovereignty of God is revealed in Scripture to encourage believers to pray. It was never intended to be a hindrance to prayer. If you believe that there is no need to pray because of God's sovereignty, then you have a faulty view of that sovereignty. His sovereignty ought to stir you to lay hold of Him and pray with faith and with boldness. It should be a comfort in dry and difficult times in your prayer life. It can be an anchor in the tragic, adverse times of life when you must seek Him.

The underlying issue is, "Do my prayers really matter to God? Does my praying truly make a difference in the lives of others?" How you answer these questions will impact and affect your prayer life before God. If you do not believe that

your praying matters to God, you will have a sporadic, lukewarm prayer life. Yet, if you believe that your prayers matter to God, you will grow and mature into a powerful and empowered intercessor before God.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will focus on the relationship between God's sovereignty and prayer. We will examine how His sovereignty should affect your prayer life. It is my fervent prayer and goal that you will come to realize in a fresh and new way that you have a sovereign God who hears and answers prayer. My heart's longing is for you to come to the conviction that your prayers do matter to God—that they touch Him and that they change people and circumstances through Him.

The Bible And God's Sovereignty

The Bible teaches that God is sovereign. This means that He has all power over all things. He is in control of all things. He created all things and now reigns over all things. This sovereign God has a plan for all things that He is now carrying out. This world is not ruled by chance or coincidence. It is guided and governed by a sovereign God who is good and loving. God's sovereign control extends from the nations of the world to the smallest details of life. Jesus said that not even a sparrow could fall

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apart from the will of our Father, “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from Your Father’s will” (**Matthew 10:29**).

Listen to the testimony of the Word of God concerning His sovereignty:

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (**Ephesians 1:11**).

“But He is unique, and can make Him change? And whatever His soul desires, that He does” (**Job 23:13**).

“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure’” (**Isaiah 46:10**).

“The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations” (**Psalms 33:11**).

“The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; let the earth be moved!” (**Psalms 99:1**).

“But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases” (**Psalms 115:3**).

“All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” (**Daniel 4:35**).

“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (**Ephesians 4:6**).

The Bible teaches that God is sovereign. He has power over everything. He reigns over all things and peoples. He is accomplishing His will in the earth.

His Sovereignty And Your Prayers

The Bible does teach that God is working out His plan for all things. He is accomplishing

what He desires in this world. There are two amazing truths concerning His sovereignty and your prayers. You need to keep these truths in mind as you consider His sovereignty and your praying. *The first is that He has determined to use your prayers in carrying out His purpose.* God has graciously allowed you to be a part in accomplishing His purpose through prayer. This sovereign God has made your praying an essential element in doing His will in this earth. God could work apart from the prayers of His people. Yet, He has determined to use your praying to accomplish His purpose.

You may be wondering, “How can I know that God will use my prayers to accomplish His purpose?” Consider all the commands, the promises, and the examples that you are given concerning prayer in the Word of God. God has given you these commands, promises, and examples to show you that your prayers matter and that He uses them. Do you believe that God makes empty promises? Do you believe that God will not be true to His Word? Why would God give you all these promises, commands, and examples if your praying does not matter?

The Word of God declares, “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” (**Numbers 23:19**). GOD DOES NOT LIE! He means what He says! He will honor these commands, promises, and examples. He has given you all these things as a vivid reminder that your praying does matter. He has chosen to use your praying to accomplish His will.

God has determined to bless, save, heal, restore, and transform the lives of people. This is God’s heart. He longs to do these things. You can pray with confidence because You are praying according to His heart. God has purposed to release His sovereign power into the lives of people through prayer. It is God’s will to bless, save, heal, restore, and transform. When you pray for these things, it does matter! He uses your prayers to accomplish these things.

Second, asking is the rule of the kingdom. God is sovereign. But He has ordained that you must ask in order to receive. This is stated clearly in **James 4:2**, “You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.”

If you do not ask, you do not receive. Consider the words of Jesus, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (**Matthew 7:7-8**). If that is not explicit enough for you, listen once again to Jesus, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him*" (**Matthew 7:11, emphasis mine**). God gives to those who ask of Him.

God has set in place a fixed, unchanging law. That law is that you must ask of God in order to receive from God. No one earns anything or merits anything from God. He has chosen that we receive from Him by asking of Him.

As I was teaching on **Matthew 7:7-11** in a prayer conference, a lady came to me, expressing reservations about what I was teaching. I had been declaring our need to ask, to seek, and to knock. I had emphasized our need to be bold in prayer. She said that we could pray boldly, but God would only answer if our request was in line with His will. I assured her that I was in complete agreement with her. But, my question to her was, "How can you know what God's will is if you don't ask?" God teaches you His will as you seek Him. God reveals His purposes as you cry out to Him.

It is not our responsibility to try and guess what God desires and what God purposes to do. The first reason for this is because our conception of what God can do is less than what He can actually do, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (**Ephesians 3:20**). Paul declares that God can do exceedingly abundantly above anything that we can ask or think of. We cannot and must not put finite limitations on an infinite God.

The second reason for this is because the Word of God teaches that you are to seek God in faith and boldness. You are to come boldly before God. You are to ask, seek, and knock! You are to pray with holy abandon. The overwhelming testimony of the Word of God is that you are to bring all your requests to Him, asking, believing, and persevering in faith and boldness. Ask of God and let Him guide you and guard you in your praying. God delights in your asking. He honors

and responds to your asking. He has made this the fixed, unchanging rule of His kingdom.

Maintaining The Balance

It is obvious that we are dealing with a mystery when we consider God's sovereignty and our praying. It is impossible for our finite minds to comprehend this infinite mystery. Yet, our lack of understanding does not mean that these things are not true. There are other mysteries of the faith that we must accept by faith. Consider the two natures of Christ. Christ is both God and man. Consider the Trinity. There is one God who exists in three Persons. How can you fully explain these things? It is impossible to comprehend them. Yet, the Bible teaches these things and we must accept them by faith.

We must maintain a balance between God's sovereignty and our prayers. What I mean by this is that we must assert and believe in both. We must believe that God is sovereign and is working out His plan in this world. We must also believe that God hears and answers our prayers. We must believe that He uses our prayers in accomplishing His purpose. We must keep a healthy balance between these truths.

If you focus only on the sovereignty of God, you will lose the fervent and passionate seeking after God. When you believe that God does what He wants apart from the prayers of His people, you deaden the bold, faith-filled praying that the Word of God requires. If you focus only on man's responsibility to pray, you will have nothing more than an empty ritual. If God is not sovereign, there is no need to pray. Why pray to a God who cannot do what you ask? However, God's sovereignty gives you the hope that God can and will do what you are asking. The truth that He is sovereign should stir you to obey His commands to pray, to claim His promises, and follow the examples of prayer in the Word of God.

It is vital that you maintain a balance between these two truths. They do not oppose one another; they complement one another. In order to help you maintain the balance between these truths, the following practical suggestions are given to help you.

- *Ask God to help you gain a better understanding of His sovereignty; pray that you will trust Him more because of His sovereignty.* God will reveal Himself to you if you seek Him. If you will express to Him your desire to know Him, especially concerning His sovereignty, He will teach you. Study and meditate on the passages that declare God's sovereignty. You might consider the following verses: **Deuteronomy 4:39; 1 Samuel 2:6-8; 2 Kings 19:15; Job 9:12, 41:11; Psalm 24:1, 50:10, 75:6, 95:3-5, 99:1, 115:3, 135:6; Proverbs 19:21; Isaiah 46:10; Lamentations 3:37, 5:19; Daniel 4:17, 25, 35; Acts 2:23; Romans 8-9; Ephesians 1:11; Revelation 4:11.** There are numerous texts that deal with God's sovereignty. You can use a good study Bible to locate other texts that teach God's sovereignty. The key issue is to dig into the Word of God, asking the Holy Spirit to teach you and to bring you to deeper trust in God because of His sovereign character. If you are struggling with this issue, confess it to Him and trust Him to help you.
- *Keep in mind the purpose of prayer.* The purpose of prayer is communication with God. Prayer is the way that you speak to and hear from your heavenly Father. Asking is only a part of your prayer life. God longs to have a relationship with you. When you are invited to eat a meal with someone, you don't rush in and say, "Okay, this is what I need. This is what I'm struggling with. This is what I want. Thanks" and then rush out. Instead, you would enter the home, talk with the people, spend time with them, listen to them and then ask of them if you needed something. How often do you rush into God's presence, spill out prayer requests, and then rush out of His presence back to your busy lifestyle? Prayer is about building a relationship with God. Adore Him. Confess your sin to Him. Thank Him. Listen to Him. If you focus only on asking, you will have a difficult time maintaining the balance between God's sovereignty and your praying. It is only by developing a relationship with God that you can keep these crucial truths balanced.
- *Memorize Matthew 7:7-8 and James 4:2.* The Holy Spirit led me to memorize these verses a couple of years ago. I continually meditate on these verses. I continually remind my Father of these verses. The reasons for doing this are

because it stirs my heart to ask of Him and helps me to know that my praying matters to God. They declare God's will for prayer—asking in faith opens the door to God's blessings. He has ordained that I ask in order to receive of Him. These verses move me to seek God with all my heart. They give me the assurance that I can ask and trust God for answers. You might consider memorizing them. Or you could write them on a 3 X 5 or 4 X 6 card and keep it in your Bible or prayer journal. The key issue is to remind God and you of these truths. It is keeping the truth of asking in order to receive at the forefront of your heart and mind.

- *Immerse yourself in the promises of God.* God has given you promises that you can believe and claim in prayer. A good study Bible will provide you with many of these. There are books that list the promises of God. You might even consider starting a section in your prayer journal or a notebook in which you list these promises as you read and study the Word. God's promises should encourage and stir you to pray. He will be faithful to His Word. He has the sovereign power to carry out all that He has promised. God has given these promises to show you that your praying matters; use them to ignite your faith and your asking of God.
- *Adore and glorify God for His greatness.* You can know God intimately. Yet, regardless of how intimate your knowledge of God is, you have not enough begun to understand who God is and what God can do. No one can fathom His character; no one can comprehend God's ways, "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave—what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth, and wider than the sea" (**Job 11:7-9**). There will always be that which is mysterious about God. Instead of doubt, this should be a point for praise in your prayer life. After all, do you really want to worship and serve a God that you can fully understand? If God were not a mystery to us, He would not be God to us. Let this truth drive you to adore and glorify God.
- *Ask God to give you a heart for praise.* Call on God to create within you a heart to praise Him. Plead with Him to give you a spirit adoration.