

# The Sovereignty of God

*"Pray without ceasing" 1 Thessalonians 5:17*

## 1. God's Sovereignty and prayer

1. If God is Sovereign over all things, why should we pray?
  1. What is Prayer?
    1. "Personal communication with God, either corporate or individual" Wayne Grudem
    2. Dictionary: A devout petition to God or an object of worship.
    3. Webster's 1828 dictionary: In worship, a solemn address to the Supreme Being, consisting of adoration, confession, supplication, intercession and thanksgiving.
    4. WCF Larger Catechism: Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of His Spirit, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies.
      1. *"Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah" Psalm 62:8*
      2. *"In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you." John 16:23*
      3. *"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." Romans 8:26*
      4. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9*
      5. *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Philipians 4:6*
  2. Why should we pray? *"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." James 5:16*
    1. We are commanded to pray! *"And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." Luke 18:1*
    2. Prayer is a means of fellowship with our Father
      1. We have been given access to the Father through Christ. *"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus" Hebrews 10:19*
      2. God wants to relate to us as Father. *"And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Luke 11:9*
    3. Prayer honors God
      1. It's a reminder, for us, who He is and who we are!
      2. Real prayer is an act of worship
      3. Prayer acknowledges our dependency

4. Prayer is a means of our growth in grace
    1. *"I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live."*  
**Psalm 116:1-2**
    2. Prayer humbles us as we acknowledge our unworthiness
    3. Prayer exercises our faith in God
    4. Prayer exercises our Love for God
    5. Prayer is the means of thanking God for His blessings
  5. Prayer is a means of seeking our needs from God. *"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."* **Matthew 6:7-8**
    1. Prayer doesn't inform God, it acknowledges He knows our needs
    2. Prayer is a confession of our needs to God
  6. Prayer Changes things!
    1. There are things that happen because of prayer and don't for lack of it
      1. A nonexistent prayer life sacrifices communion with God
      2. A persistent prayer life will reveal God more vividly
      3. *"Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, and said, 'Please, O LORD, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.' And Hezekiah wept bitterly."* **Isaiah 38:2-3**
      4. *"You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."*  
**James 4:2-3**
    5. Prayer is a means that God ordains for accomplishing His will
  7. Jesus is our example
    1. Jesus example was often going for long intervals to pray with His Father
    2. Jesus taught the disciples how to pray
3. What is the relationship between God's sovereignty and our prayer? Do our prayers change God's will?
    1. God has ordained all things to accomplish His purposes.
      1. *"Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'"* **Isaiah 46:8-10**
    2. God has declared the means of accomplishing His will
      1. *"Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, 'O Lord, the great and awesome God, who*

*keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments” Daniel 9:3-4*

2. *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.” Jeremiah 29:11-12*
3. The means of grace
  1. Preaching of the Gospel (the word of God) **R 1:16**
  2. Prayer
  3. The Sacraments
4. Prayer is committing my way unto the Lord, and leaving the ends to Him
  1. This brings our will in line with God, and not the other way around
  2. *“And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”” Luke 22:41-42*
5. What about “unanswered prayer”
  1. Every prayer asked in faith is answered
  2. We may not recognize, like or understand the answer
  3. *“This leaves God to answer the prayer in whatever way He sees fit, and often, His answer may be the very opposite of what would be most acceptable to the flesh; yet, if we have really left our need in His hands it will be His answer” A.W. Pink*
    1. John 11, the story of Lazarus
    2. 2 Corinthians 12, The apostle Paul
  4. Real prayer is communion between the Father and us
  5. We need to let God fill our hearts with His thoughts
  6. His desires will flow back to him through us
    1. *“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.” 1 John 5:14*
    2. *“Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness.” Martin Luther*
6. Prayer is more than an act, it is an attitude
  1. Dependency on God
  2. Confession of helplessness
  3. Acknowledgment of need
2. *“Prayer is not the requesting of God to alter His purpose or for Him to form a new one. Prayer is the taking of an attitude of dependency upon God, the spreading of our need before Him, the asking for those things that are in accordance with His will, and therefore there is nothing whatever inconsistent between divine sovereignty and Christian prayer.” A.W. Pink*

