

Lesson 1 – God’s Faithfulness

Discussion Questions: What is your favorite attribute of God? Why? How do you decide to trust someone?

Introduction

God is the only true God (Isa 45:5, 21-22; 46:9; Joel 2:27; John 17:3). He is awesome and amazing. His ways are beyond our ways and His thoughts are beyond our thoughts (Isa 55:8-9).

⁵“**I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God.** I will gird you, though you have not known Me; Isaiah 45:5

²¹“Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And **there is no other God besides Me,** A righteous God and a Savior; **There is none except Me.** ²²“Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; **For I am God, and there is no other.** Isaiah 45:21-22

⁹“Remember the former things long past, **For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me,** Isaiah 46:9

²⁷“Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, And that **I am the LORD your God, And there is no other;** And My people will never be put to shame. Joel 2:27

³This is eternal life, that they may know You, **the only true God,** and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. John 17:3

⁸“For **My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,**” declares the LORD. ⁹“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are **My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.** Isa 55:8-9

God has provided a self revelation in His Word so that we may know Him within the limitations of our finite minds. The attributes of God can be categorized multiple ways, but are generally broken into two main groups: those that belong to God alone (divine) and those that are in some way found in man (personal). God’s divine attributes include: self-existence, unity, infinity, eternality, immutability, omnipresence, sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipotence. God’s personal attributes include: justice, love, truth, freedom, holiness, lovingkindness, compassion, grace, faithfulness, longsuffering, and wrath. We must understand that all of God’s attributes or characteristics are perfect and that they all meld together to show us God’s character.

In our current study, we will focus on God’s sovereignty. We can define God’s sovereignty as: God is the supreme ruler – in control of all events. All things are under His rule and control, and nothing happens without His direction or permission. He works all things (not just some things) after the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11). God’s purpose is all inclusive and is never thwarted (Isa 46:11). Nothing takes Him by surprise.

¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who **works all things after the counsel of His will,** Eph1:11

⁹“Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰**Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';** ¹¹Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country **Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.** Isa 46:9-11

However, in my opinion, before we study sovereignty we must first lay a foundation concerning God's faithfulness. Understanding God's faithfulness moves us to complete submissiveness to His sovereignty.

God's faithfulness is explained as: God will always do what He has promised to do. He is steadfast, unchanging, perfectly reliable, and utterly dependable. He is 100% reliable, 100% of the time.

He not only advances and confirms that which is true, but in faithfulness abides by his promises, and executes every threat or warning he has made. Lewis Sperry Chafer's "Systematic Theology"

Far above all finite comprehension is the unchanging faithfulness of God. Everything about God is great, vast, incomparable. He never forgets, never fails, never falters, never forfeits His word. To every declaration of promise or prophecy the Lord has exactly adhered, every engagement of covenant or threatening He will make good, for "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Num. 23:19). A. W. Pink

Because God is faithful, He can be completely trusted. Because He is faithful we can fully submit ourselves to His sovereignty.

The apprehension of this blessed truth will beget increasing *confidence in God*. ... When we trustfully resign ourselves, and all our affairs into God's hands, fully persuaded of His love and faithfulness, the sooner shall we be satisfied with his providence ... A. W. Pink

God's Faithfulness

1. Faithfulness is part of God's character

⁹Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, **the faithful God**, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; Deut 7:9

⁴"The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; **A God of faithfulness** and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He. Deut 32:4

⁴For the word of the LORD is upright, And **all His work is done in faithfulness**. Psa 33:4

⁹**God is faithful**, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Cor 1:9

²⁴**Faithful is He** who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. 1 Thess 5:24

³But **the Lord is faithful**, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*. 2 Thess 3:3

¹³If we are faithless, **He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself**. 2 Tim 2:13

2. The Scriptures declare that God's faithfulness is:

- Great (abundant in quantity, size, age, number, rank, quality)

²²The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. ²³They are new every morning; **Great is Your faithfulness**. Lam 3:22-23

- Incomparable

⁸O LORD God of hosts, **who is like You, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You**. Psa 89:8

- Infinite

⁵Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, **Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.** Psa 36:5

- Unwavering

³³“But **I will not** break off My lovingkindness from him, Nor **deal falsely in My faithfulness.** Psa 89:33

- Established

²For I have said, “Lovingkindness will be built up **forever**; In the heavens **You will establish Your faithfulness.**” Psa 89:2

- Everlasting

⁸⁹Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. ⁹⁰**Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations**; You established the earth, and it stands. Psa 119:89-90

⁶Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them; **Who keeps faith forever**; Psa 146:6

3. God’s faithfulness is displayed in:

- Forgiving sin

⁹If we confess our sins, **He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins** and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

- The permanence of our salvation

⁷so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹**God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.** 1 Cor 1:7-9

²⁴**Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.** 1 Thess 5:24

³But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*. 2 Thess 3:3

²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, **for He who promised is faithful**; Heb 10:23

- Trials and discipline

⁷⁵I know, O LORD, **that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.** Psa 119:75

- Provision in times of trial, temptation, and suffering

¹³No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; **and God is faithful**, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 1 Cor 10:13

¹⁹Therefore, **those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator** in doing what is right. 1 Pet 4:19

- His providence

¹O LORD, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name; **For You have worked wonders, Plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.** Isa 25:1

– Fulfilling His promises

(to Jacob) ¹⁵Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for **I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.**” Gen 28:15

¹¹The LORD has sworn to David **A truth from which He will not turn back:** “Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne. Psa 132:11

(concerning Abraham) ¹⁹Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb; ²⁰yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹and **being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.** Rom 4:19-21

²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for **He who promised is faithful;** Heb 10:23

⁹Know therefore that the LORD your God, **He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments;** Deut 7:9

⁷The works of His hands are truth and justice; All His precepts are sure. ⁸They are upheld forever and ever; They are performed in truth and uprightness. ⁹He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant forever; **Holy and awesome is His name.** Psa 111:7-9

– Executing His judgments

²⁰“The anger of the LORD will not turn back **Until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart;** In the last days you will clearly understand it. Jer 23:20

²⁹So the land quakes and writhes, **For the purposes of the LORD against Babylon stand,** To make the land of Babylon A desolation without inhabitants. Jer 51:29

– Answering prayer

¹Hear my prayer, O LORD, Give ear to my supplications! **Answer me in Your faithfulness,** in Your righteousness! Psa 143:1

– Creation

⁵The **heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.** ⁶For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD, ⁷A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him? ⁸O LORD God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD? **Your faithfulness also surrounds You.** Psalms 89:5-8

²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. Rom 1:20

4. God’s children are commanded to depend on His faithfulness in difficult times

¹⁹Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. 1 Peter 4:19

5. God's faithfulness should be proclaimed

¹⁰I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; **I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation**; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation. Psalms 40:10

¹**I will sing of the lovingkindness of the LORD forever; To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth.** Psalms 89:1

¹It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; ²**To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning And Your faithfulness by night,** Psalms 92:1-2

Conclusion

A. W. Pink describes three results of understanding at the heart level God's faithfulness:

The apprehension of this blessed truth will preserve us from worry. To be full of care, to view our situation with dark forebodings, to anticipate the morrow with sad anxiety—is to reflect poorly upon the faithfulness of God.

The apprehension of this blessed truth will check our murmurings. The Lord knows what is best for each one of us, and one effect of resting on this truth will be the silencing of our petulant complainings. God is greatly honored when, under trial and chastening, we have good thoughts of Him, vindicate His wisdom and justice, and recognize His love in His very rebukes.

The apprehension of this blessed truth will beget increasing confidence in God. ... When we trustfully resign ourselves, and all our affairs into God's hands, fully persuaded of His love and faithfulness, the sooner shall we be satisfied with His providences ...

Three different groups of people should respond differently to an understanding of God's faithfulness:

1. To those that are His children, called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28), that are walking with Him on a consistent basis by presenting their bodies a living and holy sacrifice (Rom 12:1); God's faithfulness should be a comfort at all times because He will execute His Word perfectly. He provides all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3) in the easy times and hard times.
2. To those that are His children, yet walk in willful, unrepentant sin; there is the fearful expectation of discipline (Heb 12:4-13). God will not allow His true children to continue in rebellion; discipline is imminent.
3. To those that reject Jesus; there is the expectation of impending judgment (Psa 96:11-13; Rev 19:11).

Remember the wonder of God's faithfulness; trust His Word; trust His sovereign plan!

Application Questions

1. What kind of behavior, attitudes, and/or speech are manifested in a person who DOES understand God's faithfulness at the heart level?
2. What kind of behavior, attitudes, and/or speech are manifested in a person who DOES NOT understand God's faithfulness at the heart level?
3. What would have to change in such a person to for them to glorify God?

A Non-Comprehensive List of God's Attributes

The attributes of God can be categorized multiple ways, but are generally broken into two main groups – those that belong to God alone (incommunicable or divine) and those that are in some way found in man (communicable or personal). The attributes are listed below for personal study.

Divine attributes:

1. Simplicity – God is not a composite or compound being in essence, He is spirit only (John 4:24)
2. Self-existence – God is independent from everything; His being is in no way dependent upon anything outside Himself and exists forever in Himself alone (Ex 3:14; Psa 90:2; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16-17)
3. Unity – God is one in number, indivisible, and unique. (Deut 6:4)
4. Infinity – God has no bounds or limits. He is not limited by time-space. He is transcendent (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:28)
5. Eternality – Free from succession of time. He exists endlessly from eternity past to eternity future. All past, present, and future events are equally vivid to Him (Gen 21:33; Psa 90:2)
6. Immutability – God is unchanging and unchangeable; never inconsistent, growing, or developing (James 1:17)
7. Omnipresence – God is everywhere (Psa 139:7-12)
8. Sovereignty – God is the supreme ruler. He is in control of all events (Eph 1)
9. Omniscience – God knows all actual and possible things (Matt 11:21)
10. Omnipotence – God is all powerful and can do anything consistent with His nature (Rev 19:6)

Personal Attributes:

1. Justice – Moral equity, “no respect of persons” (Acts 17:31; Col 3:25)
2. Love – God seeking the highest good of displaying His own will (Eph 2:4-5, 1 John 4:8; John 3:16; 14:23; 16:27; Rom 5:8; 8:37; 9:13)
3. Truth – Agreement to and consistency with all that is represented by God Himself (John 17:3, Titus 1:2, Rom 3:4, Heb 6:18)
4. Freedom – Independence from His creatures (Isa 40:13-14)
5. Holiness – Pure and separate from sin (1 John 1:5)
6. Lovingkindness – Benevolent goodness (Psa 6:4; 51:1; Isa 54:8-10; Rom 2:4; Col 3:12)
7. Compassion – Goodness to those in difficulty (2 Sam 24:14; Neh 9:19; Lam 3:22; Psa 103:13; Eph 2:4; 2 Cor 1:3)
8. Grace – Goodness applied to undeserving people (John 1:14; Rom 5:15; Eph 2:8; 1 Pet 5:10)
9. Faithfulness – Always keeps His promises (Deut 7:9; Lam 3:22-23; 1 Thess 5:24)
10. Longsuffering – Patience toward those who deserve to be punished (Rom 3:25; 9:22; 1 Tim 1:16; 2 Pet 3:9, 15)
11. Wrath – Holiness and the application of justice (Ex 20:5; 34:14; Deut 32:3-4)

Lesson 2 – God’s Sovereignty

Review

Last week we laid a foundation to the study of God’s sovereignty of God’s faithfulness. God’s faithfulness is intrinsic to His character. The Scriptures declare that God’s faithfulness is: great, incomparable, infinite, unwavering, established, and everlasting. His faithfulness is displayed in: forgiving sin; the permanence of our salvation; trials and discipline; provision in times of trial, temptation, and suffering; His providence; fulfilling His promises; executing His judgments; answering prayer; and creation. God’s children are commanded to depend on His faithfulness in difficult times.

God’s faithfulness should be proclaimed. God’s faithfulness preserves us from worry, will stop our complaining, and drive us to trust God’s sovereign plan. His faithfulness provides believers comfort, drives rebellious believers to repent or be disciplined, and drive unbelievers to repentance and salvation.

Introduction

Discussion Questions: Who is in charge of your dinner plans tonight? How will you decide what to eat?

God’s sovereignty is a doctrine that eludes full comprehension. First, because it is beyond our natural experience. In our lives, we think we are in control, but if we are honest we would know we are not. Second, because God’s sovereignty goes against the natural mind. We want to be in control.

No doctrine is more despised by the natural mind than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. Human pride loathes the suggestion that God orders everything, controls everything, rules over everything. The carnal mind, burning with enmity against God, abhors the biblical teaching that nothing comes to pass except according to His eternal decrees. Most of all, the flesh hates the notion that salvation is entirely God’s work. If God chose who would be saved, and if His choice was settled before the foundation of the world, then believers deserve no credit for their salvation. John MacArthur at <http://www.sfpulpit.com/2007/09/28/gods-absolute-sovereignty/>

Definition

The Westminster Shorter Confession states: “The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.” (Isa 25:1; 46:11; Eph 1:11) The decree of God refers to His sovereign purpose – His comprehensive plan that includes all events that will ever occur. Grudem states that the decrees of God are His “...eternal plans whereby, before the creation of the world, He determined to bring about everything that happens.” We will collectively view God’s unconditional, eternal plan and His providential work in time and space to accomplish His plan as His sovereignty.

God’s exercise of power over his creation is also called God’s *sovereignty*. God’s sovereignty is his exercise of rule (as “sovereign” or “king”) over his creation. Wayne Grudem

It is not merely that God has the power and right to govern all things but that He does so always and without exception. John Piper

The Sovereignty of God. What do we mean by this expression? We mean the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the god-hood of God. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that God is God. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the Most High, doing according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, so that none can stay His hand or say unto Him what doest Thou? (Dan. 4:35). To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in Heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purpose, or resist His will (Psa. 115:3). To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is “The Governor among the nations” (Psa. 22:28), setting up kingdoms, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as pleaseth Him best. To say that God is Sovereign is to declare that He is the “Only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). Such is the God of the Bible. The Sovereignty of God by A. W. Pink

The doctrine of sovereignty is... “similar to the doctrine of providence, but here we are thinking about God’s decisions *before the world was created* rather than his providential actions in time. His providential actions are the outworking of the eternal decrees that he made long ago. Wayne Grudem

“God sustains, nourishes, and cares for everything that He has made.” John Calvin

“God’s providence is His constant care for and His absolute rule over all His creation for His own glory and the good of His people.” Jerry Bridges in “Trusting God: Even when Life Hurts”

“... the conviction that God, in His goodness and power, preserves, accompanies, and directs the entire universe. The Bible speaks of God as one who creates, preserves, upholds, wills, acts, governs, foreordains, elects, calls, predestines, judges, redeems, forgives, reconciles, provides, heals, and loves. That God is directly in command of His universe – past, present, and future, is not merely a supposition of Biblical faith, it is a central motif of the Bible.” Benjamin Farley in “The Providence of God”

God is the supreme ruler – in control of all events. All things are under His rule and control, and nothing happens without His direction or permission. He works all things (not just some things) after the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11). God's purpose is all inclusive and is never thwarted (Isa 46:11). Nothing takes Him by surprise.

The Scriptures declare that God is sovereign:

²⁵Have you not heard? Long ago I did it; **From ancient times I planned it Now I have brought it to pass, ...** 2 Kings 19:25

²I know that You can do all things, And that **no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.** Job 42:2

³But our God is in the heavens; **He does whatever He pleases.** Psa 115:3

²¹Many plans are in a man's heart, But **the counsel of the LORD will stand.** Prov 19:21

²⁴The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, **just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand,** Isa 14:24

⁹Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰**Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';** ¹¹Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country **Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.** Isa 46:9-11

¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who **works all things after the counsel of His will,** Eph1:11

The Father sovereignly plans and brings about all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psa 145:8-9; 1 Cor 8:6). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Eph 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chron 29:11). In His sovereignty, He is neither the author nor approver of sin (Hab 1:13; John 8:38-47). His sovereignty does not absolve people of their responsibility; people are still accountable (1 Pet 1:17).

1. God's plan encompasses all things – He is sovereign over all things.
2. God's plan was formed in eternity past (Eph 1:4, 2 Tim 1:9, 1 Pet 1:20).
3. God's plan is wise, perfect, and beyond our full comprehension (Rom 11:33-36, Psa 104:24, Prov 3:19).
4. God's plan is according to His will (Dan 4:35, Eph 1:11).
5. God's plan encompasses His directive will (Isa 45:18, Dan 4:35, Dan 2:21, Eph 1:4) and His permissive will through which He brings things about through secondary means (such as the free will sinful acts of men).
6. The purpose of God's plan is His glory (Psa 19:1; Eph 1:4-6, 11-12; Rom 9:23; Rev 4:11).
7. God's plan encompasses all things, yet man is responsible for his sin (Rom 3:23).
8. God, in some cases, uses man to carry out the plan (e.g. election and evangelism) (Acts 10:1-5).

God's decree includes the means to accomplish that decree. He is sovereign in all things, yet uses various means to bring about that sovereign purpose. God has elected certain individuals for salvation, but He uses the preaching of the gospel to bring them to Himself (Acts 10). Similarly, God has ordained all things that will come to pass and He uses prayer to accomplish that means.

God has decreed that certain events shall come to pass, but He has also decreed that these events shall come to pass through the means He has appointed for their accomplishment. God has elected certain ones to be saved, but He has also decreed that these ones shall be saved through the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel, then, is one of the appointed means for the working out of the eternal counsel of the Lord; and prayer is another. God has decreed the means as well as the end, and among the means is prayer. *The Sovereignty of God* by A. W. Pink

God's plan is so comprehensive that it not only includes the final destinies of things but also includes the secondary, creaturely processes that work together to accomplish these ends. *Pray With Your Eyes Open* by Richard Pratt

The Sphere of God's Sovereignty

Over all things

¹⁹The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty **rules over all**. Psa 103:19

²⁸And we know that **God causes all things to work together** for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. Rom 8:28

¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who **works all things after the counsel of His will**, Eph 1:11

Over all of nature

⁶Whatever the LORD pleases, **He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.** ⁷He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain, Who brings forth the wind from His treasures. Psa 135:6-7

⁴The **LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm** on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. Jonah 1:4

⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He **causes His sun to rise** on *the* evil and *the* good, and **sends rain** on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. Matt 5:45

²⁶He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” Then **He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.** ²⁷The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that **even the winds and the sea obey Him?**” Matt 8:26-27

⁷“Furthermore, **I withheld the rain from you** While *there were* still three months until harvest. Then **I would send rain on one city** And on another city **I would not send rain**; One part would be rained on, While the part not rained on would dry up. ⁸So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water, But would not be satisfied; Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD. ⁹**I smote you with scorching wind and mildew; And the caterpillar was devouring Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees;** Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD. Amos 4:7-9

Over physical laws

⁵But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, “Alas, my master! For it was borrowed.” ⁶Then the man of God said, “Where did it fall?” And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw *it* in there, and **made the iron float.** 2 Kings 6

¹²Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, “O sun, stand still at Gibeon, And O moon in the valley of Aijalon.” ¹³So **the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,** Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day. ¹⁴There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel. Josh 10:12-14

⁷“This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that He has spoken: ⁸Behold, I will cause the shadow on the stairway, which has gone down with the sun on the stairway of Ahaz, to go back ten steps.” So **the sun’s shadow went back ten steps on the stairway** on which it had gone down. Isa 38:7-8

²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea *back* by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so **the waters were divided.** ²²The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters *were like* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Ex 14:21-22

Over angels, Satan, and demons

²⁰Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, **Obeying the voice of His word!**

²¹Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You who serve Him, **doing His will.** Psa 103:20-21

¹⁵And **God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it;** but as he was about to destroy *it*, the LORD saw and was sorry over the calamity, and said to the destroying angel, “It is enough; now relax your hand.” 1 Chron 21:15

¹²Then the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD. Job 1:12

¹⁴Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and **an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.** 1Sam 16:14

⁶And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, Jude 6

Over nations

¹⁰The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. ¹¹The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation. Psa 33:10-11

⁷For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with a skillful psalm. ⁸**God reigns over the nations,** God sits on His holy throne. ⁹The princes of the people have assembled themselves *as* the people of the God of Abraham, **For the shields of the earth belong to God;** He is highly exalted. Psa 47:7-9

²⁰Daniel said, “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. ²¹It is He who changes the times and the epochs; **He removes kings and establishes kings;** He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. Dan 2:20-21

Over human beings

¹The king’s heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; **He turns it wherever He wishes.** Prov 21:1

⁶The **LORD kills and makes alive;** He brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. 1 Sam 2:6-7

¹⁵But when God, who had **set me apart even from my mother’s womb** and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, Gal 1:15-16

Over animals

⁴It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and **I have commanded the ravens** to provide for you there.” ⁵So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. ⁶The **ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening,** and he would drink from the brook. 1 Kings 17:4-6

¹⁷And **the LORD appointed a great fish** to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. Jonah 1:17

²⁷However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me.” Matt 17:17

Over "accidents"

³³The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD. Prov 16:33

⁷Each man said to his mate, "Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity *has struck* us." So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. Jonah 1:7

²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And *yet* not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. Matt 10:29

Over free acts of men

²¹I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. ... ³⁵Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; ³⁶and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. Ex 3:21; 12:35-36

⁹The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps. Prov 16:9

¹⁸So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. Rom 9:18

Over sinful acts of men and Satan

¹Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah." 2 Sam 24:1

¹Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. 1 Chron 21:1

⁵Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. Gen 45:5

²⁰As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. Gen 50:20

²²"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—²³this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. Acts 2:22-23

²⁷For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. Acts 4:27-28

Results of this knowledge

1. It deepens our reverence for God's character.
2. It puts God in His rightful place and puts us in ours.
3. It magnifies God's grace.
4. It is profoundly humbling.
5. It gives us a sense of complete security.
6. It provides comfort in sorrow.

Lesson 3 – God’s Sovereignty in Salvation

Review

God is faithful. God will always do what He has promised to do. He is steadfast, unchanging, perfectly reliable, and utterly dependable. He is 100% reliable, 100% of the time. Because God is faithful, He can be completely trusted. Because He is faithful we can fully submit ourselves to His sovereignty. God’s faithfulness should be proclaimed. His faithfulness preserves us from worry, will stop our complaining, and drive us to trust His sovereign plan. God’s faithfulness provides believers comfort, drives rebellious believers to repent or be disciplined, and drive unbelievers to repentance and salvation.

God is sovereign. God is the supreme ruler – in control of all events. He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass. He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events. All things are under His rule and control; nothing happens without His direction or permission. He works all things after the counsel of His own will. God's purpose is all inclusive and is never thwarted. Nothing takes Him by surprise. In His sovereignty, He is neither the author nor approver of sin. His sovereignty does not absolve people of their responsibility; people are still accountable. God’s decree includes the means to accomplish that decree. He is sovereign in all things, yet uses various means to bring about that sovereign purpose. God is sovereign over all things, specifically: over all of nature; over physical laws; over angels, Satan, and demons; over nations; over human beings; over animals; over "accidents"; over the free acts of men; and over sinful acts of men and Satan. God’s sovereignty deepens our reverence for God’s character, puts God in His rightful place and puts us in ours, magnifies God’s grace, is profoundly humbling, gives us a sense of complete security, and provides comfort in sorrow.

Introduction

We have already established that God is sovereign in all things.

¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who **works all things after the counsel of His will**, Eph1:11

Yet there are those that would try to compartmentalize God’s sovereignty; He is sovereign in events, but not sovereign in salvation. Some would attempt to elevate free will and in the process remove godhood from God. God works “all things after the counsel of His own will.” All means all. He works in time and space to move **all** things according to His divine plan. The “all” in Eph 1:11 includes people’s salvation. If we believe that God ceases to be sovereign in “all things”, then we to ourselves He ceases to be God.

God’s sovereignty is a doctrine that eludes full comprehension. First, because it is beyond our natural experience. Second, because God’s sovereignty goes against the natural mind. We want to be in control.

No doctrine is more despised by the natural mind than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. Human pride loathes the suggestion that God orders everything, controls everything, rules over everything. The carnal mind, burning with enmity against God, abhors the biblical teaching that nothing comes to pass except according to His eternal decrees. Most of all, the flesh hates the notion that salvation is entirely God’s work. If God chose who would be saved, and if His choice was settled before the foundation of the world, then believers deserve no credit for their salvation. John MacArthur at <http://www.sf pulpit.com/2007/09/28/gods-absolute-sovereignty/>

Free Will

One may ask, "Does God have free will?" The answer is an unequivocal "yes". But in reality it is a qualified "yes". God is free to do whatever he chooses according to the counsel of his own will (as we have seen before in our definition of God's sovereignty). But He can only choose to do that which is consistent with His nature.

¹Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, ²in the hope of eternal life, **which God, who cannot lie,** promised long ages ago, ³but at the proper time manifested, *even* His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, Titus 1:1-3

The Scriptures clearly speak of the condition of man as being in a fallen – sinful state. Each person has inherited the sin nature from Adam (Rom 5:12). The sin nature is the corruption of our whole nature and is that which inclines us to sin. The result of the sin nature is "Total Depravity" – where the corruption of sin extends to every aspect of our being (Rom 1:18–3:20) including intellect (2 Cor 4:4), conscience (1 Tim 4:2), will (Rom 1:28), and heart (Eph 4:18). The idea of Total Depravity is not that man displays as much evil as he possibly could, nor that he cannot do any good, or even feign a love for God, but that his entire nature is affected by sin. As such he is totally incapable of moving on his own toward God.

All are sinful:

¹⁰as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, **THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;** ¹²ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." ¹³"THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; ¹⁴"WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; ¹⁵"THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, ¹⁶DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, ¹⁷AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN." ¹⁸"THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES." Rom 3:10-18

²³for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** Rom 3:23

The unregenerate man's heart is wicked:

⁵Then the LORD saw that the **wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.** Gen 6:5

⁹"The **heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick;** Who can understand it? Jer 17:9

The unregenerate man is dead in his sins:

¹And **you were dead in your trespasses and sins,** ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. Eph 2:1-3

The unregenerate man loves the darkness and hates the Light:

¹⁹"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and **men loved the darkness rather than the Light,** for their deeds were evil. ²⁰"For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. John 3:19-20

The unregenerate man will not come to Christ of his own volition:

⁴⁴"**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him**; and I will raise him up on the last day.
John 6:44

⁶⁵And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that **no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.**" John 6:65

The unregenerate man is a slave to sin:

³³Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.** John 8:33

¹⁶Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are **slaves** of the one whom you obey, either of **sin** resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that though you were **slaves of sin**, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. . . . ²⁰For when you were **slaves of sin**, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. ²²But now having **been freed from sin** and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom 6:16-18, 20-23

In a similar way then to God being "free" within the bounds of His nature, people have free will within the bounds of their nature. But everyone's nature, before regeneration, is a totally depraved nature that is a slave to sin.

Sovereignty in Salvation (Election)

Salvation is the work of God whereby he saves individuals from the penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. It is completely by God and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Eph 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Pet 1:18-19).

According to the largest meaning as used in the Scripture, the word "salvation" represents the whole work of God by which He rescues man from the eternal ruin and doom of sin and bestows on him the riches of His grace, including eternal life now and eternal glory in heaven. Major Bible Themes by Lewis Sperry Chafer

Election is God's unconditioned choice before the foundation of the world of those individuals whom He would save (Matt 22:1-14; Rom 3:10-13; 8:27-30; 9:6-24; 1 Cor 1:18-19; Eph 1:3-11; 2:8-9; 2; Acts 13:48; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 2:10; 1 Pet 1:1-2; 2 Pet 1:10; 2:13). All whom the Father appoints to eternal life (Acts 13:48) He will call to Himself (Rom 8:30) by sovereignly causing the gospel to be told to them (Acts 10; Rom 10:8-17).

God's choice is required because all people are dead in their trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). Since man is dead, blind, held captive, etc., the remedy must come from outside himself. The dead cannot cause themselves to be alive. The Scriptures declare that we have been "made alive" (Eph 2:4-6) and "born again" (1 Pet 1:3) by God (from outside ourselves). On the other hand, for those that are not "made alive", we conclude that it is because God has not caused that to be. If man is unable to save himself because he is totally depraved, and if God alone can save, and if all are not saved, then the conclusion must be that God has not chosen to save all.

...the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Eph 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Pet 1:2). TMS Website

⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Eph 2:4-6

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has **caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1 Pet 1:3

The Scriptures are clear that God "chooses" individuals for salvation:

¹⁶**You did not choose Me but I chose you**, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. John 15:16

⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and **as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed**. Acts 13:48

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as **He chose** us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. Eph 1:4-6

⁴knowing, brethren beloved by God, **His choice of you**; 1 Thess 1:4

¹³But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because **God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth**. 2 Thess 2:13

¹⁰For this reason I endure all things **for the sake of those who are chosen**, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus *and* with *it* eternal glory. 2 Tim 2:10

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **who are chosen** ²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. 1 Pet 1:1-2

¹⁰Therefore, brethren, **be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you**; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 2 Pet 1:10

Believers in Christ Jesus have been prepared beforehand for this relationship.

¹⁵For He says to Moses, "**I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.**" ¹⁶So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "**FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.**" ¹⁸So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. ¹⁹You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? ²²What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, **endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?** ²³And He did so **to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,** Rom 9:15-23

The call of God in the heart of His elect cannot be frustrated or rejected. It is clear that people resist the gospel message. This is not resisting God's call, but simple doing what their nature demands. Some influence greater than our totally depraved natures must be brought to bear upon our souls in order to respond to the gospel. Once that "Efficacious Grace" is brought to bear it will not be resisted.

³⁰and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He **called**, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. Rom 8:30

³⁷"All that the Father **gives** Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. John 6:37

⁴⁴"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me **draws** him; and I will raise him up on the last day. John 6:44

⁴⁵"It is written in the prophets, '**AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.**' Everyone who has **heard and learned from the Father**, comes to Me. John 6:45

¹⁴A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the **Lord opened her heart to respond** to the things spoken by Paul. Acts 16:14

God's decree includes the means to accomplish that decree – God is sovereign in all things, yet uses various means to bring about that sovereign purpose. God has elected certain individuals for salvation, but He uses the preaching of the gospel to bring them to Himself (Acts 10). Similarly, God has ordained all things that will come to pass and He uses prayer to accomplish that means.

God has decreed that certain events shall come to pass, but He has also decreed that these events shall come to pass through the means He has appointed for their accomplishment. God has elected certain ones to be saved, but He has also decreed that these ones shall be saved through the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel, then, is one of the appointed means for the working out of the eternal counsel of the Lord; and prayer is another. God has decreed the means as well as the end, and among the means is prayer. *The Sovereignty of God* by A. W. Pink

We should view God's sovereignty in salvation as:

1. A Comfort

²⁸And we know **that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.** ²⁹For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. Rom 8:28-30

2. A Reason to Praise God

⁵He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶**to the praise of the glory of His grace**, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ¹²to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. Eph 1:5-6, 12

²**We give thanks to God always for all of you**, making mention *of you* in our prayers; ³constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, ⁴knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you; 1 Thess 1:2-4

¹³**But we should always give thanks to God for you**, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. ¹⁴It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess 2:13-14

3. An Encouragement to Evangelize

¹⁰For this **reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.** 2 Tim 2:10

¹¹For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; ¹³for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." ¹⁴How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!" ¹⁶However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" ¹⁷**So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.** Rom 10:11-17

Lesson 4 – God’s Sovereignty in Difficult Times

Review

God is faithful. God will always do what He has promised to do. He is steadfast, unchanging, perfectly reliable, and utterly dependable. He is 100% reliable, 100% of the time. Because God is faithful, He can be completely trusted. Because He is faithful we can fully submit ourselves to His sovereignty. God’s faithfulness should be proclaimed. His faithfulness preserves us from worry, will stop our complaining, and drive us to trust His sovereign plan. God’s faithfulness provides believers comfort, drives rebellious believers to repent or be disciplined, and drive unbelievers to repentance and salvation.

God is sovereign. God is the supreme ruler – in control of all events. He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass. He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events. All things are under His rule and control; nothing happens without His direction or permission. He works all things after the counsel of His own will. God’s purpose is all inclusive and is never thwarted. Nothing takes Him by surprise. In His sovereignty, He is neither the author nor approver of sin. His sovereignty does not absolve people of their responsibility; people are still accountable. God’s decree includes the means to accomplish that decree. He is sovereign in all things, yet uses various means to bring about that sovereign purpose. God is sovereign over all things, specifically: over all of nature; over physical laws; over angels, Satan, and demons; over nations; over human beings; over animals; over "accidents"; over the free acts of men; and over sinful acts of men and Satan. God’s sovereignty deepens our reverence for God’s character, puts God in His rightful place and puts us in ours, magnifies God’s grace, is profoundly humbling, gives us a sense of complete security, and provides comfort in sorrow.

God is sovereign in salvation. Salvation is the work of God whereby he saves individuals from the penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. It is completely by God and not on the basis of human merit or works. Election is God’s unconditioned choice before the foundation of the world of those individuals whom He would save. All whom the Father appoints to eternal life He will call to Himself by sovereignly causing the gospel to be told to them. God’s choice is required because all people are dead in their trespasses and sins – the remedy must come from outside himself. The Scriptures declare that we have been “made alive” and “born again” by God (from outside ourselves). The call of God in the heart of His elect cannot be frustrated or rejected. It is clear that people resist the gospel message. This is not resisting God’s call, but simply doing what their nature demands.

Introduction

All people will experience trouble in their lives: perhaps a financial crises, unemployment, personal serious illness or death or that of a family member, chronic illness or painful handicap, grief, bereavement, heartache, criticism, loneliness, ostracism, the victim of crime, etc. This should not be surprising.

⁷For **man is born for trouble**, As sparks fly upward. Job 5:7

¹Man, who is born of woman, **Is short-lived and full of turmoil**. Job 14:1

Believers will have particular trouble in the world.

³³"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace **In the world you have tribulation**, but take courage; I have overcome the world." John 16:33

¹²Indeed, **all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted**. 2 Tim 3:13

²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “**Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.**” Acts 14:22

Some Key Passages

²**Consider** it all **joy**, my brethren, **when** you **encounter various trials**, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4

consider (hegeomai): aorist imperative – a command calling for action. Denotes deliberate and careful judgment stemming from external proof, not subjective judgment based on feelings.

joy (chara): Joy is the deep-down sense of well-being that abides in the heart of the person who knows all is well between himself and the Lord. It is not an experience that comes from favorable circumstances but even occurs when those circumstances are the most painful.

when (hotan): in the subjunctive mood and carries the idea not just of possibility but inevitability.

encounter (periptō): falling into, usually unexpectedly.

various (poikilos): various kinds or modes, diversified, manifold, variegated, many colored. It stresses the diversity not the quantity of trials.

trials (peirasmos): trial, try, tempt, prove in either a good or bad sense. Depending on the context, it may either mean that which entices to sin or difficult times.

Trial (e.g. James 1:2): Trial is from peirasmos, which has the basic meaning of trying, testing, assaying, or proving. The word itself is neutral and can have negative or positive connotations, depending on the context, and is sometimes translated “temptation” (e.g., Matt. 6:13; 26:41; 2 Pet. 2:9). The verb form of the word, in fact, is rendered “tempted” or “tempt” in James 1:13, where the idea is clearly that of solicitation to evil. In the present text, however, James obviously has in mind the idea of testing through trouble that is caused by any sort of hardship, problem, or difficulty. MacArthur NT Commentary-James

When the inevitable varieties of trials fall upon us out of the blue, we should evaluate the truths from God’s Word concerning trials and joyfully accept them looking expectantly for how we may glorify God in the trial and how He will change us.

⁶In this you **greatly rejoice**, even though now for a little while, **if necessary**, you have been **distressed** by **various trials**, ⁷so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 1 Pet 1:6-8

greatly rejoice (agalliaō): an intense, expressive term that means to be supremely and abundantly happy—a happiness that is not tentative nor based on circumstances or superficial feelings. It always refers to spiritual rather than temporal joy, and it usually has reference to a relationship with God.

necessary: by whose perspective – God’s!

distressed (lypeō) refers not only to physical pain, but also to mental anguish, including sadness, sorrow, disappointment, and anxiety.

various (poikilos) trials (peirasmos): Same as James 1:2

³And not only this, but we also exult in our **tribulations**, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; Rom 5:3-4

tribulations (thlipsis): originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man. Thlipsis is a strong term which does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships.

Thlipsis (tribulations) has the underlying meaning of being under pressure and was used of squeezing olives in a press in order to extract the oil and of squeezing grapes to extract the juice...In Scripture the word thlipsis is perhaps most often used of outward difficulties, but it is also used of emotional stress." MacArthur NT Commentary: Romans 1-8.

What about equitability?

One may ask, "Why is it that some believers seem to have more difficulty (or difficulty to a more intense degree) in life than others?" Experience shows us that some Christians seem to sail through life while others have a hard time, moving from one crisis to another.

Charles Spurgeon (in a sermon on Isaiah 50:10) noted that God calls some Christians to shoulder extraordinary hardships in this life: "Spiritual darkness of any sort is to be avoided, and not desired; and yet, surprising as it may seem to be, it is a fact that some of the best of God's people frequently walk in darkness; ay, some of them are wrapt in a sevenfold gloom at times, and to them neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appear. As the pastor of a large church, I have to observe a great variety of experiences, and I note that some whom I greatly love and esteem, who are, in my judgment among the very choicest of God's people, nevertheless, travel most of the way to Heaven by night."

¹⁰Who is among you that fears the LORD, That obeys the voice of His servant, **That walks in darkness and has no light?** Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. Isa 50:10

The answer to this question is probably unsatisfying from a human perspective. To our human mind it may seem unfair.

"The fact of suffering undoubtedly constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith, and has been in every generation. Its distribution and degree appear to be entirely random and therefore unfair." John Stott

The bottom line is... God is God and will do as He wills in allowing or causing His children to experience difficulty. The truth of Scripture is that difficult times are for His glory and our good!

⁵"I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; ⁶That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, ⁷ The One forming light and creating darkness, **Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.** ... ⁹"**Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker—An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the thing you are making say, 'He has no hands'?** Isa 45:5-7, 9

¹⁹You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰On the contrary, **who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?** ²¹**Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?** ²²What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴*even us*, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. Rom 9:19-24

Things to “Consider”: Purposes of trials include:

1. To test the strength of our faith.

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, **that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.** Ex 16:4

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷so that **the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;** ⁸and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 1 Pet 1:6-8

God left him alone only to test him, **that He might know all that was in his heart.** 2 Chron 32:31b

To test the genuineness of a diamond, jewelers often place it in clear water, which causes a real diamond to sparkle with special brilliance. An imitation stone, on the other hand, will have almost no sparkle at all. When the two are placed side by side, even an untrained eye can easily tell the difference. In a similar way, even the world can often notice the marked differences between genuine Christians and those who merely profess faith in Christ. As with jewels, there is a noticeable difference in radiance, especially when people are undergoing difficult times. Many people have great confidence in their faith until it is severely tested by hardships and disappointments. How a person handles trouble will reveal whether his faith is living or dead, genuine or imitation, saving or non-saving. MacArthur Study Guide on Trials

2. To humble us

⁷Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, **to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh,** a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself! 2 Cor 12:7

3. To teach us to trust God and not in ourselves

⁸For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; ⁹indeed, **we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;** 2 Cor 1:8-9

4. To remind us of our future glory

¹⁸For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.** Rom 8:18

5. To develop godly character and strength

³And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that **tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5:3-5**

²Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³knowing that **the testing of your faith produces endurance.** ⁴And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4

¹⁰Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; **for when I am weak, then I am strong.** 2 Cor 12:10

The road to maturity, to being complete in Christ during our alien pilgrimage here, is filled with the bumps of difficult circumstances. The life of ease is not the way God has typically chosen as the forum for growth. This perspective, also reflected in Acts 14:22, and 1 Peter 1:6-9, shows us a purpose in hard days. We have the great opportunity to both please and honor our God by our faith and to simultaneously grow in the likeness of Christ. Wayne Johnston

6. To enable us to better help others in their trials

³¹"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; ³²but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, **when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.**" Luke 22:31-32

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴**who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.** ⁵For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. ⁶But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; 2 Cor 1:3-6

7. To allow us to receive help in time of need

¹⁶Therefore **let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.** Heb 14:6

8. To cause us to learn more of God's Word

⁷¹**It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.** Psa 119:71

9. To give us opportunities for service.

¹²Now I want you to know, brethren, that **my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,** ¹³so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, ¹⁴and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. Phil 1:12-19

Hope in Trials

1. The trial may never end this side of heaven, but glory awaits the true believer.

¹⁸For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.** Rom 8:18

2. God is sovereign and is working all things for His glory and my benefit.

²⁸And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Rom 8:28

3. God has given us everything we need to glorify Him through the trial.

²Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³seeing that **His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness**, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 2 Pet 1:2-4

4. God will not allow more trials (temptations) in our life than we can bear through His strength.

¹³No **temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man**; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 1 Cor 10:13

5. The Word can equip us to glorify God in the trial.

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷**so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**
2 Tim 3:16-17

6. Saturation with the Word provides peace.

¹⁶⁵**Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble.**
Psalm 119:165

7. Prayer brings peace.

¹Give ear to my words, O LORD, Consider my groaning. ²Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, For to You I pray. ³In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch. Psa 5:1-3

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And **the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** Phil 4:6-7

8. Trust in God in the midst of the trial.

¹⁵**Though He slay me, I will hope in Him** Job 13:15a

9. Cast the burden on God and He will care for you.

²²**Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain** you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.
Psa 55:22

⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷**casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.** 1 Pet 5:6-7

10. Perseverance results in blessing, maturity and eventually the crown of life.

¹²Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. James 1:12

11. Fear God in the trial not man.

⁶so that we confidently say, "**THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?**" Heb 13:6

12. Our hope is an anchor for our soul.

¹⁷In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. ¹⁹**This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one** which enters within the veil, Heb 6:17-19

Conclusion

We will all experience trouble in this life—this side of glory. God is sovereign over this trouble. Everything we experience is for God's glory and our good – so that God's purpose of sanctification will be accomplished in us.

Lesson 5 – God’s Sovereignty in Prayer

Review

God is faithful. God will always do what He has promised to do. He is steadfast, unchanging, perfectly reliable, and utterly dependable. He is 100% reliable, 100% of the time. He can be completely trusted. Because He is faithful we can fully submit ourselves to His sovereignty. God’s faithfulness should be proclaimed. His faithfulness preserves us from worry, will stop our complaining, and drive us to trust His sovereign plan. God’s faithfulness provides believers comfort, drives rebellious believers to repent or be disciplined, and drive unbelievers to repentance and salvation.

God is sovereign. God is the supreme ruler – in control of all events. He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass. He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events. All things are under His rule and control; nothing happens without His direction or permission. He works all things after the counsel of His own will. God’s purpose is all inclusive and is never thwarted. Nothing takes Him by surprise. In His sovereignty, He is neither the author nor approver of sin. His sovereignty does not absolve people of their responsibility; people are still accountable. God’s decree includes the means to accomplish that decree. He is sovereign in all things, yet uses various means to bring about that sovereign purpose. God’s sovereignty deepens our reverence for His character, puts God in His rightful place and puts us in ours, magnifies God’s grace, is profoundly humbling, gives us a sense of complete security, and provides comfort in sorrow.

God is sovereign in salvation. Salvation is the work of God whereby he saves individuals from the penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. It is completely by God and not on the basis of human merit or works. Election is God’s unconditioned choice before the foundation of the world of those individuals whom He would save. All whom the Father appoints to eternal life He will call to Himself by sovereignly causing the gospel to be told to them. God’s choice is required because all people are dead in their trespasses and sins – the remedy must come from outside himself. The Scriptures declare that we have been “made alive” and “born again” by God (from outside ourselves). The call of God in the heart of His elect cannot be frustrated or rejected. It is clear that people resist the gospel message. This is not resisting God’s call, but simply doing what their nature demands.

God is sovereign in difficult times. All people will experience trouble in their lives. The purposes of trials are to test the strength of our faith, humble us, teach us to trust God and not in ourselves, remind us of our future glory, develop godly character and strength, enable us to better help others in their trials, allow us to receive help in time of need, cause us to learn more of God’s Word, and give us opportunities for service. There is hope in trials: the trial may never end this side of heaven, but glory awaits the true believer; God is sovereign and is working all things for His glory and my benefit; God has given us everything we need to glorify Him through the trial; God will not allow more trials (temptations) in our life than we can bear through His strength; the Word can equip us to glorify God in the trial; saturation with the Word provides peace; prayer brings peace and trust in God in the midst of the trial; we must cast the burden on God and He will care for us; perseverance results in blessing, maturity and eventually the crown of life; we should fear God in the trial not man; and our hope is an anchor for our soul.

Definition of Prayer

Prayer is 1) a devout petition to god or an object of worship; 2) a spiritual communion with God or an object of worship, as in supplication, thanksgiving, adoration, or confession. (dictionary.com)

Prayer is personal communication with God (Grudem).

Prayer is the act of pouring out our heart to our creator in adoration/praise, repentance/confession, thankfulness, and supplication. The Westminster Catechism (Question 178) defines prayer this way:

Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God^a, in the name of Christ^b, by the help of his Spirit^c, with confession of our sins^d, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies^e.

^a Psa 62:8; ^b John 16:23b; ^c Rom 8:26; ^d Psa 32:5-6; Dan 9:4a; ^e Phil 4:6

Introduction

We have already established that God is sovereign in all things.

¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, Eph1:11

1. God's plan was formed in eternity past (Eph 1:4; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:20).
2. God's plan is wise, perfect, and beyond our full comprehension (Rom 11:33-36; Psa 104:24; Prov 3:19).
3. God's plan is according to His will (Dan 4:35; Eph 1:11).
4. God's plan encompasses His directive will (Isa 45:18; Dan 2:21; Dan 4:3; Eph 1:4) and His permissive will through which He brings things about through secondary means (such as the free will sinful acts of men).
5. The purpose of God's plan is His glory (Psa 19:1; Eph 1:4-6, 11-12; Rom 9:23; Rev 4:11).
6. God's plan encompasses all things, yet man is responsible for his sin (Rom 3:23).
7. God, in some cases, uses man to carry out the plan (e.g. election and evangelism) (Acts 10:1-5).

So, the natural question when trying to reconcile God's sovereignty and prayer is: if God is sovereign in all things, why should we pray? What is the reason for praying if God has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass?

The bottom line is that the way God works is mysterious. We are the creature, not the creator. God has graciously given us glimpses into His character and will through His Word, but the completeness awaits us in heaven.

⁸“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. ⁹“For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are **My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.** Isa 55:8-9

⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

¹¹When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. ¹²For **now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully** just as I also have been fully known.

1 Cor 13:9-12

The Means

God's decree includes the means to accomplish that decree – God is sovereign in all things, yet uses various means to bring about that sovereign purpose. God has elected certain individuals for salvation, but He uses the preaching of the gospel to bring them to Himself (Acts 10). Similarly, God has ordained all things that will come to pass and He uses prayer to accomplish that means.

God has decreed that certain events shall come to pass, but He has also decreed that these events shall come to pass through the means He has appointed for their accomplishment. God has elected certain ones to be saved, but He has also decreed that these ones shall be saved through the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel, then, is one of the appointed means for the working out of the eternal counsel of the Lord; and prayer is another. God has decreed the means as well as the end, and among the means is prayer. *The Sovereignty of God* by A. W. Pink

God's plan is so comprehensive that it not only includes the final destinies of things but also includes the secondary, creaturely processes that work together to accomplish these ends. *Pray With Your Eyes Open* by Richard Pratt

Example: Jeremiah's prophecy of the length of the Babylonian captivity (70 years) and Daniel's prayer (Dan 9).

¹¹This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹²Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation. Jer 25:11-12

¹⁹O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name." Dan 9:19

God will restore His people in response to their prayers, but these prayers—rather than being an intrusion into God's eternal plan—are actually *part* of God's plan. Both the means and the end—the prayers and the restoration—have been ordained by Him and will be brought to pass by Him (cf. Ezekiel 36:37). *Why Pray if God is Sovereign?* by Matt Maymeyer (Pulpit Magazine)

Example: Abraham, Abimelech and Sarah.

¹Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar. ²Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. ³But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married." ⁴Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a nation, even *though* blameless? ⁵Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." ⁶Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and **I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.** ⁷**Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die,** you and all who are yours." ...

¹⁷**Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech** and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children. Gen 20: 1-7, 17

Example: Job and Eliphaz.

⁷It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “**My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends**, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has. ⁸Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and **My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you according to your folly**, because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.” ⁹So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job. Job 42:7-9

The Power of Prayer

The Scriptures are clear that God is sovereign and in that sovereignty He uses means to accomplish His good purposes. The Scriptures also declare that prayer accomplishes things.

¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. **The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.** ¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit. James 5:16-18

²¹And Jesus answered and said to them, “Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it will happen. ²²**And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.**” Matt 21:21-22

¹⁸What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹for I know that **this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ**, ²⁰according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. Phil 1:18-20

We also see in prayer a qualifier. The heard prayer is according to God's sovereign will, not our desires.

¹⁴This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, **if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.** 1 John 5:14

Why Pray?

1. Prayer is commanded – We may never be able to grasp an understanding of how prayer and God's sovereignty work together, but as His children (as those redeemed from sin and made new in Christ) we are called to obey. Out of love for Christ (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 1:6) we should yield to God's command to pray even if we cannot reconcile the Biblical truth regarding God's sovereignty with the command.

²⁸Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, **let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;** ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire. Heb 12:28-29

⁸and **though you have not seen Him, you love Him**, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. 1 Pet 1:8-9

¹⁵**If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.** John 14:15

Prayer is clearly commanded in Scripture.

¹Now He was telling them a parable to show that **at all times they ought to pray** and not to lose heart, Luke 18:1

¹⁷**pray without ceasing;** 1 Thess 5:17

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but **in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.** Phil 4:6

²**Devote yourselves to prayer,** keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; Col 4:2

¹⁸**With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit,** and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, Eph 6:18

And Jesus also clearly expected prayer to be a part of His disciples' lives.

⁵"**When you pray,** ... ⁶"But you, **when you pray,** ... ⁷"And **when you are praying,** ... ⁹"**Pray, then,** in this way:... Matt 6:5, 6, 7, 9

2. Jesus' example – Jesus prayed often and fervently. Even though Jesus was Himself God very God and knew all things including that he was to be *delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God,* ... to be *nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men* (Acts 2:23), He saw no conflict between pouring His heart out to the Father and submitting to the Father's plan.

²³After He had sent the crowds away, **He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray;** and when it was evening, He was there alone. Matt 14:23

³⁵In the **early morning,** while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and **went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.** Mark 1:35

¹²It was at this time that **He went off to the mountain to pray,** and **He spent the whole night in prayer to God.** Luke 6:12

³⁵And **He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray** that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. ³⁶And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." ³⁷And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? ³⁸"Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹Again **He went away and prayed,** saying the same words. Mark 14:35-39

²⁵Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since **He always lives to make intercession for them.** Heb 7:25

3. God responds (and *IS ABLE* to respond) to prayer – The Scriptures are clear in teaching and example that God responds to prayer: Moses (Ex 32:10-14); Jabez (1 Chron 4:10); Elijah (James 5:17-18); Daniel (Dan 9-10); Amos (Amos 7); and Peter and the believers (Acts 12).

⁷"**Ask, and it will be given to you;** seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸"For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Matt 7:6-8

¹⁶"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that **whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.** John 15:16

The fact of God's sovereignty (and omnipotence) gives us confidence in our prayers. If God is not able to accomplish anything that He wills, then prayer is useless. But the truth is that God can accomplish anything that He wills which is consistent with His nature.

4. Prayer shows our dependence on God – We are completely dependent on God for all things. This is contrary to our American, independent-spirit thinking. We cannot exist without God. We cannot continue to exist without God. We can do nothing apart from God. We live in complete dependence on God. The unbeliever lives opposite of this truth and is therefore condemned. Do we live as functional unbeliever?

⁹“Pray, then, in this way:

‘Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰‘Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹‘Give us this day our daily bread.

¹²‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.>] Matt 6:9-13

5. God is glorified in our prayers – The ultimate purpose of all things is the glory of God. Through dependence on His grace, mercy, and power in prayer He is glorified.

⁸“I am the LORD, that is My name; **I will not give My glory to another**, Nor My praise to graven images. Isa 42:8

¹¹“For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And **My glory I will not give to another**. Isa 48:11

⁵He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶**to the praise of the glory** of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ... ¹²to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be **to the praise of His glory**. ... ¹⁴who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, **to the praise of His glory**. Eph 1:5-6, 12, 14

³⁶For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things **To Him be the glory forever**. Amen. Rom 11:36

¹⁶Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and **glorify your Father who is in heaven**. Matt 5:16

³¹Whether, then, you eat or drink or **whatever you do, do all to the glory of God**. 1 Cor 10:31

¹⁵**Call upon** Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and **you will honor** (glorify–ESV) Me.” Psa 50:15

¹³**Whatever you ask in My name**, that will I do, so that **the Father may be glorified in the Son**. John 14:13

God uses Prayer to Bless Us

God uses prayer to bless us. Not to get what we want for selfish motives, but to get what is in accord with His perfect sovereign will for us.

Good Gifts

¹¹"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 what is good to those who ask Him!** Matt 7:11

³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. James 4:3

Peace

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷**And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** Phil 4:6-7

Joy

²⁴"Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; **ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.** John 16:24

Encouragement

¹Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to **pray and not to lose heart,** Luke 18:1

Fruit

⁷"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸"My Father is glorified by this, that **you bear much fruit,** and so prove to be My disciples. John 15:7-8

Mercy and grace in time of need

¹⁶Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may **receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.** Heb 4:16

Barriers to Prayer

Unrepentant sin

¹⁸**If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;** Psa 66:18

Wrong motives

³You ask and **do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives,** so that you may spend it on your pleasures. James 4:3

¹⁴This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, **if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**

¹⁵And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. 1 John 5:14-15

Idolatry

³"Son of man, these men have **set up their idols in their hearts and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity** Should I be consulted by them at all? Ezek 14:3

Hypocrisy

⁵"When you pray, **you are not to be like the hypocrites**; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. Matt 6:5

Anger

⁸Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, **without wrath and dissension**. 1 Tim 2:8

Indifference to needs of poor

¹³**He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered.**
Prov 21:13

Unforgiving spirit

²⁵"**Whenever you stand praying, forgive**, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. Mark 11:25

Inconsideration towards wife

⁷You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, **so that your prayers will not be hindered**. 1 Pet 3:7

Lesson 6 - Response to God's Sovereignty

Review

God is faithful. God will always do what He has promised to do. He is steadfast, unchanging, perfectly reliable, and utterly dependable. He is 100% reliable, 100% of the time. He can be completely trusted. Because He is faithful we can fully submit ourselves to His sovereignty. God's faithfulness:

- should be proclaimed
- preserves us from worry
- will stop our complaining
- drive us to trust His sovereign plan
- provides believers comfort
- drives rebellious believers to repent or be disciplined
- drive unbelievers to repentance and salvation

God is sovereign. God is the supreme ruler, in control of all events, working all things after the counsel of His own will. He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass. He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events. All things are under His rule and control; nothing happens without His direction or permission. God's purpose is all inclusive and is never thwarted. Nothing takes Him by surprise. In His sovereignty, He is neither the author nor approver of sin. His sovereignty does not absolve people of their responsibility; people are still accountable. He is sovereign hi all things, yet uses various means to bring about that sovereign purpose. Understanding God's sovereignty:

- deepens our reverence for God's character
- puts God in His rightful place and puts us in ours
- magnifies God's grace
- is profoundly humbling
- gives us a sense of complete security
- provides comfort in sorrow

God is sovereign in salvation. Salvation is the work of God whereby he saves individuals from the penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. It is completely by God and not on the basis of human merit or works. Election is God's unconditioned choice before the foundation of the world of those individuals whom He would save. All whom the Father appoints to eternal life He will call to Himself by sovereignly causing the gospel to be told to them. God's choice is required because all people are dead in their trespasses and sins — the remedy must come from outside himself. The Scriptures declare that we have been "made alive" and "born again" by God (from outside ourselves). The call of God in the heart of His elect cannot be frustrated or rejected. However, it is clear that people resist the gospel message. This is not resisting God's call, but simply doing what their nature demands. God's sovereignty in salvation is:

- a comfort because we know He is at work in us
- a reason to thankfully praise God
- an encouragement to evangelize

God is sovereign in difficult times. All people will experience trouble in their lives. God has sovereignly designed every difficult time for His glory and our good. The purposes of trials are to:

- test the strength of our faith
- humble us
- teach us to trust God and not in ourselves
- remind us of our future glory
- develop godly character and strength
- enable us to better help others in their trials
- allow us to receive help in time of need
- cause us to learn more of God's Word
- give us opportunities for service.

There is hope in trials...

- the trial may never end this side of heaven, but glory awaits the true believer
- God is working all things for His glory and my benefit
- God has given us everything we need to glorify Him through the trial
- God will not allow more trials (temptations) in our life than we can bear through His strength
- the Word can equip us to glorify God in the trial
- saturation with the Word provides peace
- prayer brings peace and trust in God in the midst of the trial
- we must cast the burden on God and He will care for us
- perseverance results in blessing, maturity and eventually the crown of life
- we should fear God in the trial not man
- our hope is an anchor for our soul.

God is sovereign in prayer. The way God works is mysterious. He is sovereign and in that sovereignty He uses various means to accomplish His good purposes. The Scriptures are also clear that prayer accomplishes things. So why pray?

1. Prayer is commanded - Out of love for Christ we should yield to God's command to pray even if we cannot reconcile the Biblical truth regarding God's sovereignty with the command.
2. Jesus' example - Jesus prayed often and fervently. Even though Jesus was Himself God very God and knew all things, He saw no conflict between pouring His heart out to the Father and submitting to the Father's plan.
3. God responds (and *IS ABLE* to respond) to prayer. The Scriptures are clear in teaching and example that God responds to prayer. The fact of God's sovereignty (and omnipotence) gives us confidence in our prayers. If God is not able to accomplish anything that He wills, then prayer is useless. God can accomplish anything that He wills that is consistent with His nature.
4. Prayer shows and deepens our dependence on God
5. God is glorified in our prayers - The ultimate purpose of all things is the glory of God. Through dependence on His grace, mercy, and power in prayer He is glorified.

God uses prayer to bless us by giving good gifts, peace, joy, encouragement, fruit, and mercy and grace in time of need. Barriers to prayer are: unrepentant sin, wrong motives, idolatry, hypocrisy, anger, indifference to needs of poor, an unforgiving spirit, and inconsideration towards one's spouse.

Resignation and Trust

Remember, the way God works is mysterious.

⁸"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways **higher than your ways** **And My thoughts than your thoughts.** Isa 5 5:8-9

The truth (doctrine) of God's sovereignty is one that we will never fully grasp in this life. Only in glory might we be able to come to a full understanding of this truth and its full ramifications.

The system of truth is not one straight line, but two. No man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. I am taught in one book to believe that what I sow I shall reap: I am taught in another place, that "it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." I see in one place, God presiding over all hi providence; and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions to his own will, in a great measure. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act, that there was no presidence of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to Atheism; and if, on the other hand, I declare that God so overrules all things, as that man is not free enough to be responsible, I am driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring. Charles Spurgeon in a sermon "Sovereign Grace and Man's Responsibility".

However, we know, because the scriptures declare, that the purpose of all things is God's glory.

⁸"I am the LORD, that is My name; **I will not give My glory to another**, Nor My praise to graven images. Isa 42:8

⁵He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶**to the praise of the glory** of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ... ¹²to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be **to the praise of His glory.** ... ¹⁴who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, **to the praise of His glory.** Eph 1:5-6,12,14

³⁶**For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things To Him be the glory forever.** Amen. Rom 11:36

¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, "Amen, **blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever.** Amen." Rev 7:11-12

The bottom line is... He is God and He will do as He wills. Who am I to answer back to Him and who am I to question His character and who am I to not bow in worship to my creator?

⁵"I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; ⁶That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other,..." ⁹**"Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker—An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the thing you are making say, 'He has no hands'?"** Isa 45:5-7, 9

^{38:1}Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, "Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge? ³Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you instruct Me! ... ^{10:1}Then the LORD said to Job, ²"Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it." ³Then Job answered the LORD and said, ⁴"Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. ⁵Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; Even twice, and I will add nothing more." ⁶Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm and said, ⁷"Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me. ... ⁴²Then Job answered the LORD and said, ²"I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. ³Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." ⁴Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.' ⁵"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; ⁶Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes." Job 38:1-3; 40:1-7; 42:1-6

So we resign ourselves to trust God's sovereignty, not because we understand it fully, but because it is the truth of God's Word.

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Prov 3:5-6

¹⁰And **those who know Your name will put their trust in You**, For You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You. Psa 9:10

¹⁴But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD, I say, "You are my God." ^{15a}My times are in Your hand; ... Psa 31:14-15a

⁴How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood. ⁵Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count. Psa 40:4-5

⁴In God, whose word I praise, hi God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me? Psa 56:4

Why Does it Matter?

Some of the following reasons why it matters that we believe in God's sovereignty were originally presented in a different form by John Piper.

The doctrine of God's sovereignty is an anchor for the troubled soul, a hope for the praying heart, a stability for fragile faith, a confidence in pursuing the lost, a guarantee of Christ's atonement, a high mystery to keep us humble, and a solid ground for all praise. John Piper

1. God being God depends on it.

⁸"Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. "Remember the former things long past, **For I am God, and there is no other; / am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And 'from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';** Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. **Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.** Isa 46:8-11

2. God's glory depends on it.

⁵He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, **to the praise of the glory** of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ... ¹²to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be **to the praise of His glory**. ... ¹⁴who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, **to the praise of His glory**. Eph 1:5-6, 12,14

3. Understanding the majesty of God's glory depends on it.

²⁰On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? ²²What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, Rom 9:20-23

³³**Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!** ³⁴For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? ³⁵Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?

³⁶**For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.** Rom 11:33-36

4. Praise of God depends on it.

¹Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth. ... ³But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases. ... ¹⁸But as for us, we will bless the LORD From this time forth and forever. Praise the LORD! Psa 115:1,3,18

⁴For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. Psa 96:4

5. God's final triumph over evil depends on it.

⁹Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; / am God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My **purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure**' Isa 46:9-10

¹⁰And **the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.** ¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. ¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And **if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.** Rev 20:10-15

6. The Gospel depends on it.

²²Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— ²³**this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.** ²⁴But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. Acts 2:22-24

²⁷For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸**to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.** Acts 4:27-28

7. The perseverance of the saints depends on it.

⁴I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, ⁶even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸**who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.** ⁹**God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.** 1 Cor 1:4-9

⁶For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.** Phil 1:6

8. Sanctification depends on it.

¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³**for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** Phil 2:12-13

9. Commitment to godliness depends on it.

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ¹¹**Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,** ¹²looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. 2 Pet 3:10-13

10. Hope in difficult times depends on it.

³²For if **He causes grief, Then He will have compassion According to His abundant lovingkindness.** Lam 3:32

²⁸And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God,** to those who are called according to His purpose. Rom 8:28

²⁰As for you, **you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good** in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. Gen 50:20

11. The expectation of answered prayer depends on it.

²¹And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen.

²²**And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."** Matt 21:21-22

¹⁴This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, **if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.** 1 John 5:14