



**GROW
IN
GRACE**
NEWSLETTER

[THIS MONTH OF PRAYER and FASTING... Those of you who have already signed up... Our Secretary, Caryn Pierce, is sending you email reminders of your day... If you have not signed up... please connect with Caryn... We have folks on all the days of the first two weeks... but some blanks on the latter two weeks. We do not do this to be seen of men; names are not published... we encourage a 'prayer closet' approach.]

Volume 45, No. 40, October 6, 2020 / Southside Baptist Church / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **The Grow in Grace Newsletter is a WEEKLY Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church; and is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD JESUS CHRIST!"***

OCTOBER 1-31, 2020— A MONTH of PRAYER and FASTING!

QUESTION: "Since God is SOVEREIGN— WHY PRAY?" (This article is edited from, ***"If God Is Sovereign, Why Pray?"*** By Brian G. Hedges)

This [QUESTION] is no mere academic question, for our understanding here (or lack thereof) significantly affects such practical areas as evangelism and prayer. A friend asked me these thought-provoking questions:

1. If God already knows what will happen (and what choices will be made, etc.), can He change the outcome?
2. What is the purpose of prayer?
3. Can our prayers for someone's salvation actually make a difference?

In a way, I don't want my salvation to hinge on other people's prayers, yet neither do I want my prayers to accomplish nothing. What follows is a slightly edited version of my response to my friend.

Your thought-provoking questions cut to the heart of the issue. You want prayer to make a difference, yet you don't want such a

tremendous matter as your soul's eternal salvation to rest ultimately in the prayers of fallible people.

Those two concerns represent the two opposite and extreme positions so many adopt but which we must carefully avoid.

On one side we have the extreme of determinism, or fatalism. This position basically says with Doris Day, "***Que será, será; whatever will be, will be!***" It reasons, "Since God is sovereign and in control, it doesn't matter whether I pray or not. God knows His elect, and He will save them without my help. He will do His will regardless of what I do or fail to do."

On the other side of the issue, there are those who insist that "prayer changes things," and that *God is actually limited to our prayers.* They believe He either can't or won't work except in response to prayer.

Both of the above positions are partly true. The problem is not in what they affirm but in what they deny:

1. While it is true that God is sovereign and will accomplish His will, **it is not true** that I don't need to pray.

2. And while it is true that prayer changes things, **it is not true** that God is limited by my prayers.

Our tendency is to take only one side of the truth and misuse it. We either sacrifice God's sovereignty on the altar of human responsibility, or vice versa. In either case, our mistake lies in emphasizing a biblical truth without regarding its intended function.

YES: The Scriptures teach that God is sovereign in all things:

- God "works all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11).

- God does His will "among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'" (Dan. 4:35).
- "The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all" (Psa. 103:19).

On the other hand, the Bible ALSO clearly affirms man's responsibility. In the realm of prayer, for example, we read that:

- "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working" (James 5:16).
- "You do not have, because you do not ask" (James 4:2).
- "**Ask**, and it will be given to you; **seek**, and you will find; **knock**, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8).
- **In nearly every one of his letters**, Paul requests prayer and reports of his own intercession for his fellow believers (Eph. 1:16-23; 3:14-21; 6:18-20).
- Paul prayed for the salvation of his fellow Jews: "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved" (Rom. 10:1).

So how do we fit these two seemingly contradictory sides of Scripture together into one coherent paradigm?

We must realize the following three things.

1. God's unchangeable nature does not cancel out His personal interaction with humanity.

God is immutable, or unchangeable. Psalm 102:27 declares of Him, *"You are the same, and your years have no end."*

God Himself says, *"I the Lord do not change"* (Mal. 3:6).

Hebrews 13:8 tells us that *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."* God knows all things from the beginning (Isa. 46:9-11), and He does not change His eternal will.

If He did, His wisdom or knowledge would be deficient. We must not rob God of His omniscience in our attempt to safeguard prayer's effectiveness.

But then you might remember instances in Scripture where God did "change His mind" in response to prayer!

For example, after the children of Israel committed idolatry in worshiping the golden calf, God said to Moses, *"I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you"* (Exo. 32:9-10).

The next three verses record Moses' prayerful response for God to remember His promises to the patriarchs and turn away His anger. Then verse 14 says, ***"The Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people."*** [KJV- *"And the LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His People."*]

Does this mean that God changed His mind about something He had planned to do from eternity? Does this text imply that God is not all-knowing? I don't think so. **[NO, NOT AT ALL!]**

The Scriptures often speak of God "regretting" [Or repenting of] something. For example, 1 Samuel 15:10-11 says, "The word of the Lord came to Samuel:

'I regret that I have made Saul king, [KJV- *"It repenteth Me that I have set up Saul to be king..."*]' for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments.' And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the Lord all night."

But in the very same chapter, we also read, "The Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for He is not a man, that He should have regret" (v. 29). [KJV- "The **STRENGTH** of Israel will not lie or **repent**; for He is not a man that He should **repent**."]

So there is a sense in which God does regret [or REPENT] and thus change His mind, and there is another sense in which He does not. **God doesn't experience regret [REPENT] or change His mind in exactly the same ways we do.** God does not change because of a flaw in His nature.

When Scripture says that God regrets [REPENTS of] something or changes His mind, we must understand those texts to speak of God's moral and personal response to people and events *considered in themselves*; it is not a response based on some deficiency in His knowledge or a change in His eternal will or purpose. God's unchangeableness does not cancel out His personal interaction with human beings.

2. Prayer is one of God's ordained means of accomplishing His purposes.

The example of Moses given above is a perfect illustration. Consider also Daniel's prayers for the end of Israel's captivity in Babylon.

According to Daniel 9:2, he knew that God had promised release after seventy years, but this didn't keep him from praying! Rather, it motivated him to pray. *As Daniel 9:3 says, "Then I turned my face to the Lord God, **seeking Him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.**"*

We learn from this that the true function of God's promises is always to motivate us to action, never to lull us into inactivity. God wants us to pray, but not because He can't act without us praying. As John Piper points out, God wants us to pray that He might be glorified (John 14:13) and that we might be satisfied in Him (John 16:24).

3. If we deny God's sovereignty over human choices and events, insisting that God will not infringe upon man's freedom, we actually do more damage to prayer than when we assert God's sovereign freedom.

Denying God's ability or authority to rule over the wills of men does not help prayer. It hinders prayer. Of course, a mystery still remains. We can't fully explain how God's sovereignty interrelates with man's will, but we know that we can't deny either.

So, if we stick to the Scriptures, both of your concerns are answered:

1. "Can we pray that someone will be saved and it actually make a difference?" ***Absolutely! God has commanded us to pray, and He uses our prayers to accomplish His purposes and glorify His name.***

2. "Does this mean that the salvation of someone's soul hinges on my prayers for them?" **No. A person's salvation hinges on Christ's death on their behalf and the Holy Spirit's work in applying salvation to their heart.**

3. But neither do my prayers "accomplish nothing." For just as my hand animates and moves the glove I wear, so God animates and moves people to accomplish His purposes.

The glove is not determinative; I am. But the glove is involved because it is filled with my hand. My prayers are not determinative; God is. But I am involved if I am filled with God's Spirit.

A CONGREGATION— DAILY in Church-wide Prayer!

Some years back, Kurt Koch, a German missionary, told of an experience he had in South Korea with a local church.

He writes: I was invited to give a short sermon. I was glad to do so, but was surprised when told that **the meeting would start at 5AM! Who would ever show up?**

At 4AM the alarm clock woke me. The rain spattered against the window. Surely the prayer meeting will be called off because of the rain. I said to myself: “You traveled quite in vain to this place. It is wet and cold, and on top of that, it is 5 in the morning!

Straining against the wind, I ventured into the church.

What on earth...? My eyes nearly popped out of their sockets.

The church was packed to capacity! There were no empty chairs. Everybody squatted down or kneeled on straw mats.

I went up to the pulpit and asked the brothers taking the lead: **“What is this? Surely the whole congregation wasn’t invited just to listen to one missionary - that is just not possible?”**

“This is our usual prayer meeting,” was the simple answer.

“In the middle of the week?” I asked, unbelievably. “Yes, we gather every day,” was the answer. “How many people are gathered here?” I wanted to know. **“About 3000— the whole congregation.”** I was speechless.

One of the elders announced a song and the singing began. There were no songbooks, organ or any other musical instruments to

accompany the people in this bare church building that rather resembled a factory.

THEN THE PRAYING STARTED— three thousand people praying simultaneously! I could sense the unity in the Holy Spirit through the prayers. There was no disorder. It could not be compared to the vociferous [loud, insistent so as to compel attention] type of praying in some of the extremist church groups. **They prayed for almost one hour.**

Then the elder asked me to give a message. ***“Please, just a short message— no longer than one hour,” he said, “these people still have to go to work by 7 a.m.”*** A short message of one hour, it went through my mind. Where in the West will you find a church where a preacher will dare to preach at a prayer meeting for one hour? I was in awe at the dedication and spiritual depth of these people.

At the third prayer meeting I attended, I asked some of the brothers, **“How often do your Prayer Groups gather during the week?”** **“Daily!”** was their answer. Three different prayer groups gathered every morning of the week. “Since when are you having these prayer meetings?” I wanted to know. “It started about five years ago,” they answered.

They also have prayer meetings in the evenings. Each night a group of about 100 Christians gather together in prayer. (It is not the same people every night; the group varies every night). For the past 5 years, 100 people in this church pray every night until daybreak! **Once a week - from Saturday till Sunday there is all-night prayer attended by about 1000 people.**

I then grasped the meaning and implication of Acts 12:5: *“Peter was therefore kept in prison, but **constant prayer** was offered to God for him by the church.”* **These praying Koreans illustrated to me the meaning of Revelation 5:8— “... and**

golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” Here in the West: **We are causing great pain and sorrow to ourselves for not allowing in our churches the circumstances of the New Testament Church and not following that example.**

{From:

http://www.prayerhouse.co.za/pdf/A_congregation_that_prays.pdf}

Great Grace to All! / James Bell / www.southsidegallatin.org

NEWS NOTES:

EVERY Saturday, * 8:00am — Men’s Bible Study: New Studies— *THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS!* (Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee’s Biscuits are available!)**

***** NEXT Ladies Bible Study— Tuesday, October 13, 11:00am: Women of the Bible! [TITUS 2:1-5 — New Testament Women!]**

SUNDAYS— OCTOBER 11, 18, 25

***** Sunday School at 9:30am:** Nursery, Children’s classes, Youth, and Adult classes.

***** WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!**

Additional Sunday Events:

October 11, 5:30pm- Training Faithful Men, 1689 Confession of faith.

October 18, LORD’S SUPPER, at end of Morning Worship; and HOME GROUPS, in the evening.

October 25, 6:00pm- Church Wide DISCIPLESHIP... presently an important STUDY on PRAYER, using R.C. Sproul videos...

TUESDAYS: WEEKLY Youth Group Meeting, ages 12 and up ... NOW, Tuesdays a 7:15pm... at Jaden and Rhi’s home...

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS @ SOUTHSIDE:

6:30pm— Come in by the back ‘double doors’ under the Drive Thru awning

**** Adult Prayer Service ** Young FAMILIES Prayer Service**

***** HEALTH REMINDERS as to CHURCH SERVICES**

1. IF YOU ARE SICK... [OR if you are presently in a state of high immune deficiency or if (at home or work) you are caring for one who is sick; or if you have • Fever; • Coughing; • • Chills; • Headache; • Sore throat; etc.], please stay home!]

2. IF YOU ARE HEALTHY and well... you may or may not choose to wear a mask... or gloves... WE do not require; we WILL NOT provide such. WE CONTINUE to encourage FREEDOM... as to ‘social distancing’— 6ft apart... give sensitivity and respect one to another. ADDED NOTE: In addition to carefulness, and good hydration, good nutrition, and sleep— SEEK TO HAVE A STRONG IMMUNE SYSTEM... I PERSONALLY TAKE ELDERBERRY, VITAMIN C, ZINC, GINGER, VITIMIN D, Quercetin, and a good multi-vitamin that includes fiber.

3. LET each of us DO OUR PART IN personal hygiene. IF you use the restrooms— please wash your hands with SOAP; and use nearby SANITIZER.

IT IS A MATTER OF SAFETY for all, (ESPECIALLY for SENIOR ADULTS), CHILDREN ANY WHERE IN THE CHURCH BUILDING— No unsupervised Children!

FOR THOSE AT HOME: TO RECEIVE THE 10:45am LIVE STREAMING of the worship service of October 11... GO TO:

www.southsidegallatin.org [You can also connect to our YouTube page for past messages & Bible Studies!]

LOVE OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD BY MAIL or ONLINE GIVING:

**SUCH funds, (if checks), make out to Southside Baptist) —
MAIL TO: Southside Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1594,
Gallatin, TN 37066**

**OR, you may choose to GIVE, via ONLINE GIVING
<https://southsidebaptist.breezechms.com/give/online>**