



God's Providence Over Prayer

MAIN IDEAS

- **God's providence and prayer are not contradictory.**
- **God ordains prayer as a means to fulfilling His purposes.**
- **Although God responds to prayer, prayer doesn't change God's ordained purposes.**
- **Prayer is a petitioning of God, recognition of who God is, an expression of our trust in Him, communion with God, and submission to His purposes.**
- **Prayer has the potential to change us.**

MEMORY VERSE

I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.—Psalm 57:2

SCRIPTURE

- 1) Psalm 57:2
- 2) Romans 10:17
- 3) Philippians 4:6-7
- 4) James 5:17-18



LESSON SUMMARY

What difference do our prayers make? Or do they even make any difference at all? If God is sovereign, then why should we pray?

In Psalm 57:2, the psalmist recognizes both the sovereignty of God and the need to pray: I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. So from this text it is obvious that prayer and God's sovereignty are not contradictory things.

But sometimes they seem contradictory if we have a wrong view of prayer. Prayer is not giving God information, as God knows all things; it is not negotiating with God or attempting to persuade the transcendent, as God is unchangeable, having established His purposes before the foundation of the world.

So if God is unchangeable and His purposes stand, does prayer accomplish anything? Why should we even pray? We pray because God has ordained not only the end of things, but also the means to the end. He has ordained that He work and responds in answer to prayer.

[God] is the Giver not only of the answer, but first of the prayer itself.¹

We should pray with fervency and faith, because God will accomplish great work through our prayers. Prayer changes things! There are five "ion" words that describe what prayer is, and what is changed by prayer:

- **Petition:** Prayer is making our requests known to God and humbly presenting them to him.
- **Recognition:** Prayer is understanding who we come to when we pray—we are coming to our Father who is all-powerful, unchanging, loving, and sovereign.
- **Expression:** Prayer is our expression of confidence in God.
- **Communion:** Prayer is spending time with God, getting to know Him better.
- **Submission:** Prayer is submitting ourselves to God's purposes; through prayer, God changes our hearts

Ask God to give you a heart and the discipline to pray. Spend some time praying with your son or daughter, recognizing Who you are praying to, expressing your confidence in Him, communing with Him, and submitting to His will.

1. Forsyth, P.T. *The Soul of Prayer*. (Blackwood, South Australia: New Creation Pub., 1999), 12.

AS YOU WALK BY THE WAY

Ask your child to explain what Psalm 57:2 teaches about prayer and God's providence over all things.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and discuss the following questions:

- What does "praying without ceasing" mean?
- How does verse 18 show you God's providence?
- What does it show you about submission to God's purposes?
- How does understanding God's providence help you to "give thanks in all circumstances"?

ACTION STEP

During application time, each student was asked to decide on a personal response to what was learned. After recording this step below, discuss how your child can apply this response to his or her life this week.

SUGGESTION FOR JOURNALING

Write out three prayers this week. Where do you see self-centeredness in your prayers, and where do you see God-centeredness in them?

**SEEING GOD AT WORK****An Urge to Pray**

by Sally Michael

How could an old woman in Rhode Island (in the United States), have a part in saving the lives of two children in Ecuador (in South America)?

A missionary and his family were having a picnic with another family at a reservoir in Ecuador. The children were rowing a boat on the lake, and the adults were visiting. It was a beautiful, sunny day, and the children were having fun in the boat—so much fun, that a three-year-old on shore decided that she wanted to join them in the boat. They rowed close to the edge, but because the edge of the reservoir was sloped, the boat was a fair distance from the three-year-old girl. Her father called to her to wait for his help, but she was anxious to get aboard, so she stepped out and missed the boat.

Gasping for breath and screaming hysterically, she slipped under the deep water, as her father looked on helplessly. A severe arthritic from childhood, he maneuvered himself on crutches but was unable to help his daughter.

A young boy on the boat dived in after her and was able to grab the little girl. But she was flailing her arms hysterically, and he had a hard time holding on to her. By then the boat had drifted away. Unable to hold the hysterical child and swim for the boat, his energy exhausted, he started going under.

At that moment, the boy's father glanced at his watch to see how much time the children had on the rental boat, and then looked over toward the children and saw the danger. He ran to the reservoir, jumped in, and saved both children.

A few weeks later, a letter arrived in Ecuador from a friend in the United States. This older woman asked what they had been doing on a certain date at a certain time. She had been compelled to pray for them. She prayed fervently for them until the burden passed.

What was the time and date she asked about? It was the same time the father had looked at his watch. She was praying when the children were drowning. God had put it in her heart and guided her to pray until the danger passed.

Who compelled the woman in Rhode Island to pray? Was God ignorant of the situation in Ecuador? Did she need to pray to persuade God to save the children? Why do you think God had her pray? What does her praying exactly at the time of the trouble show us about God's providence over prayer? What does it show about prayer?