

## **THE PLACE OF PRAYER**

God doesn't need prayer! He is totally SELF-SUFFICIENT! God could do anything He wants to do without a single prayer. In the beginning, God's Creation activity was not in response to prayer because no one was even there to pray other than God Himself. In determining His sovereign plan, no prayer was involved. He chose "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4); the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8); the names of the saved were written in the Book of Life "from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 17:8). "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations." (Ps. 33:11). God "works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). "Known to God from eternity are all His works." (Acts 15:18).

God is sovereign, and yet, in the outworking of His sovereign plan, He has chosen to use prayer. God is totally sovereign, and what He has determined He brings to pass (cf. Ps. 115:3; Isa. 46:10-11; Rom. 11:36; Eph. 1:11). Yet at the same time, He works through prayer. How sovereignty and prayer work together is a MYSTERY. God does what He purposes, and at the same time, prayer changes things. James says, "you do not have because you do not ask." (Ja. 4:2) Clearly, prayer or the lack thereof changes things. James 5:16 says, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." It makes a HUGE difference!

A straight-jacket position of "what will be will be" undermines the truth of what the Bible says about the place of prayer. Does prayer legitimately make a difference or not? Of course, it does! The Bible clearly says it does! Paul told the Corinthians that in God's delivering activity, they were "helping together in prayer" (2 Cor. 1:11). Peter warned husbands that if they don't treat their wife properly that their prayers may be hindered (1 Pet. 3:7). In 1 Timothy 2:1 Paul exhorts the believers to pray for "all men" and then goes on to say in verse 4 that God "desires all men to be saved". God works in the lives of people as we pray. In John 15:16, Jesus appointed His disciples to bear fruit and then said, "that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." (cf. Matt. 7:7-11)

Prayer changes things, and yet God is sovereign. In heaven, there are golden bowls full of incense, which represent "the prayers of the saints" (Rev. 5:8; 8:3).

"Specifically, these prayers [in Rev. 5:8] represent all that the redeemed have ever prayed concerning ultimate and final redemption. This becomes a major theme throughout the book." – **John MacArthur**

In Revelation 8:3 God is about to bring the ultimate climactic judgments on the world, but the emphasis is that this happens in conjunction with prayer!

“The interaction between the sovereignty of God and the prayers of His people is part of the ultimate mystery of existence.” – **Robert Thomas**

Prayer is RELATIONAL. Prayer expresses DEPENDENCE upon God. In prayer we are acknowledging God and that we need Him. God invites us to pray so that He might work and thus bring glory to Himself.

Only those who know Jesus have access to God in prayer. Jesus alone is the Mediator between God and men (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5). Without Jesus, people have no access to God, they have no prayer (cf. Rom. 5:1-2; Heb. 4:15-16; 11:6). This is why we pray in Jesus Name - not as a formula, but as a recognition of the truth that the only way to God the Father is through Jesus (cf. Jn. 14:6). Jesus invites His people to pray saying, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." (Jn. 14:14). To ask in Jesus' Name is to ask it for Jesus' sake in accordance with His will and for His glory. All prayer that lines up with God's will is answered.

### **1 John 5:14–15 (NKJV)**

14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

God will accomplish His purposes and will fulfill His plans and yet prayer plays a very important part in a way that we can't fully comprehend. Truly, we have a God so GREAT that we can't completely figure Him out (cf. Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 11:33). The biblical tension between God's sovereignty and human responsibility is clearly illustrated in the what the Bible has to say about prayer. Both the Calvinist and the Arminian agree that God works through prayer and yet none fully understand all the tensions involved.