

LESSON FOUR OUTLINE
PRAYING TO OUR SOVEREIGN GOD
EPHESIANS 1: 3-14

I. Review

- A. Our hope for the class- to know and understand the heart of God in order to align our prayers with who He is, who we are in Him, and what He is doing.
- B. Keep in mind two important concepts
 - 1. God thinks it's important for you to know Him- Creation, Scripture, Jesus
 - 2. God thinks it's important for you to know that He knows you- fully!

II. The sovereignty of God

- A. Sovereignty means God is the King and ruler of everything- Psalm 103:19
- B. Challenges for us
 - 1. The fall > our determination not to be ruled
 - 2. As Americans we are suspicious of the idea of a king
- C. What kind of King is He?
 - 1. Jesus reveal the heart of the King
 - 2. The King with a crown of thorns on a cross displaying God's attributes

III. Is God sovereign over everything?

- A. Answering either 'yes' or 'no' can lead to prayerlessness
- B. BUT the Bible commands/encourages prayer in OT, by Jesus, in epistles!
- C. God's sovereignty in relation to human activity
 - 1. Two truths taught in Scripture- they seem contradictory but are complementary
 - a. God is sovereign AND man is responsible
 - b. Man is responsible AND God is not contingent/dependent on man
 - 2. Joseph (Genesis 50:20), praying apostles (Acts 4:27-30)
 - 3. God makes sovereign promises, but recipients must show up to have them fulfilled, e.g. the Exodus- they couldn't sit passively in Egypt
 - 4. Mystery- how dependent/fallen creatures relate to an independent/perfect being not enclosed in space/ time
- D. Solution- what does prayer to a sovereign/personal God look like?
 - 1. We must do our best to ensure that these complementary truths function in our lives in the same ways they function in the lives of believers described in Scripture- D.A. Carson
 - 2. Exhortations to prayer never make God dependent on us but invite us into His world to participate in the plan of redemption to reverse the curse
 - 3. In terms of prayer
 - a. b/c God is sovereign, I must pray! Only He can help
 - b. b/c people are responsible, I must pray! We all need His help

IV. The sovereignty of God over evil and suffering

- A. Christians understand why there is evil in the world> the fall
- B. We can forget the depth of our capacity for evil
 - 1. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked
 - 2. Before the flood, every intention of man's heart was only evil continually!
 - 3. God 'puts His foot on the brake' to keep man from doing his worst
- C. May doubt the sovereignty/goodness of God in the face of injustice
 - 1. We must lament over it and be mobilized to bring the gospel to bear
 - 2. Justice will come (2 Thess. 1:6-10)
 - 3. If I want grace/mercy for me, I must pray for it in the lives of others
- D. D.A. Carson- God expects to be pleaded with; He expects godly believers to intercede with Him> He gives us language to use in psalms and prayers
- V. God's sovereignty in salvation- Ephesians 1: 3-14 precedes Paul's prayer which begins "for this reason"
 - A. The sovereign work of the triune God in salvation
 - 1. The Father v. 3-6
 - a. V. 4 CH= chosen in Christ by God the Father
 - b. v. 5 A= Adopted as sons through Jesus according to his kind intention
 - c. Why? To the praise of the glory of His grace
 - 2. The Son v. 7-12
 - a. v. 7 R= redeemed through the blood of Jesus= forgiveness
 - b. v. 11 I= in Christ we have an inheritance
 - c. Why? First believers are to the praise of His glory
 - 3. The Spirit v. 13-14
 - a. v. 13 S= sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise
 - b. v. 7 redeemed by Christ's blood, v. 14 future greater redemption
 - c. Why? Redemption of His own is to the praise of His glory
 - B. Good memory tool- the above spell CHARIS= grace in Greek
 - 1. All these actions are active on God's part and passive on ours!
 - 2. All are mediated through Christ- expression used 11x
 - C. Big question- how does He choose?
 - 1. Understanding both His sovereignty AND His personal nature expressed in all of His attributes is necessary
 - 2. This passage demonstrates that God is not capricious, but kindly intentional, always moving toward His perfect purposes
 - 3. We may not have access to all those purposes, but our King who hung on a cross and asked for forgiveness for His executioners in the midst of His agony is one we can trust with all our unanswered questions
 - 4. "Not a drop of rain can fall outside the orb of Jesus' sovereignty. All our days- our health, our illnesses, our joys, our victories, our tears, our prayers, and the answers to our prayers-fall within the sweep of the sovereignty of one who wears a human face, a thorn-shadowed face."
 - D.A. Carson

THINKING ABOUT GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

1. When you think of God being sovereign over everything, is that comforting or disquieting for you? Why do you think that is? Have you ever excused yourself from prayer because you either thought prayer was unnecessary or ineffective?
2. Ponder again, what is prayer? Is it a human activity or a means for multiplying your closeness to and intimacy with God?
3. Read and re-read Ephesians 1: 3-14 this week. Again, do this at different times and in different situations. Notice all the different blessings that are attached to the words "in Him," "through Him," and like phrases. Take time to be with your Savior, soaking in the richness of the love He has displayed to you in your salvation.
4. Think of people you are currently praying for. If they are Christians, how could you use this passage in your prayers to bring deeper joy to their faith? If they are not believers, how can you pray these blessings into their lives?