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ONE THING I ASK

By Josh Maxey

If you could only pray for one thing, what would it be?

As you think about what is going on in your life right now, there could be an abundance of things to ask God for! You could ask God to heal your loved one who is sick. You could pray that all of your financial needs are supplied. You could pray for God to take away all the things that are overwhelming you and that you are fighting against.

Are your life circumstances ideal, and things are going really well for you? If so, I ask you: What are you praying for?

On the other hand, are you anxious and stressed? Are you struggling and fighting against a multiplicity of things? If so, I ask the same question: What are you praying for?

It is typical for our prayers to revolve around our circumstances. When facing adversity, our prayers are filled with requests of God corresponding to the hardships in our lives. However, when our lives are relatively peaceful and ideal, there is more room for thanksgiving in our prayers, and delight in our relationship with God.

Consider David's prayer in Psalm 27:4

"I have asked one thing from the LORD; it is what I desire: to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, gazing on the beauty of the LORD and seeking him in his temple."

Upon reading this passage outside of its context, we could assume David's life is going pretty well. He is at peace and at a point in his life where he can simply rest in the presence of God. He doesn't have to worry about war or being chased by his enemies.

However, that is quite the opposite of David's situation! Notice the verses just prior in Psalm 27:1-3

The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom should I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— whom should I dread? When evildoers came against me to devour my flesh, my foes and my enemies stumbled and fell. Though an army deploys against me, my heart will not be afraid; though a war breaks out against me, I will still be confident.

Pay attention to all of the things that are against David: evildoers, an army, a war. Yet he has nothing to fear; nothing to dread; his heart will not be afraid, and he will still be confident. How can this be?

Considering that these are the circumstances in David's life, one might think that the "one thing" he asks for would be salvation from his enemies! He could pray that God destroys his enemies and all those that come against him, and he even does pray that at times, but here we see the priority of his heart: the nearness of God.

Look at the result of God's presence in his life in verse 5-6: "For he will conceal me in his shelter in the day of adversity; he will hide me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock. Then my head will be high above my enemies around me; I will offer sacrifices in his tent with shouts of joy. I will sing and make music to the LORD."

The result of that "one thing" is protection, security, peace, joy, thanksgiving.

So I ask you again, what is going on in your life? What things are against you? And what are you praying for? God wants us to draw near to him and pray about all the things that make us anxious, but what we can learn from this psalm is that ultimately, peace and security do not come from our circumstances, but from the presence and nearness of God.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

by Andy Diestelkamp

God is sovereign (i.e. supreme ruler). He is King of kings (1 Tim. 6:15). God can do what He wills to do because He is God, and all of His ways are perfect. God's sovereignty is inherent as the Creator (e.g. Rom. 1:20; Rev. 4:11). I acknowledge it. I believe in it. I submit to it (imperfectly). I am *not* sovereign, and I am in no position to challenge His authority. Knowing that His ways are higher than mine, He is patient with my doubts and welcomes my laments about why things happen as they do in this life under the sun. He is perfectly faithful in His love, justice, and mercy. Indeed, these grand characteristics are not bigger than He is. He is not subject to them. He defines them.

Therefore, I must follow and teach what He has revealed. However, I do so with the understanding that my interpretation and application of His revelation can be as imperfect as I am; and I am in no position to challenge God's sovereignty based on my limited understanding. Rather, I must do my best to conform my understanding to His revelation and immutable character.

Also, God is not subject to His revelation or to my conclusions about His revelation. His revelation is neither infinite nor sovereign. There is much more to God than He has revealed (cf. Deut. 29:29).

Therefore, respect for and submission to the sovereignty of God takes seriously what He *has* revealed while acknowledging that God may extend grace in ways that are beyond my ability to imagine. Conversely, respect for and submission to the sovereignty of God takes seriously what He has revealed so that I do not, in any way, alter or diminish the necessity of faithful obedience on the presumption of His grace.

I am gracious to others because God has been gracious to me (cf. Mt. 6:12; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). However, God's grace is not mine to extend except as He has revealed in His Word.

As I wrestle with whether or not some teaching in Scripture is "necessary" in order to be saved, to be faithful, or to be sound, I must beware extremes. While I must not assume that *my* understanding of Scripture requires God to act accordingly, I am also not at liberty to declare some doctrine "unnecessary" on the basis that God can do whatever He wants. Belief in the sovereignty of God requires me to obey what He has revealed and to acknowledge that God is perfect in justice and will judge in whatever way is consistent with His character.

God is sovereign; I am not. Vengeance is God's, not mine (Rom. 12:19). He extends mercy according to *His* will, not according to mine (9:14-18). "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (11:33).

Think on These Things April – June 2025