

## Does Prayer Really Make a Difference?

[James 5:13-18](#)

James, Day 25

*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. - James 5:13-18, ESV*

If God already knows what we're going to ask before we ask, why ask? Or, if God has already decreed everything and is sovereign over all things absolutely, why pray? In light of a perfectly sovereign God who knows all and rules over all, does prayer make any difference at all? Isn't God going to do what He's going to do, whether we pray or not?

These questions some people ask about prayer could be asked about other things, too. If election is true, why evangelize? Why share the Gospel if God has already determined from eternity past who He is going to save? Or, to take it to an extreme, if the days of our lives are all numbered and written in God's book before we're born, why bother with medical care or healthy living? Why not just eat what we want and never go see a doctor? Jesus said we cannot add an hour to our lives by worrying, so what difference does it make?

One simple answer to these kinds of questions is that we should never use one truth from God's word as a battering ram to knock down other truths from God's word. The same God who declares His own sovereignty very clearly in Scripture also calls us to pray, promising to answer our prayers according to His wisdom and love. The same God who proclaims the truth of election throughout Scripture also tells us to preach the Gospel, for "*faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*" (Rom. 10:17) We must believe all that God reveals about Himself, not picking what we like and using it to nullify what we don't.

Digging a little deeper into the issue, we see that the same God who ordains the ends also ordains the means toward those ends. In other words, God not only tells us what He's going to do but also how He's going to do it. God could accomplish His purposes apart from our prayers and our evangelism, but He has declared that He will not. So, does prayer make a difference? Absolutely! Why? Because God has decreed that it does.

When we pray in faith, we can pray in hope and in confidence. Our prayers aren't going to convince God to do something wrong or foolish or unloving. Yet our prayers do make a difference. They are heard and answered by a loving God who is our Heavenly Father and who delights to hear and answer the prayers of His children. It's all part of His plan, and His sovereignty should encourage, rather than discourage, our prayers.