

Presbyterianism: The Sovereignty of God

THE LINK

Devotional Living Guide, February 1, 2009

Sugar River United Methodist Church

Prayer Link

Prayers for the community

Praise & Thanksgiving

Audio, Video & Presentation Techs

Pray for...

All people facing layoffs and all who are struggling to get back in the job market

May God touch someone through us today

E-Prayer Chain: A group of people have covenanted to pray for special requests they receive periodically via e-mail. Please send your request to Marian M. Pagan romali@sbcglobal.net (Quicker response and more confidential)

Prayer Link Listing: If you would like to have your concern listed in this weekly publication, please contact the church office: sugarriverumc@tds.net or call 845-5855

Inspirational Thoughts Link
& insights from Worship

Job 19:25-27, Psalm 139:16b-18, Romans 8:28

"I know that my redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin is destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

"All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake I am still with you."

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

This week we'll study scriptures that relate to major emphases of Presbyterianism

The Word Link
Study guide

Monday, February 2 --

Predestination --

There are several passages in the Bible that speak of God having "predestined" persons to become his followers. Let's consider one of them today. **Read Ephesians 1:3-14.** Some translations use the word "predestined" in verses 5 and 11, while others use the word "destined" Is there a difference? Some believe this passages is teaching that God chose specific people to be saved, before the world began – these are the "elect." John Calvin taught that those who were not elect God, predestined for damnation, and that neither the elect nor the damned could do anything to change their status – their status having been pre-determined by God before they were born. A case can be made for this based upon our passage today. Does this idea raise any difficulties for you? Why or why not? Some understand the word, "predestined" to mean that God knew in advance who would choose him, not that God chose in advance who would be saved. **Read Romans 8:29** where you can see this idea. Others believe that God's hoosing, God's election and God's predestination described in Ephesians 1 is more general than specific – that God predestined that all of those who would accept Christ would be holy, loved, and

adopted as his children. Much of the Bible seems to indicate that “as many as received Christ” could be saved, which seems to line up with the idea that God, by his grace, gives persons the opportunity to respond to the gospel, but some reject his offer of life. Look over Calvin’s TULIP on your sermon notes. For a bit more information about each point, and the perspective of Methodist Christians to these five points, see www.cresourcei.org/tulip.html. On this topic of pre-destination there will always be debate with Christians on both sides, pointing toward scriptures that support their views. What response would Christ have Christians on opposite sides of this issue take toward one another?

Tuesday, February 3 – God’s Sovereignty – Presbyterians typically hold a very high view of the “sovereignty” of God. You will notice that part of the word sovereignty is the word “reign.” The idea is that God does what God chooses to do – that God’s will will always be done. Calvin understood that everything that happens, happens according to God’s sovereign will. Tragedies, suffering, even horrible things that humans do to one another – ultimately these are part of God’s working in the world. Humans do evil, but God is ultimately in charge of what is happening on a daily basis and so the evil we do to one another is also part of God’s will in our lives and is to be accepted as such. For some this brings great comfort – no matter what kind of terrible thing happens in our lives, it is God’s will and since God is holy and good, there must be a plan we cannot see that is at work. Others find this idea disturbing, believing it seems to attribute human evil (and every natural disaster), ultimately to God. Methodists tend to think of God being sovereign – meaning that God is ultimately in control – but that God has allowed the world to be subjected to human beings – (in Genesis we read that God gave us “dominion” over the world), and that we often live in rebellion to God’s will – so that the evil that happens in the world is generally not God’s will, but a result simply of humanity’s sin. We believe that the kingdom of God is that realm where God reigns and where his subjects recognize and heed his rule. This kingdom begins in our lives as we accept Christ as Lord, and is seen in its fullest expression in heaven. Nevertheless, Methodists believe that God does take all that happens in our lives and, when we place it in his hands, he will use it for his glory and purposes. The rest of this week’s readings will be focused on this idea. **Read Psalm 103**. What does it say about how God reigns?

Wednesday, February 4 – September 6 – **Read Job 19:25-27**. Job has faced terrible circumstances, losing everything, yet he continues to trust in God – this is a picture of how a strong trust in God’s rule and reign produces a steadfastness in us. **Read Lamentations 3:19-33**.

Thursday, February 5– Paul the Apostle’s perspective on his own imprisonment and suffering was shaped by his view of God’s reign and his work even through adversity. **Read Philipians 1**.

Friday, February 6– In a sense what the doctrine of the sovereignty of God calls us to is absolute trust that God will work in all things to accomplish his purposes and our salvation. **Read Romans 8:28**. How does this promise sustain you in difficult times? **Read Psalm 25:1-10**. **Read Proverbs 3:5-6**. **Read Isaiah 12**. What does it mean for you to trust in the Lord?

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I feel led by God to...

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