

**QUESTIONS**

**ABOUT PRAYER**

**PART 2**



**REVIEW OF LAST WEEK:**

**WHY DO A SERIES ON  
QUESTIONS ABOUT PRAYER?**

**YOUR QUESTIONS  
ABOUT PRAYER**

**QUESTIONS FROM  
OTHER CHRISTIANS**

**QUESTIONS FROM  
FORMER CHRISTIANS**



**REVIEW OF LAST WEEK:**

**LESSONS FROM OUR  
LAST SERIES ON PRAYER**

**THE "UNANSWERED"  
PRAYERS OF JESUS**



# QUESTIONS ABOUT PRAYER:

DOES PRAYER CHANGE GOD'S MIND?

WHY PRAY IF GOD ALREADY KNOWS  
ALL OF YOUR NEEDS?



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*God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? (Numbers 23:19)*

*He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind. (1 Samuel 15:29)*

*I, the Lord, do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. (Malachi 3:6)*

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*My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. (Hosea 11:8)*

*Now therefore amend your ways and your deeds and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will change His mind about the misfortune which he has pronounced against you. (Jeremiah 26:13)*

*The Lord changed His mind about this. 'This too shall not be,' said the Lord God. (Amos 7:6)*

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God changed His mind:

Abraham praying over Sodom;

Moses pleading to spare the Israelites;

Jeremiah ordered to stop praying;

Isaiah prophesying the death of Hezekiah;

God prophesying destruction to Nineveh.

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God did not change His mind:

Moses forbidden from entering the promised land;  
Saul pleading for a return to the Lord;  
David pleading for the life of his son;  
Jesus in the Garden;  
Paul and the “thorn” in his side.



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IF GOD IS SOVEREIGN,  
WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO TO PRAY?



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IF GOD IS SOVEREIGN,  
WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO TO PRAY?



Origen (early Third Century):

“First, if God foreknows what will come to be and if it must happen, then prayer is in vain. Second, if everything happens according to God’s will and if what He wills is fixed and none of the things He wills can be changed, then prayer is in vain.”

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IF GOD IS SOVEREIGN,  
WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO TO PRAY?



1. God invites prayer, even as we pray “thy will be done.”
2. God often “withdraws” His sovereignty to allow us to exercise our free will.
3. Other times, God intervenes in the natural order (plagues, miracles) to change the course of things, or even to restrict our free will (Jonah, Pharaoh).
4. Many times, Jesus appeared to know the will of the Father; yet He nevertheless prayed.

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What should we conclude?

Statements about God “not changing his mind” are most often made to describe a God whose promises and commandments do not change.

It appears that God at times is moved by our prayers, but at other times will not change “His will”.

Since we are bound by time and cannot know the outcome, we should pray until the “outcome” is made known.

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WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO TO PRAY?



Karl Barth said:

*He is not deaf; he listens; more than that, he acts. He does not act in the same way whether we pray or not. Prayer exerts an influence upon God's action, even upon His existence. That is what the word "answer" means. . . . The fact that God yields to man's petitions, changing His intentions in response to man's prayer, is not a sign of weakness. He Himself in the glory of His majesty and power, has so willed it.*

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1. The question assumes that prayer is to make known our needs.
2. Jesus told us the Father already knows our needs (Matt: 6:32)
3. But Jesus instructed us to pray, “give us this day our daily bread,” “forgive us our debts,” “lead us not into temptation,” and “deliver us from evil” (all of which appear to be “needs”)
4. Jesus invited a persistent and insistent form of prayer:
  - Luke 11:5-13 / Luke 18:1-8



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Philip Yancey:

*“Why pray? Evidently, God likes to be asked. God certainly does not need our wisdom or our knowledge, nor even the information contained in our prayers. But by inviting us into the partnership of creation, God also invites us into relationship. . . .*

*Consider again the act of repentance. Confessing my sins before God communicates something God already knows. Yet somehow the act of confession binds the relationship and allows a closeness that could not otherwise exist.”*



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Set apart Christ as Lord...

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