

How effective is prayer if it can't change God's mind?

- Our actions change the world and others, without changing God's secret will
- Our prayers change the world and others even more, without changing God's secret will
- Whether or not we pray changes the future course of events and the destiny of others

Believing what cannot be understood

Truth	More truth	Heresy
God is one Lord	God exists as three Persons	<u>One</u> Lord cannot exist as <u>three</u> (Arianism)
Jesus is fully God	Jesus is fully human	Someone who is fully <u>God</u> cannot really be fully <u>human</u> (Docetism)
Prayer never changes God's mind	Prayer really changes people and events	If prayer does not <u>change God</u> , then it does not <u>change</u> people or events (Deism)

Based on *If God Already Knows, Why Pray?* (Douglass F. Kelly, 1989, p. 76).

God's secret will

- GOD from all eternity did...freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.
- Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions; yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 3.

What can come to pass

- ☉ "Therefore he said he would destroy them — had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them." (Ps 106:23)
- ☉ "And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them." (Ezek. 22:30-31a)

What would have happened

What could have happened, and was in <i>God's secret will</i>	What could have happened, but was not in <i>God's secret will</i>
Moses interceded for Israel	Moses did not intercede for Israel
God saved Israel	God destroyed Israel

What would have happened

What could have happened, and was in God's secret will	What could have happened, but was not in God's secret will
No one stood in the gap for Israel	Someone stood in the gap for Israel
God punished Israel	God saved Israel

Ezek. 22:30–31:

“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.”

What would have happened

What could have happened, and was in God's secret will	What could have happened, but was not in God's secret will
Sodom did not see the miracles of Jesus	Sodom saw the miracles of Jesus
Sodom did not repent	Sodom repented

“And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be [11:23 NU-Text reads [will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be.]] brought down to **Hades**; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in **Sodom**, it would have remained until this day.” (Matt. 11:23)

Do prayers change others?

What could happen — God's secret will is not yet known to us	What could happen — God's secret will is not yet known to us
You pray that your friend will have life	You do not pray that your friend will have life
Your friend repents	Your friend does not repent

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.” (1 John 5:16–17)

Prayer is effective

Moses prayed for mercy → God forgave

Moses lifted his hands → Victory in battle

Moses dropped his hands → Defeat in battle

You do not ask God → You do not have

Ex 17:10–12 (Moses' prayer in battle). Ex 32:10–14; Ps 106:23 ("Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them," cf. Ezek. 22:29–31). James 4:2; 5:15–18.

What would God do if you asked?

General principle

You do not ask God in faith → You do not have

Example

Ask in faith for wisdom → God will give wisdom

Do not ask in faith for wisdom → God will not give wisdom

James 1:2-8; 4:2; 5:15-18

What did God not ordain?

Work at your job → God will give a paycheck

Do not work at your job → God will not give a paycheck

Ask in faith for wisdom → God will give wisdom

Do not ask in faith for wisdom → God will not give wisdom

James 1:2-8.

You live by every command of God

God commanded bread → They lived not only by bread,
but also by the command of God

God commanded manna → They still lived by God's word
(God's command of food)

Ask in faith for wisdom → God will give wisdom

Work at your job
"Give us our daily bread" → God will give a paycheck

Matt 4:4; Deut 8:3-4.

Lies that hinder prayer

<p>Lie #1: Prayer changes God's mind</p>	<p>Lie #2: Prayer does not change the world</p>
<p>Result: Praying without faith in God's wisdom leads to relying on prayers more than on God.</p>	<p>Result: A lack of faith in God's sovereignty leads to relying on work more than on God in prayer.</p>

Application

- ④ If you believe your work is more effective than your prayers, what does that say about your faith in *God's* love and sovereignty?
- ④ Could someone look at your prayer life and tell that you really depend on *God* to answer you? Or do you depend more on your own effort?
- ④ Francis Schaeffer asked this question:
Would your life be very different if everything *God* said about the effectiveness of prayer were removed from the Bible?

More questions

- Are you ever too busy to pray?
- Are you ever too busy not to pray?
- Would that be different if you believed prayer is as effective as Scripture says?
- "...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us..."