

Does Prayer Change Things? 2018-04-22

James 4:2b

You do not have, because you do not ask.

Point to prayer “core value”....May be hesitant to receive future prayer messages if don't 1st address this issue.

- Why pray if God has already determined/decided everything?
 - Prayer doesn't change God's mind but it does change/affect things!

If God changes His mind then He is not omniscient/all wise and takes man's counsel.

- What about “God repents” or God “sorry”? Genesis 6:6, Jonah 3:4 & 10, Exodus 32:14
- Short term caused sorrow, but long term achieves His purposes.
 - Father allows child do something knows bring sorrow to parent and child because knows greater long-term good come from it.
- God responds differently to different situations. Deuteronomy 28:2, 2 Chronicles 7:14
 - Purpose of warning was to bring repentance to Nineveh and Jonah.
- God did not bring judgment because of prayer (Moses), repentance or both.
 - "changes his mind" perhaps only from our perspective inside of time.
 - Prayer does not bend God to our will, it bends us toward His will.
 - Speculate: Father allows his kids to think it's their idea rather than his.

If not change God's mind & going to happen anyway, what difference prayer make?

- Because it is not going to happen “any way”; it's going to happen 1 particular way.

God plans the destination and entire journey to get there.

- Both cause/means & effect/end must be ordained together.
 - Event happens if cause happens. James 4:2b, 5:16,
 - *“We must never presume God will grant us apart from prayer what He has ordained to grant us only by means of prayer.” Sam Storms*

God does what he does through causes/means and prayer is one of His means.

- God does SOME of what He has chosen to do only in answer to prayers that He has moved Christians to pray by the Holy Spirit.
 - In these situations prayer allows us to participate in God's plan and have some effect on how that plan is accomplished.
 - *“The event [in question] has already been decided—in a sense it was decided “before all worlds.” But one of the things taken into account in deciding it, and therefore one of the things that really cause it to happen, may be this very prayer that we are now offering. . . . My free act [of prayer] contributes to the cosmic shape.” C. S. Lewis*
 - In turn God receives glory and our faith grows.

Can take 1st principle and use it to nullify 2nd because can't fathom how both are true.

- Bible teaches both God's sovereignty and that prayer causes things to happen.
 - Somehow both are true.

- Nobody understood divine sovereignty more than Jesus & He considered prayer essential and prayed constantly. Luke 6:12-13, 22:41-44, Matthew 7:7-8
 - Gethsemane denied, He bowed to Father's will: secret to joy-filled prayer.

Enemy uses God's sovereignty as reason not pray but it's the very reason we should pray.

- God determined all outcomes but we still take medicine when sick, work for living, look for a spouse.
 - If prayer does not affect outcome, God would not ask/command us to do it.

Scripture continually encourages Christians to pray because God chooses to use prayer as means/cause to make things happen. Philippeans 4:6, 1 John 5:14, James 4:2b

- Some things prayer does not change but what will be affected through prayer is unknown
 - Prayer affects/changes things! Let's obey Scripture: Ask & receive.
 - Challenge: Read books about prayer, increase prayer by 10 minutes a day & specifically ask for greater desire for prayer for self, me & LEFC.
 - *"God has as much ordained His people's prayers as anything else, and when we pray we are producing links in the chain of ordained facts. Destiny decrees that I should pray—I pray."* C.H. Spurgeon