

Does God Change His Mind?

The Power and Place of Prayer

Results of Prayer

- Gives us peace & understanding
- Helps our understanding of the Bible
- Gives us a peek at who God is
- Revives us, even reforming us
- Heals us emotionally, sometimes physically
- Means through which God works in our lives and others
- Changes God's mind?

Can our prayers change God?

- God is not a man that He should change His mind (Numbers 23:19).
- God does not lie or change His mind (1 Samuel 15:29).
- The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind (Psalm 110:4).
- I, the LORD, do not change (Malachi 3:6).
- ...Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow (Jas 1:17).

But what about...

- Didn't God change His mind in Exodus 32:9-14 (cf. Numbers 14:11-20)?
- After Moses pleaded with God not to destroy the Israelites, God relented: "*So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people*" (Exodus 32:14).

God and Time

- Philosophically speaking, since God is outside of time...
- **FIRST**, that which changes does so in some chronological order—a time before the change and a time after the change.
- **But** that which experiences a before and after can only exist in time—that chronological progress from before to after.

- **Yet God is eternal and hence outside time (John 17:5; 2 Tim. 1:9).**
- **Thus, there cannot be in God a series of before's and after's.**
- **Conclusion: God cannot change since change necessarily involves before and after.**

- **SECOND**, that which changes must change for better or for worse, for a change that makes no difference is not a change.
- Either something that is needed is gained that was previously absent (a change for the better), or something that is needed is lost that was previously possessed (a change for the worse).
- Yet since God is perfect, He does not need anything; thus, He cannot change either for the better or the worse. Thus, God cannot change.

- **THIRD**, to change one's mind, new information has to come to light—previously unknown—or the circumstances have changed that require a different kind of attitude or action.
- Yet since God is omniscient (Ps. 147:5), He does not learn new information; He knows everything.
- So, for God to change, the circumstances must change, requiring a different attitude or action.
- Thus, it cannot be said that God changes His mind; rather, as circumstances change, God's relationship to the new circumstances are different because *they have changed, not God.*

Answer to Exodus 32:14

- Therefore, when Moses interceded for Israel, the circumstances were changed. Though God's attitude toward sin is always anger, His attitude toward those who call to Him is always an attitude of mercy. Before Moses prayed for Israel, they were under God's judgment. By Moses' intercession for Israel, he brought them under God's mercy. So God did not change, the circumstances did—through prayer!

- This anthropomorphic language is akin to changing positions when the sun is in your eyes. Moving one's back to the sun does not change the sun; it changes the circumstance—moving the sun out of our eyes from a human perspective.
- When Moses said God relented, it was a figurative way of saying that Moses' intercession successfully changed the relationship of the people to God. He brought the nation under the mercy of God's grace, and out from under the judgment of God.
- Conclusion: God does not change, not His mind, His will, or His nature.

- **Jeremiah 18:5-10:** *the word of the LORD came to me saying, “At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it... “I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.”*

Let us conclude that God...

- Will relent from His threats IF people turn from sin (Jeremiah 18:5-10).
- *“Rend your heart and not your garments. Now return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil”* (Joel 2:13).
 - Cf. Jonah 3:10; 4:2; Amos 7:3 & 6.

Why Change God?

- If we think our will is better, then why a need for God?
- If God is omniscient why even ask? Isn't it dangerous to try to change the mind of a perfect God?
- And why pray for the lost? In fact, why do non-Calvinists pray for unbelievers? Won't that interfere with their freewill?

**GOD'S WILL IS SET IN
SCRIPTURE**

Genesis 49:8-12

- v 8: Judah (“let him be praised”) will have leadership [speaking of future].
- v 9: Judah will be mighty (lion).
- v 10: From Judah Messiah will come.
 - “scepter” is symbol of kingship.
 - “Shiloh” (“who to him”) refers to the Messiah whom the kingdom actually belongs to.
- vv 11-12 describe an actual person.

God's Promises

- God cannot lie.
- God's unconditional promises must be fulfilled, or He is a liar.
- Abrahamic yet to be (land, seed, blessing).
- Davidic yet to be (sit on David's throne).
- All prophecy yet to be (Israel).

The Problem

- We suffer much:
 - We have many needs (health, finances, family, etc.).
 - We are not in control of our lives.
 - We are all sinners.
 - We are all subject to sicknesses and will all die.

The Solution

- Prayerful communication with God Almighty.
 - He does not change.
 - Yet He works through prayer
 - His wrath subsides as people repent.
 - God's plan will unfold regardless of people.
 - All answers given bring Him glory.

Application

- **Bother God with your requests (persistent widow in Luke 18).**
 - Pray continually about your needs.
 - To pray is to talk.
 - Don't try to change God, let Him change you.

Conclusion

- God intended to spare Israel.
 - He drew Moses into the process.
- God is not changed through prayer; we are!
- God uses our prayers to implement His perfect will.
 - We get to come along for the ride.

Conclusion cont.

- God will work, but often He waits long periods of time.
- James says, “You do not have b/c you do not ask” (4:2).
- God sometimes says no just like a parent says no to his children -- for their good.

BTCP Question

- Find at least one source that talks about “open theism” and critique it.