

**Discipleship:
An
Introduction to
Systematic Theology and
Apologetics**

Protestant Reformation Doctrines of Salvation

The Heights Church October 13, 2019

Prayer: Two Reasons to Pray (review)

- Summary of Edward's reasons to pray.
 - All that God does is for His glory first and for our benefit second.
 - We pray because God commands us to pray, because it glorifies Him, and because it benefits us.

What Does God's Omniscience mean?

- **Wayne Grudem** Is the doctrine that God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.
- **James P. Boyce** All that we can say is that [God's] knowledge is his essence or nature knowing. It is not something acquired, but something belonging to that nature itself and identical with it ... it is something so inherent in his nature that it exists exclusively of any means of attaining or perceiving it. The knowledge of God, therefore, not being acquired, cannot be increased. Time does not add to it. Succession of events does not bring it before God...

What Does God's Omniscience mean?

He knows all the past, present, and future of all things, knowing the future with the same certainty and accuracy with which he knows the present and past; for that future is already as present to him as though actually existing with the creatures and time belonging to it, and is distinctly perceived as it shall be then.

What Does God's Omniscience mean?

- Job 37:14-16 | Listen to this, O Job ... Do you know ... those wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?
- Psalm 139:1-6 | O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me, such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it.

What Does God's Omniscience mean?

- Isaiah 46:9-10 | Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is none like Me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure.
- Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depths of the riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it should be repaid to him? For of him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. **Amen.**

Prayer: If God Knows Everything, why does God want us to pray?

- R. C. Sproul says this: *There is something erroneous in the question, “If God knows everything, why pray?” The question assumes that prayer is one-dimensional and is defined simply as supplication or intercession. On the contrary, prayer is multidimensional. God’s sovereignty casts no shadow over the prayer of adoration. God’s foreknowledge or determinate counsel does not negate the prayer of praise. The only thing it should do is give us greater reason for expressing our adoration for who God is. If God knows what I’m going to say before I say it, His knowledge, rather than limiting my prayer, enhances the beauty of my praise.*

Prayer: If God Knows Everything, why does God want us to pray?

Prayer, like everything else in the Christian life, is for God's glory and for our benefit, in that order. Everything that God does, everything that God allows and ordains, is in the supreme sense for His glory. It is also true that while God seeks His own glory supremely, man benefits when God is glorified. We pray to glorify God, but we also pray in order to receive the benefits of prayer from His hand. Prayer is for our benefit, even in light of the fact that God knows the end from the beginning. It is our privilege to bring the whole of our finite existence into the glory of His infinite presence.

Prayer: If God Knows Everything, why does God want us to pray?

One of the great themes of the Reformation was the idea that all of life is to be lived under the authority of God, to the glory of God, in the presence of God.

Prayer is not simply a soliloquy, a mere exercise in therapeutic self-analysis, or a religious recitation. Prayer is discourse with the personal God Himself. There, in the act and dynamic of praying, I bring my whole life under His gaze. Yes, He knows what is in my mind, but I still have the privilege of articulating to Him what is there. He says: "Come. Speak to me. Make your requests known to me." So we come in order to know Him and to be known by Him.

R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions booklet [Does Prayer Change Things?](#).

Prayer: Salvation and the Sovereignty of God - John Piper*

I am often asked, “If you believe God works *all things* according to the counsel of his will (Ephesians 1:11), and that his knowledge of all things past, present, and future is infallible, then what is the point of praying that anything happen?” Usually this question is asked in relation to human decisions: “If God has predestined some to be his sons and chosen them before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4–5), then what’s the point in praying for anyone’s conversion?”

*The John Piper slides quote an article written by John Piper titled The Sovereignty of God and Prayer written January 1, 1976.

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The implicit argument here is that if prayer is to be possible at all, people must have the power of self-determination. That is, a person's decisions must *ultimately* belong to himself, not God. For otherwise, he is determined by God, and all his decisions are really fixed in God's eternal counsel. Let's examine the reasonableness of this argument by reflecting on the example cited above.

“Why pray for anyone's conversion if God has chosen before the foundation of the world who will be his sons?”

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A person in need of conversion is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1); he is “a slave to sin” (John 8:34; Romans 6:17); the god of this world has blinded his mind that he might not see “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians. 4:4); his heart is hardened against God (Ephesians 4:18) so that he is hostile to God and in rebellion against God’s will (Romans 8:7).

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Now, I would like to turn the question back to my questioner: If you insist that this man must have the power of ultimate self-determination, what is the point of praying for him? What do you want God to do for him? You can't ask that God overcome the man's rebellion, for rebellion is precisely what the man is now choosing, so that would mean God overcame his choice and took away his power of self-determination. But how can God save this man unless he act so as to change the man's heart from hard hostility to tender trust?

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Will you pray that God enlighten his mind so that he truly see the beauty of Christ and believe? If you pray this, you are in effect asking God no longer to leave the determination of the man's will in his own power. You are asking God to do something within the man's mind (or heart) so that he will surely see and believe. That is, you are conceding that the *ultimate* determination of the man's decision to trust Christ is God's, not merely his.

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It is not the doctrine of God's sovereignty that thwarts prayer for the conversion of sinners. On the contrary, it is the unbiblical notion of self-determination which would consistently put an end to all prayers for the lost. Prayer is a request that *God* do something. But the only thing God can do to save a lost sinner is to overcome his resistance to God. If you insist that he retain his self-determination, then you are insisting that he remain without Christ. For "no one can come to [Christ] unless it is *granted* him by the Father" (John 6:65, 44).

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Only the person who rejects human self-determination can consistently pray for God to save the lost. My prayer for unbelievers is that *God* will do for them what he did for Lydia: He opened her heart so that she gave heed to what Paul said (Acts 16:14). I will pray that *God*, who once said, “Let there be light!” will by that same creative power shine in their hearts to give “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). I will pray that *he* will “take out their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

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I will pray that they be born not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of *God* (John 1:13). And with all my praying I will try to “be kind to everyone, able to teach, correcting [my] opponents with gentleness,” for “*God* may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:24–25).

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In short, I do not ask God to sit back and wait for my neighbor to decide to change. I do not suggest to God that he keep his distance lest his beauty become irresistible and violate my neighbor's power of self-determination. No! I pray that he ravish my unbelieving neighbor with his beauty, that he unshackle the enslaved will, that he make the dead alive and that he suffer no resistance to stop him lest my neighbor perish.

Prayer: Salvation and the Sovereignty of God - John Piper*

If someone now says, “Okay, granted that a person’s conversion is ultimately determined by God, I still don’t see the point of your prayer. If God chose before the foundation of the world who would be converted, what function does your prayer have?” My answer is that it has a function like that of preaching: How shall the lost believe in whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach unless they are sent (Romans 10:14–15)? Belief in Christ is a gift of God (John 6:65; 2 Timothy 2:25; Ephesians 2:8), but God has ordained that the means by which men believe on Jesus is through the preaching of men.

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It is simply naive to say that *if* no one spread the gospel, all those predestined to be sons of God would be converted anyway. The reason this is naive is because it overlooks the fact that the *preaching* of the gospel is just as predestined as is the *believing* of the gospel: Paul was set apart for his preaching ministry before he was born (Galatians 1:15), as was Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5). Therefore, to ask, “If we don’t evangelize, will the elect be saved?” is like asking, “If there is no predestination, will the predestined be saved?”

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God knows those who are his, and he will raise up messengers to win them. If someone refuses to be a part of that plan because he dislikes the idea of being tampered with before he was born, then he will be the loser, not God and not the elect. As C.S. Lewis writes, “You will certainly carry out God’s purpose, however you act, but it makes a difference to you whether you serve like Judas or like John” (*The Problem of Pain*, 111).

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Prayer is like preaching in that it is a human act also. It is a human act that God has ordained and which he delights in because it reflects the dependence of his creatures upon him. He has promised to respond to prayer, and his response is just as contingent upon our prayer as our prayer is in accordance with his will.

“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything *according to his will* he hears us” (1 John 5:14). When we don’t know how to pray according to God’s will but desire it earnestly, “the Spirit intercedes for the saints *according to the will of God*” (Romans 8:27).

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In other words, just as God will see to it that his word is proclaimed as a means to saving the elect, so he will see to it that all those prayers are prayed which he has promised to respond to. I think Paul's words in Romans 15:18 would apply equally well to his preaching and his praying ministry: "I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience." Even our prayers are a gift from the one who "[works] in us that which is pleasing in his sight" (Hebrews 13:21). Oh, how grateful we should be that he has chosen us to be employed in this high service! How eager we should be to spend much time in prayer!