

What is Reformed Theology? Predestination, Prayer and Evangelism

If God has predestined all things, then why pray? If God has elected some, then why witness, evangelize or send missionaries?

I. Predestination and Prayer

On the surface, prayer seems to make God's plans contingent and God's sovereignty seem to make prayer meaningless.

A. Biblical Premises about Prayer

1. The Bible commands us to pray (Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:17)

Persistent, fervent prayer is encouraged (Lk. 11:5-13; 18:1-7)
2. Prayer is a mighty weapon (Jas. 5:16-17)
3. Prayer and ministry go hand in hand (Rom. 15:30-32; Col. 4:2)

B. The biblical resolution

1. Prayer is a real means (or secondary cause)
(2 Cor. 1:8-11 [ESV]; Phil. 1:18-20; Ezek. 36:33-37)

“The God who is pleased to ordain the salvation of sinners based solely on His good pleasure, is no less pleased to ordain that he will save them in response to the prayers of others whom He has previously saved by the same means” (Storms, *Chosen for Life*, 172-172).

2. Prayer is part of the plan/decreed
Prayer and sovereignty are never set against each, prayer is part of the plan (Isa. 37:21, 26).

Prayer is woven into the warp and woof of God's purposes so that when He is about to act, He sets His people praying (Zech. 12:10). *God has been pleased to constitute prayer to be antecedent to the bestowal of mercy; and He is pleased to bestow mercy in consequence of prayer, as though He were prevailed on by prayer.- When the people of God are stirred up to prayer, it is the effect of His intention show mercy; therefore He pours out the spirit of grace and supplication.* Jonathan Edwards, “The Most High a Prayer-Hearing God.”

Spurgeon on Prayer and the Sovereign Decree of God

And if the Church be determined to-day to lift up her heart in prayer for the conversion of men, it is because God determined from before all worlds that men should be converted; your feeble prayer to-day, believer, can fly to heaven, and awake the echoes of the slumbering decrees of God. Every time you speak to God, your voice resounds beyond the limits of time, the decrees of God speak to your prayer, and cry, "All hail! brother, all hail! thou, too, art a decree!"

Prayer is a decree escaped out of the prison of obscurity, and come to life and liberty among men. Pray, brother, pray, for when God inspires you, your prayer is as potent as the decrees of God. As his decrees bind the universe with spells and make the suns obedient to him — as every letter of his decree is as a nail, pinning together the pillars of the universe, so are your prayers, they are the pivots on which earth rests; they are the wheels on which providence revolves; your prayers are like God's decrees, struggling to be born, and to become incarnate like their Lord.

God will, God must answer the prayers of his Church. Methinks I can see in vision in the clouds, God's register, his file on which he puts the prayers of his Church. One after another they have been deposited, he has cast none of them away, and consumed none of them in the fire, but he has put them on his file, and smiled as the heap accumulated; and when it shall reach a certain mark which he has set and appointed in his good pleasure, and the last number of the prayers shall be completed, and the blood of Christ shall have bedewed the whole, then will the Eternal speak, and it *shall* be done he shall command and it *shall* stand fast.

II. Predestination and Evangelism

- A. Biblical Premises about evangelism
 1. Evangelism is commanded (Matt. 28:19-20)
 2. A fervent desire to see the lost saved is biblical (Matt. 23:37; Rom. 9:1-3*)

- B. Evangelism, witness and missions are means
Acts 18:9-10; John 10:16 cf. Rom. 10:14-17; 2 Tim. 2:10

“So far from making evangelism pointless, the sovereignty of God in grace is the one thing that prevents evangelism from being pointless. For it creates the possibility – indeed, the certainty – that evangelism will be fruitful. Apart from it, there is not even a possibility of evangelism being fruitful. Were it not for the sovereign grace of God, evangelism would be the most futile and useless enterprise that the world has ever seen, and there would be no more complete waste of time under the sun that to preach the Christian gospel” (Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 106).

Conclusion