

Our first reading is one of the trickiest in the whole bible. On the surface level it seems really nice. Hezekiah, generally a good king, hears that he is going to die. He says that he has lived a good life and tried his best to serve the Lord. He demonstrates sorrow. God sees this. On the surface level, it looks like God changes His mind.

We are dealing with some extremely important questions here:

1. Can God change? Or does God change His mind? "I was going to allow Hezekiah die, but seeing his repentance, I change my mind. I will add 15 years to his life." This is called process theology – the belief that God can change.
2. Practically: Do our prayers change God (i.e., change His mind?) If so, then do we have power over God? If not, then why pray?

St. Thomas Aquinas addressed the question of whether God changes in the *Summa Theologiae*. I had to do an assignment on this question and present it to the class.

St. Thomas gives three reasons why God cannot change. I will discuss only one. First, to back up his reasoning, St. Thomas quotes Scripture: "*I am the Lord, I change not.*" (Mal. 3:6)

St. Thomas says that God is infinitely perfect (i.e., He is the perfection of all being). If God is infinitely perfect (lacking in nothing), He cannot acquire anything new. To give you an example, assume God is the whole alphabet – A to Z. He lacks no letters.

If God is the whole alphabet, then He cannot acquire any new letter. With that said, St. Thomas discusses finite beings that change. Finite beings that change – like you and me – change because we lack something. We acquire something new – something we didn't have before – or we move to a new spot (from one spot to another).

However, God lacks nothing and is everywhere. He has everything and is everywhere (omnipresent). Therefore, God cannot change.

If God cannot change, then why pray? Are we trying to "move" God or get Him to change His mind? If He doesn't change, then are our prayers useless? The short answer is that God doesn't change, but He wills certain things to happen under certain conditions. From all eternity, He incorporates your prayers into His will.

For example, assumed that you pray for healing – either for yourself or someone else. God will heal you or someone else under the condition that you pray. Your prayers are incorporated into God's providential plan from all eternity. In other words, God wills you to pray, and in doing so, will heal. In this light, your prayers are extremely important!