

Praying in the Name of Jesus

Last week we saw that there is not a greater promise given than verse 12 of John 14, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.” This meaning the disciples and all those that followed who surrender their lives to Christ, who “who believes in Me” may exceed what Jesus did while He walked this earth in expanding the gospel of salvation to far more people. However, if there were to be a promise greater than verse 12 it would have to be what follows immediately after, “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.” (John 14:13-14) This promise has been misunderstood and has been used to argue that Jesus was NOT the Christ for this promise is impossible to fulfill. Is this promise impossible to fulfill? This is what we will explore this morning.

Here we see as Jesus is preparing the disciples for His departure from earth and they are to continue His work, as we are to continue His work today and it will not mean the end of a relationship with Him because He is absent. The disciples and we can continue a relationship with Jesus, who is in heaven and we on earth. How? Through prayer there is no barrier of distance between earth and heaven – there is no problem with “band width” as millions of Christians communicate with Christ through prayer. Prayer is the key for the disciples and for us to do the “greater works” that Jesus has promised and has called us to do in His stead. How do your prayers help you do the “greater works” of sharing the gospel with the lost? As you consider this – let me dedicate our time to God in prayer and ask for His wisdom to come upon us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is comfort if the promise found in verses 13 and 14. Have you received comfort from the promise Jesus gave in verse 12? I know I have. **“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.”** I have come to understand how I can fulfill this promise through faith and obedience. Where are you in this understanding? Do you find it striking here in verses 13 and 14 the scope of Jesus’ promise? Jesus did not say He would hear the disciples prayers most of the time, if He wasn’t too busy in heaven dealing with other things or that He would answer their prayers some of the time. Look at verses 13 and 14, Jesus says, **“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”** Jesus is saying He will hear every prayer and He will grant their requests – always – every time! This is absolutely amazing. Can’t be true? Well if Jesus said it and He did, then it has to be true or He is not God incarnate, He would not be the Christ.

As we begin to delve into these two verses let me begin by being honest; I have asked for things in my prayers that have not been granted. Can you relate? But, this is a good thing. Praise God that He saw fit **not** to grant my foolish and selfish requests. For if He had granted them it would have brought trouble into my life and the lives of others and this type of prayer and answer is not taught here in these two verses. As John Bunyan said, **“When thou prayest, rather let thy heart be without words than thy words without heart.”** What we are seeing in these verses is if we have true faith in Jesus and pray in the way He instructs we will not get some good things but as R. A. Torrey wrote in his book *The Power of Prayer and the Prayer of Power*, **“... they will get the very thing that they ask for.”** Christians who ask anything in the name of Jesus will have it. Wow! What a promise! Jesus begins this promise by saying, **“Whatever you ask in My name.”**

Pray - In My Name

First, we need to understand prayer is for Christians only. This is made clear by Jesus saying, **“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”** In order for **“you”** to ask it must be for the purpose that **“the Father may be glorified in the Son.”** So **“you”** can only mean a believer in both God the Father and Jesus, God the Son. Nowhere in the Bible is found a promise that God will hear and answer the prayers of unbelievers. There are examples of God choosing to answer the request of a non-believer to fulfill His plan, but He never promises that He will hear the prayers and answer them for unbelievers.

To pray a prayer asking for selfish desires and tacking the words **“in Jesus name”** at the end of the prayer is not what is being said here. First, it means to make our request be consistent with God’s will and His purposes for His kingdom, He has allowed us to live in. Jesus taught in Matthew to **“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.’”** **“Hallowed”** means holy or blessed or consecrated. We are to approach prayer in awe of God and with great respect knowing that to communicate with God is **“Hallowed”**, blessed and holy. Jesus continues, **“Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.”** (Matthew 6:9-10) It is God’s kingdom, not ours. God created us for this time and place to bring Him glory and this is accomplished as we surrender to Him so that His **“will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.”** Have you thought about this fact that God created you specifically so you would be here and at this very time? For God to hear and answer our prayers we must be believers in Jesus Christ as God, Lord and Savior and approach God in an attitude **“Hallowness”** as seen in Matthew 6:9 and 10.

Pray – In No Other Name

Secondly, the meaning of verse 13, “**Whatever you ask in My name**” is we are able to approach God only on the basis of the salvation given to us by His grace through Jesus. Look back a few verses to verse 6, Jesus made this very clear when He said, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.**” (John 14:6) The problem is we are often praying in our own name. I sometimes feel I am coming to God in prayer with a list of things I want Him to do – do you do this also? C. S. Lewis commented on this problem when he wrote, “**The moment you wake up each morning, all your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists in shoving it all back; in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other, larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in.**” None of us deserves anything from God. In fact, if we got what we deserved, every one of us would be in hell. But, Jesus Christ as God the Son has great privileges with God and as God - for Him alone is perfect, He enables us go to God in our prayers **not** on the merit of any goodness in ourselves, but on the foundation of Jesus’ position as God and because of His relationship with God the Father. James Montgomery Boice said, “**To pray in the name of Jesus is, therefore, first, to come to God as a Christian, having believed on Jesus, and, second, to come humbly, recognizing that we have no claims upon him but that Jesus himself does and that we can approach God solely on that basis.**” There simply is no other name by which we can approach God in prayer. We must be true believers in the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are to pray as Jesus would pray and for what He desires and seeking His will. Do you consider this before you begin to pray?

Pray – To Glorify God’s Name

Look in your Bible and see verse 13 has two parts. First, “**Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do ...**” This we have already examined. Secondly, “**... so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**” We have already said that our prayers must be consistent with the will of our Lord Jesus. Then we ask, “What is it that our Lord Jesus desires, what is the will of God?” The answer is found in the second half of verse 13, “**... that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**” It is obvious that this should be our desire as well. I think this might be a new thought for some. We can be filled with the idea that prayer is for the purpose of getting something from God, but have we considered what prayer is in reality - it is a way for God to get something from us - God wants us to glory in Him and glory in living our lives so that others will see His glory in us. Have you thought of things that you desire and have prayed for and how they compete with God’s desire and glory? As I search my thoughts I have to ask at times, “Whose glory do I really desire?” Do you struggle with this as well?

It is hard for me to talk about some things that are emotional for me and expose my weaknesses, but I believe this story shows how we use prayer and how God wants us to use prayer. So bear with me - I remember walking alone at night through the rain forest, which we were never suppose to do, on my way home after helping and praying for a sick man in another village. I always had my dog, Refh, given to me by another missionary, but I also believe was sent from God for my protection for he had protected me and my family on many occasions, but Refh was not with me this night. I always had my bush knife or machete, but not on this night. There had been death threats and I had be cautioned to be careful – as two men stepped out onto the trail I knew why they were there. I began to pray

earnestly as one does when they are suddenly in a difficult situation. I wanted to live. As I prayed, the Holy Spirit asked my heart, “What is more important – that you live or God be glorified? My mind reeled, as I wanted to get back to Joyce and the girls. I had a noble thought – I needed to live for their sake. The Holy Spirit saw right through this and again, He asked, “What is more important – that you live or God be glorified?” I knew that I was in a difficult situation with these two men hired to kill me, but I knew I was in even a more difficult situation with God. The Holy Spirit said, “If you really want God glorified does it matter how God chooses that you glorify Him?” I was crushed, by my lack of faith. As I finally surrendered, I asked God for two things, first, He be glorified and secondly, that they would find my body so Joyce would know what happen to me and she would not have to deal with uncertainty. To my surprise God choose to be glorified in another way than my death. At that point, just as things were about to get interesting Igonia with his bush knife stepped out onto the trail. The two men began to size up their odds and decided it was too risky and turned off the trail and disappeared into the forest. I asked Igonia what he was doing here, for he lived on the other side of the valley. He told me that about three hours earlier he had been praying and God had told him to come. Even though he was a friend, I thought Igonia was a marginal Christian, I wasn’t even sure of his heart and relationship with Christ. So many in the villages presented themselves as Christians in order to get things from us. Praise God, I was wrong about Igonia and I began to see things differently for what God did that night. Igonia glorified God by being obedient to God’s direction as he prayed. Igonia shared what God had told him, directed him and how it proved to be true and others saw the glory of God in his changed demeanor and testimony. I saw the glory of God because I had wrestled with my pride, my desires and my ambition and praise God I lost, but in losing I gained faith and determination to

serve God for His glory and as He desired. I struggle to continue in this resolve as the world invades my life with God at times. It is at these times I remember that night and how God dealt with my heart – how I had to come to the end of myself in order to see God’s glory. When the world invades your thoughts and interferes with your thoughts, your time with the Lord and your prayers – do you have something you can remember to bring back into the right mind for glorifying God?

There is the temptation to ease back on prayer once the crisis is over. To slide back into our normal routine and to let God be in the background of our lives. We must fight this as John Bunyon said, **“Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer.”** We are in spiritual battle and must stay focused and strive every day to seek God first – this happens through study of His Word and prayer and these enable us to seek and desire His glory. How many of you have spent time reading and studying the Westminster Shorter Catechism? If not, you need to put this on your list of things to do – check your email when you get home. It asks great fundamental questions and gives great answers. Question 98 asks, **“What is prayer?”** The answer is, **“Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies.** It is not about our selfish desires - it is about God’s glory.

Conclusion

John 14:13-14 says, **“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”** Jesus is saying, as you seek to carry on My work in the world, and as you seek to let your light shine, and live in love, and offer forgiveness of sins in the name of the

crucified and risen Christ - ask Me for whatever you need and I will give it to you.

“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do.”

Three Truths About Prayer

I believe there are three truths we can come to understand from our study this morning about prayer:

1. Prayer is “Fruit-Bearing” - God designed prayer to give his disciples and you and I, the joy of bearing fruit while God Himself gets the glory. **“... the Father may be glorified in the Son.”** Prayer is not designed to give you what you want and then you say, “glory be to God.” Prayer seeks God’s glory and then because your desire is God’s desire you receive. Is this how you approach prayer?

2. Prayer is not gratifying our natural desires. Our natural desires are always inferior to Kingdom desires. Now I know that Jesus taught us to pray, **“Give us this day, our daily bread.”** What could be more natural than the desire to eat? I know that there are dozens of instances in the Bible of people praying for desires as natural as the desire for protection from enemies and escape from danger and success in vocation and fertility in marriage and recovery from sickness, etc. My point is not that these desires are wrong. My point is that they should always be secondary to spiritual desires; kingdom desires and fruit-bearing desires and gospel-spreading and God-centered desires and Christ-exalting and God-glorifying desires. When our natural desires are a means to these greater Kingdom desires, then they become the proper subject of prayer. This is what David meant when he said in Psalm 37:4, **“Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.”** The desires of the heart cease to be merely natural desires when the heart delights above all else in the Lord. The evidence for this is found in the

writing of John, “This is the confidence which we have before Him (*Jesus*), that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” (1 John 5:14) Are you actively seeking God’s will and desires for your life as you pray?

3. Praying and Scripture. The words of Jesus abiding in us prepare us for prayer. This is the key to praying with spiritual power. In other words, it's the abiding Word of Jesus that puts us in tune with the fruit-bearing purposes of God to glorify Himself. Studying and meditating on the Word of God brings us into unity with God’s will and prepares us to pray with God’s desires foremost in our minds and hearts. How are you structuring your time each day to give time for the study of God’s Word and to spend time with Him in prayer?

E. M. Bounds wrote a number of books on prayer and was a man of prayer. I have come to greatly admire him as I have read his writings. Bounds, wrote, “What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use--men of prayer, men mighty in prayer.” This is what Christ’s church desperately needs; this is what Canyon Bible needs. Since we are a community that strives to love the Lord and each other. I would like to stop here and take a few minutes to do what we have studied this morning – pray. I would like us to get into small groups and I would like each group to be led by a man and for everyone in the group to pray – pray for us as individuals, families and as a community to know God’s heart, desire and will so He will be glorified in our lives. I will call us back when it is time.