

The Promise of Answered Prayer

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, 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 ESV

Today we are going to study the topic of Biblical prayer. We want to see this text in light of many other verses of Scripture to help us know what is proper and Biblical when it comes to prayer. We'll do this by asking and answering 7 questions.

Question #1 - What is prayer?

The Greek word in the New Testament that is translated "pray" or "prayer" is *Proechomai*. There are two Greek words in the Bible that make up the word *Proeuchomai*. *Pros* means to move towards. *Euchomai* means to pray, or to communicate with God. When you combine the two words, you can get a clear understanding of the Biblical word "pray." To pray means to move toward God in communication with Him. It literally means to draw yourself near to God or move in His direction.

Genesis 18:22-23: *So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"*

What is prayer? Prayer is moving toward God through communication with Him.

How close to God are you this morning?

Question #2 - Why can we assume that Jesus is discussing prayer in John 14:13-14?

The question is: why do we assume Jesus is talking about prayer when He says "ask?"

In the Bible, there are many different words used to describe prayer and the different aspects of prayer.

Prayer: moving toward God.

Confession: saying the same thing about sin that God says.

Intercession: praying on behalf of another.

Entreaty: speaking to God about a specific need.

Thanksgiving: expression of gratitude to God.

Destruction or Vindication: asking for God's destruction to come on one not right with Him.

Supplication, petition, or request: humbly and earnestly asking God for personal things.

Matthew 21:22: *whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.*

Jesus taught that prayer involves asking. When we read that Jesus is talking about asking, it is safe to say He is talking about prayer.

Question #3 - What does Jesus mean by the phrase "in my name?"

Before Jesus became a man, prayer was not in His name. Prayer in the Old Testament was based on (1) the character of God and (2) the covenants that He had made with men.

In Exodus 32:13, Moses pleaded with God in prayer, and it was on the basis of the covenant promises God had made with His people. Moses said, "*Remember Abraham, Issac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever'*" That is an example of prayer being based on God's covenants with men.

An example of prayer based on God's character can be found in Nehemiah 9:4-38 where we hear the people of Israel going to God in prayer declaring God to be the Creator, to be righteous, to be a keeper of promises, the giver of commandments, the God who is worshipped by the hosts of heaven, whose name is exalted above all blessing and praise. That is a prayer based on the character of God.

What you do not see in the Old Testament are prayers made in the name of Jesus. The people of the Old Testament did not go to God in prayer on the basis of their positions and privilege in Christ like we see in the New Testament.

It was not until the upper room discourse of John 13-17 that Jesus introduced an entirely new basis for prayer. The basis of prayer in the New Testament, Grace Age, Church Age would be the believers' positions and privilege in Christ. The believer's connection to Christ allows for access to God in prayer. Proper prayer is based on a believer's connection to God through faith in the Person and work of Jesus. Prayer in today's Church Age dispensation is completely and vitally linked with the person of Jesus Christ.

John 16:23-28: [23] *In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.* [24] ***Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*** [25] *"I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.* [26] ***In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf;*** [27] ***for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.*** [28] *I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."*

When we say "in Jesus' name," we are acknowledging that our only access to God the Father is through the name of Jesus, our only chance at God the Father hearing our prayer is through our

connection and link to Jesus through faith in Him, and what we are saying ought to be something the Jesus Christ Himself would say.

Question #4 - When Jesus says "whatever" and "anything", what does He mean?

We'd like to read this and say, "see, there it is. I can ask God for Him to make me a successful business entrepreneur, and if I ask in Jesus' name, God is obligated to give me what I ask for. I just need to ask with unwavering faith, and God must give it to me." We'd like for Jesus to mean just that when He said anything and whatever, but the problem is that does not fit Scripture. Prayer has never played out that way, and I'll prove it to you. Paul asked for a thorn in the flesh to be removed from him, and God never removed that torment from Paul (2 Cor. 12:8-9). The apostle John requested that Jesus would return, and John's request still hasn't been granted (Rev. 22:20).

The context is directly related to verse 12, which talks about works of God done in the believer by the authorized will of God the Father in connection with God the Son by the power of God the Spirit spoken of in verse 16. Jesus is telling the disciples, "I am going to leave this earth and go to the Father. You have seen me do great things, but in the days ahead, you're going to be used by Me to do even greater things, and it will all be accomplished in you by the authority of God the Father, through the power of God the Spirit, in connection with your prayers in the name of Me, God the Son."

The word "if" in verse 14 indicates probability but not definite certainty. That means Jesus is saying, "most likely in the future if you ask something of me that is carrying out my work and is something that I agree with, I will do it, but if you ask me something that is not carrying out my work and I do not agree with, it won't happen."

We asked what Jesus meant when He said "whatever" and "anything". I think our answer is that Jesus meant whatever is in accord with the will of God and the Word of God, and anything that is in line with the work of Christ and the purpose of Christ.

Question #5 - What is the purpose of answered prayer?

Jesus answered this question in the second part of verse 13. He said, "*whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*" Why would Jesus see to it that prayer is answered? Answered prayer glorifies the Father in the Son.

Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote, "The supreme objective in all such work (v.12) and prayer is 'that the Father may be glorified in the Son.'" (Systematic Theology Vol. 7. Pg. 253)

Question #6 - What are the conditions for an effective prayer life?

(Condition #1) - God answers the prayers of one who abides in Christ. **John 15:7**

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

(Condition #2) - God answers the prayers of one who bears fruit for God. **John 15:16**

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

(Condition #3) - God answers the prayers of one who asks. **James 4:2**

You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

(Condition #4) - God answers the prayers of one who asks selflessly. **James 4:3**

You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

(Condition #5) - God answers the prayers of one who asks according to His will. **1 John 5:14-15**

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

(Condition #6) - God answers the prayers of one who keeps His commandments and pleases Him. **1 John 3:22-23**

and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

God answers prayers to those who are Christ abiding, fruit bearing, selflessly motivated, willing to ask, asking in accordance with God's will and living in a God-pleasing manner, having faith in Jesus and a love for others.

Question #7 - What should we conclude in light of this information?

We have said a lot today regarding prayer. If I could summarize it all into one sentence to leave with you today it would be this:

GOD'S GLORY IS DISPLAYED WHEN HE ANSWERS THE PRAYERS OF HIS PEOPLE WHO LIVE ACCORDING TO HIS WORD AND HIS WILL AND DRAW THEMSELVES NEAR TO HIM WITH THEIR GOD-HONORING REQUESTS.