

Praying In Jesus' Name

By Paris Reidhead*

Will you turn, please, to John 14. This morning our theme, that which will engage us, is PRAYING IN JESUS' NAME. Now last week we considered in Colossians, Chapter 3, and verse 17 that key Scripture. We called it the "Fulcrum" of the Christian life, wherein we read, "Whatever you do in word or in deed, do all in the Name of our Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). And we saw that we should have an eye single to His glory, that every area of our life, every aspect of our life, every department of our life should have one test and measure: Does this contribute to the glory of Jesus Christ? There has to be a unifying of the intention and the purpose in the Christian's heart. If he is scattered and divided, if he is guided by many rules and numerous adages and axioms, then he is going to be tossed from pillar to post and torn, and will never quite know what is right. But if he has committed himself to the glory of Christ, has some insight and understanding in the Word, and guided by the Holy Spirit, then he has a simple rule to which he can apply every experience under which he can possibly come. Is this to the glory of Christ?

Now this is something of what we understand this verse to mean. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus. And so we are going to take this same thought, the Name of the Lord Jesus, and relate it to our prayer life. If you have your Bible open to John the 14th Chapter, you will have before you the words of our Lord Jesus there, as we read them in verse 12: "Yerily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in My Name, I will do it" (Joh. 14:12-14).

Let us remind our hearts the reason for our Lord's ministry. If you turn to the 10th Chapter of John, and the 25th verse, our Lord has something to say regarding what He has done that is, His works. Let me read it for you: "Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's Name, they bear witness of Me" (Joh 10:25). Everything that was done by our Lord Jesus was, as we thus see from this verse, done in the Father's Name. Now when we understand what it means for our Lord Jesus to do His works in His Father's Name, we will better understand what it means for us to do the works that He has has for us in our Lord Jesus' Name. But bear this in mind. Everything done by our wonderful Lord was done in the Name of the Father. Now you will realize that John in the opening chapter said, that "in the beginning was the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him. And without Him was not anything made that was made" (Joh. 1:1-3). It was, thus, our Lord Jesus, the Word, the Eternal Lord, who created all things. Now it is appropriate that it should be so, because all things that were made were made by Word. You will understand that the entire, creative work of God was the creation by word. He spoke, and worlds came into being. He spoke and the sun began to shine. Everything that was made was made in response to word. Understand that. So it is the eternal Word who spoke all things into being.

Now He said that these ministries of original creation were performed by the Son, as the Word, and (if I may) in His Own Name by Him, of course in perfect agreement and counsel with the Godhead, but none the less it was the Son who created. Now our Lord Jesus is speaking of His earthly ministry, and He is saying that the works which He has done He has done not in His own Name, but He has done them in the Father's Name.

I think you need to go to Philippians, the 2nd Chapter to understand the background of this. And if you would turn to Philippians, Chapter 2 and verse 5, I believe you would understand why our Lord Jesus now as the incarnate Word, the incarnate Son, does not work in His Own Name, but He works in the Father's Name; "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery (but I think it is better to use the margin, or other translations which correctly say thought it not something to be grasped after, be insisted upon) to be equal with God" (Php. 2:5-6). He knew He was equal with God, the eternal Son. But in the incarnation He did not insist for this period of His earthly sojourn having all the marks and insignia of the Godhead. He did not insist, or grasp, or seek after that which was His by right of His eternity as God the Son. "But He accepted (notice now). He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself," He accepted the limitations of His humanity (Php. 2:7-8a).

Will you realize, therefore, that everything done by our Lord Jesus during the three years of His public ministry was done by the Father through the Spirit. Now this is tremendously important to you. Everything done by the Lord Jesus was done as a man, the God-Man, but a God-Man accepting the limitations of His humanity. And, therefore the works performed by Christ were performed by the Father through the Spirit. I say this is tremendously important. It pleased the Lord Jesus that He should be in all points, and in all ways like unto His brethren. As He is, so are we in the world. Thus when we read in the Apocrypha that our Lord molded a little mud bird, and touched it, and it flew away, you understand that this is truly apocryphal. Because during the first 30 years of His ministry, He is living under the cover of this Kenosis, this emptying portion here in Philippians 2, and accepting the limitations of His humanity, it is said of Him, "Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luk. 2:52).

Now He is, at this time as from His birth, indwelt by the fullness of the Godhead bodily. It is not that He could not have done these things in His own power as Son, for He never relinquished His Sonship, and He never relinquished His power, but what He did relinquish was the right to act in His essential deity as such. For He was here as your Brother, and He was to accept the limitations of His humanity. Therefore, our Lord had no visible ministry, no public ministry, until He was presented at the Jordan River, and He had gone into baptism.

Now we accept baptism as being a picture of death. Death, and burial, and resurrection. For many years over our Baptistry, we had these words, Buried with Him by baptism into death. We feel that going into the water is a picture of the grave, for so many have found their grave in the water. And being raised is to come out as typifying new life in Christ. And so our Lord, in our comprehension and understanding, went under the water of the Jordan, signifying death. To what could He die? Not to sin in the sense we would know it. For in Him was no sin. Then to what could the Lord Jesus publicly signify death? Is it not that He was thereby, by this act of obedience, going into the water of baptism, saying that which He had actually said and decided before the foundation of the world, that in His Incarnation He would accept the limitations of His humanity. And that He would then perform all of His ministry in total dependence upon the Father. And I believe that when He went into the water of baptism, He was simply saying there what He had said before the foundation of the world when He had consented thus in the counsels of the eternal Godhead to be the Lamb slain that He would accept the limitations of His incarnate, His humanity. And thus the Spirit of God came visibly upon Him. And remember this: "The Spirit of God was in Him, when the Spirit of God came upon Him" (Mat. 3:16). For He was in Him in nature, and He came upon Him in anointing for Service. And then our Lord Jesus said, as we read last Sunday morning in Isaiah 61, that "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. He hath anointed Me. He has sent Me" (Isa. 61:1). And all the ministry performed by Christ was performed in the Name of the Father, but in the power of the Father, through the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Now I think this is essential if you are to understand the ministry of our Lord, and certainly you will never understand your own ministry until you understand the ministry of the Lord. For we read in John 17 and verse 18, and again in John 20:21, "as the Father sent me (said He to His disciples)" in John 20 and verse 21 "so send I you." And in His high priestly prayer in John 17:18, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

Thus for us to understand what it meant for our Lord to do His works in the Father's Name, it meant that He had come to the place where He relinquished all right to act independently. He could not originate. He did not plan. He did not make His program. He said, "I only do those things that I see the Father do" (Joh. 5:19). You remember when He went on that hospital visit, and came to the pool, and saw all these sick people, he walked around stepping over this one. I am sure He was gracious and kind to them all. He stepped over this one, and stepped over that one, and passed the other, and wound His way here and there until He came to one man, and He said to this one man: "Wilt thou be made whole. And the man said, Well, there is no one to put me into the water when it is troubled. He said, Here, rise up and walk. Stand upon thy feet" (Joh. 5:6-8). And afterwards, asked about it, Why? Why? Why? the disciples questioned Him, He said, "I can only do what I see the Father do." Someone might say, "Why didn't He heal everybody? He was there." But remember He did His works in the Father's Name, and this meant that He must act, and in moment by moment to the Father, and He could say as He did, "I do nothing of Myself. I only speak," said He. — I don't even speak of Myself. "I only speak as I receive commandment of the Father" (Joh. 12:49). So, for our Lord Jesus to do His works in the Father's Name meant that He was utterly, totally submissive to the perfect will of the Father. And He was living, therefore, not working for the Father, but He was working by the Father, by the illumination, the guidance, the direction, the moment by moment unfoldment of the Father's plan and the Father's will.

And now our Lord Jesus is speaking to His disciples. His hour is approaching. He is about to leave them, and so He gives them this, which incidentally was not recorded in written form to our knowledge until 90 A.D. We sometimes feel that John's Gospel was more or less published as a Diary, and it was given as it occurred. But this is not the case. The internal evidence and other evidence is sufficient for at least my own mind to be satisfied that John's Gospel could not have been written before 85 A.D., and possibly not until 90 A.D., or even somewhat later. Therefore, this that you have here was given by Christ that night, and it was said by the Lord Jesus, "When He the Spirit of Truth is come He will bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever I have said unto you" (Joh. 14:26). And this is part of that which was brought to the remembrance of John and incorporated into the Word. And obviously the Book of Acts testifies that what is set forth here was practiced there. But now we are seeing how it was that Peter, coming into the Temple on that Day, seeing the lame man that He passed every other day that He had come into the Temple. (Remember that.) This man was not there as a stranger. He had been there, and as some of the chronologers say who have studied the matter, and it is difficult for me to find and authenticate this, that that miracle in the Temple might not have occurred until some three or four years after Pentecost. But be that as it may, for some period of time, whether longer or shorter, Peter had been going probably through the same gate, at the same time, and seeing this man customarily seated there in this place begging. Why had not Peter done something in his behalf a month, or two months, six months or a year later? I believe the principle is discernible not: This was the time. He could do nothing of Himself. That was the time that God did it, for everything He did He did in the Name of the Lord Jesus, for He definitely said, "In the Name of the Lord Jesus, Stand, Rise up, Stand upon thy feet" (Act. 3:6). But doing it in the Name of the Lord Jesus was not simply using the Name as a tool, but it implied first and foremost an utter abandonment on Peter's part of any willingness or intention to work in, and of, and by himself. It was not that the Lord gave him something that he could do. It was rather that Peter gave the Lord Jesus something that He could use. Do you see the difference? And this is not a tool for us to use. This is something that we provide the Lord that He can use. It makes a great deal of difference. Some people think they want to be filled with the fullness of God, and the power of God, so that they can use God indirectly in their achievements to acquire greater fame and reputation thereby. And so God becomes a means to an end. But this is not what the Lord teaches at all. It is not that we get something from God we can use, but it is that God gets something from us that He can use.

And so Peter had come in for days, weeks, even months, and had not, had not done anything for this lame man; but then there came the Lord's time, the Lord's moment, the Lord's hour. Peter was released. John was released. Everything was propitious. God's time was come. Now if it had been our situation, somebody would have read this verse, gone in on the first day, and said to the lame man, In the Name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk. And he would not. And then the man would have been discouraged, and the servants would have been discouraged, and they would have said, "Well, what is there in all of this?" They had failed. They thought that they could use the Lord. No. This is not it. To do anything in the Name of the Lord recognizes that you have allowed Him to have all the timing responsibility. You have allowed Him to have all the choosing responsibility, all the deciding responsibility. All of the responsibility now becomes the Lord's. So we find here that our Lord has stated that "the works that I do in My Father's Name, they bear witness of Me. Father I have glorified Thy Name."

Now it is to be a similar ministry for you. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in My Name, I will do it" (Joh. 14:13-14).

In John 17 verse 14, our Lord Jesus said, "Father, I have given them Thy Word." I have given them Thy Word. Do you understand, dear heart, that words are terribly important. When our Lord was on His way into Jerusalem there in Passion Week, when He was hungered after His ministry, as you recall, He went to the fig tree expecting to find fruit, and found none. And our Lord spoke. And I do not know what He said, but allow me to suggest that He said, No man ever eat of thee hereafter. I believe that is recorded. "Fig tree, die. And He turned and walked away. The next day when they came back, Peter went over and the other disciples. They said, Lord, a strange thing has happened. That tree has begun to die, and this time from the roots up." Because you know, customarily a tree dying from a natural cause will start dying from the top down, and shrivel, and draw its roots in. But, he said, this died from the roots up. And our Lord said, You marvel at that? He said, Do you not realize the power of words? Do you not realize what I have done for you? Do you not realize what I have said? "If you should say to this mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, and doubt not in your heart, it shall be as you say" (Mat. 21:19-21). Now He did not say pray. He said, Say. He did not say, Pray to this mountain to be removed. He said, Say to this mountain, Be removed.

I remember reading a testimony of someone who was encouraging individuals to believe for the body, and for healing. They said, "Some people believe far more in their symptoms than they do in the Lord; I feel terrible. I am getting worse by the moment." And he said, "Well if you say this and doubt not in your heart, it will be as you say." And unquestionably this has happened. Many times people have actually produced the conditions from which they are trying to escape by their misuse of words. Words were that by which the world was created. Word power has been given to the Christian and the Church. "Jesus Christ is the High Priest of our profession," and we must watch our words (Heb. 3:1).

You go into a Department Store over here and say — go to the counter, and even though you might need something, and the attendant comes up and says, "Can I help you?" And you say, "Well, I am not sure that you can help me. I don't know what color I need, and what size I should get. And I don't know if I can afford it if I had the color and the size, and I don't know if it's the right time to buy." And she says, "Lady, when you get some of these questions settled come and talk to me." And she walks away. But if you go in, and take the article down, and say, "I want this," she becomes the high priest of your profession, and she takes it, puts it in a box, wraps it up, puts a handle on it, and says, "Charge or Cash?" She trusts you because you know what you want, and she becomes the high priest of your profession. YOU have professed that you want this and she answers it by providing it for you. And so the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the High Priest of our profession, of our confession, and if you say, Everything is going to pieces, the world is falling apart, and things are worse and worse every day. Business is gone — everything. And you doubt not in your heart, it is going to be just exactly what you say. My children are completely leaving, they are going, my husband is this and that, and oh... and if you doubt not in your heart, it is going to be as you say. It is going to be exactly what you say. You have power in words, and you should respect that power.

We have spoken of that, because it is related to this general subject. The Lord Jesus said, "I have given them Thy Word," and you as a Christian ought to set a bound about your lips because you are going to give an account before the Lord Jesus of every word because of the tremendous power that God has invested in the Christian's lips (Joh. 17:14). You have the power to change communities, to change homes, to change lives. You have the ability to bring revival. You have the ability to see people brought to Christ. Tremendous power has been invested in the lips, in the tongue, in the words of the child of God. And it behooves us to recognize this, and realize that we are going to have to give an account before Him.

But now comes this matter that we must develop in greater detail at another time in regard to the matter of praying in Jesus' Name. It is not just affixing a little suffix to the close of your prayer. It is not just to say, Lord, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, in Jesus' Name, and expect to get it. This is not praying in Jesus' Name. You will notice that He has established several things here as contingencies upon which His answer comes. First, He says, if you love Me keep My commandments. For He said, I have loved My Father, and I have kept His commandments. So praying in Jesus' Name implies a love for Him which involves a complete commitment to His will, and a dedication to His commandments. You do not pray in Jesus' Name until you love the will of God sufficiently and love the Son of God sufficiently to commit yourself unreservedly to His commandments. Oh this terrible thing that says that a Christian is not under law. Do you realize that the laws of the Spirit are far more numerous than the Decalogue, and the commandments of Christ are there? Obviously a Christian is not under the law. It is not a law of duress, but a law of delight. And He said, "If you love me keep my commandments" (Joh. 14:15). You do not do it because you have to, but because you want to. But you love His commandments.

And then He said, "He that heareth My commandments and heareth them, He it is that loveth me. And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him" (Joh. 14:21). And so the relationship between the prayer and the One to whom he prays is this, that if you love the Lord Jesus you keep His commandments. If you keep His commandments, you are loved of the Father. And so the effectiveness of your prayer is the complete dedication to the commandments of Christ and the will of God.

Then you will notice something else. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode in him" (Joh. 14:23). So it is not only a commitment to the commandments, but it is on the part of the Father and the Son a commitment of their presence to us. He commits commandments to us. Do you love Me? Keep My commandments. Oh it does not pay to say, Oh how I love Jesus, and disobey His commandments. If you love Me, keep My commandments. The test is not what we say, but what we do, what our heart attitude is toward His will. And so He said, The Father recognizes those who love the Son and keep His commandments; and He said, "If you keep My Words and do them, My Father will love you, and I will love you, and We will come to you and make our abode with you." And then again He said,

“When the Comforter, the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things” (Joh. 14:26). So now you see the pattern. On your part it is a commitment to the will of God, a commitment to the commandment of God, a commitment to the Word of God, an absolute abandonment to God’s Will. You are not going to use God. You are not going to try and make God a tool. This is not what He is saying, “If ye ask anything in My Name, I will do it.” Oh no. It is infinitely more than that. It is a commitment to the commandments of God just as Christ committed Himself to the commandments and the Will of His Father. And in this commitment there is love manifest toward the Lord Jesus which has the response of the love of the Father toward you, and the Father and the Son make their abode in you. And then They make their abode in you by the presence of the Holy Spirit who will teach you as He taught Christ. He will teach you that for which you should pray, and teach you how to pray, for it is He that maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And so to take the Scripture out of its context, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name,” without regard for the commandments of the Lord Jesus without regard for the presence of the Father and the Son by the Spirit, without regard for the teaching ministry of the Holy Ghost, is to wrest the Scripture to one’s own disappointment and destruction. And so it comes then back to this, that when we understand our relationship with Christ is to be similar to that which He had with the Father, where our Lord Jesus said, “I only speak as I receive commandment of the Father; I do nothing of Myself. I love the Father’s commandments, and He has loved Me, and He is filling Me with Himself, and He is working through Me” — this is to be the pattern for my life and yours; To love the Lord Jesus, to commit ourselves to His commandments, to know then the presence of the Father in the Son by the Spirit, and the teaching ministry of the Holy Ghost, how to pray and when to pray, and thus when we are in that relationship, it is true that whatever we ask of the Father in His Name (because His Name is involved in total relationship) He will do it.

Now this is what it means to pray in Jesus’ Name. Not just to affix a little formula, but to bring yourself into a whole, complete vital relationship. And it is this for which the world is waiting. May God move upon our hearts until it becomes a reality in our lives in our midst.

Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, all of us through all our days have prayed in Jesus’ Name. But to many of us it has been just a formula that we affixed. We have judged men as being liberal or fundamental by whether or not they put the formula at the close of their prayer. And show us Lord that so many times people have piously prayed in Jesus’ Name, but they have had no love for the commandments of the Lord Jesus. They have not known the indwelling, infilling presence of the Father and the Son by the Spirit, and they have not been taught by the Holy Ghost. Oh God of Grace, bring us this morning to that place that seeing this world in such desperate need, and seeing ourselves in such futility and powerlessness, that with one accord, and one mind, we are going to commit ourselves to the commandments of the Lord Jesus in a new abandonment, and a new dedication, regardless of tradition held, regardless of what we have been taught, regardless of what we have felt, we are going to commit ourselves to the whole will of Thy dear Son, and Thou wilt love us, and He will love us, and Thou wilt make Thine abode with us, and Thy Spirit will teach, and then it can be true, because our only desire is Thy Glory in the Praise of Thy Son, that whatever we will ask in the Name of the Lord Jesus Thou wilt do it. Lord, this ought not to discourage. This ought to encourage us to understand how this text can become operative and vital and real in our lives. And so seal it to our hearts, and grant, Lord, that Thy people shall become a people who pray truly in Jesus’ Name in all it means. For the Glory of Thy Son we ask it. Amen.

Shall we stand for the Benediction. May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father, the Communion and fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be and abide with each of us now and until Jesus comes again. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, October 22, 1961 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.