

BIBLICAL PRAYER (69)

The results of this prayer meeting were amazing:

- 1) There was a supernatural power. **4:31a**
- 2) There was a supernatural boldness. **4:31b**
- 3) There was a supernatural unity. **4:32**
- 4) There was a supernatural ministry. **4:33**
- 5) There was a supernatural benevolence. **4:34-35**

These were all mighty results of this powerful prayer meeting. When God's people meet and unite in prayer, there is great power and impacting ministry.

QUESTION #17 – How does prayer relate to the three members of the Godhead?

Back when I was in school, there was this one instructor who would begin the class by directing his prayer to Jesus, God the Son. The next class he would direct his prayer to the Holy Spirit, God the Spirit. Is this legitimate? Are we to pray individually to all three members of the Trinity? Is it acceptable to pray one day to God the Father and another day to God the Son and another day to God the Spirit? This question is critical to us forming a Biblical structure of prayer as it relates to all three members of the Godhead. There are four main theological realities we want to present:

Theological Reality #1 - When prayer is specifically associated with the other members of the Trinity, it is stated that it is aimed at God the Father.

- 1) **John 15:16** - Jesus Christ, Himself, states that prayer should be that which makes a request to the Father.
- 2) **Matthew 6:8-9** - Jesus Christ specifically taught His disciples to offer their prayers to the Father and He specifically did this when teaching them how to pray (**Luke 11:1-2**).
- 3) **Luke 22:42** - Jesus Christ, by His own example, aimed His prayer to God the Father, not to Himself or to the Holy Spirit.
- 4) **Romans 8:16-17, 26-27** - The Holy Spirit, who lives in the believer and intercedes for the believer, aims His prayer at God the Father, not God the Son or to Himself.
- 5) **Matthew 6:6-8** - Answers to prayer are specifically said to come from the Father (**Luke 12:30**).

From these passages we may assume that one Divine member of the Trinity is to be the object of our prayer and that is God the Father. **The only exception is Romans 10:13**

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Theological Reality #2 - When prayer is addressed to God the Father it must be specifically offered through God the Son.

Time and time again we learn that prayer must be offered to God the Father through the name of Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ Himself taught this:

(Passage #1) - John 14:13 - Prayer is directed to the Father in Jesus name and must be that which glorifies the Father.

(Passage #2) - John 15:16 - Prayer directed to the Father is made in Jesus' name and fruit-bearing answers to prayer come from the Father. Every believer has a right to pray to God the Father through the name of Jesus Christ asking to bear fruit and expecting answers.

(Passage #3) - John 16:23 - Answers from the Father are clearly related to prayer made in Jesus' name, especially for full joy in the context of trouble (**16:24-33**).

Dr. Charles Feinberg wrote: "Christ taught that acceptable and effective prayer should be in His name" (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, 96:285-306, pp. 293, 1939).

One question that immediately comes to mind is, "What exactly does it mean to pray in Jesus name?" Since this is such a critical part of the inspired formula for having the Father answer the prayer, what exactly does it mean?

When Jesus would have said this to His disciples, they would have immediately thought of three names, "Lord Jesus Christ." In thinking about the name "Lord" they would understand He was eternal God. In thinking about the name "Jesus" they would understand Him to be the Savior, and in thinking about the name "Christ" they would think of Him as Israel's Messiah. Prayer "in Jesus name" would be "based first on His office as Savior" (John Walvoord, *Prayer in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, Bib. Sac., pp. 465, 1934).

Most of Christianity assumes to pray in the name of Jesus simply means to end a prayer with words which say something like "We pray all these things or we ask all these things in Jesus' name, Amen." Some at the end of a prayer will change the tone of their voice to emphasize "in Jesus' name." Is this what it means to pray in Jesus' name? As long as we conclude our prayers with this prepositional phrase, does this guarantee that God the Father will give us a successful and positive answer?

Before we examine this important concept, let me say that this prepositional phrase "in Jesus' name" is critical. It is only through the name of Jesus Christ that we can even begin to approach the throne of God, so we certainly never want to minimize its importance, but we also want to understand what this means.

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The critical point to realize is that any connection or relationship that human beings have with God the Father must come through God the Son. Jesus Christ made this point very clear in **John 14:6**. In the original text the verse is emphatic; Jesus Christ is stressing that He is “the” way, “the” truth and “the” life. We could understand this to be the only way, the only truth and the only life. Jesus Christ is the only possibility of sinful men having a relationship with the Father. **Everything must go through Him in regard to the Father, including prayer . Any connection we have with God the Father must always be through God the Son.** Dr. Walvoord said, “The basis of our prayer life ... is our union with Christ” (*Ibid.*, p. 466).

In a true understanding of what it means to pray in Jesus’ name, the spiritually-minded believer realizes that access to the Father is contingent upon everything Christ is and upon everything Christ accomplished. **A name is that which represents the Person .** A name is a title that reflects who the Person is. The name Jesus Christ is a title that stands for the second member of the Trinity who came to this earth. Praying “in the name of Jesus” is praying with a full acknowledgement of who Christ is and all He accomplished.

Again we cite Charles Feinberg: “To pray in the name of Christ means to invoke all of His authority and power. It includes all that Christ is and has done or ever will do. ... To invoke the name of Christ is to avail one’s self of all that He is in His essential character. Whatever God will do for Christ because of who He is, God will do for us when we ask in Christ’s name. When we pray in Christ’s name, furthermore, we must be certain that we have His mind and are in sympathy with His purposes and plans. To ask in Christ’s name for our own selfish pursuits and personal interests is to commit forgery. ... To pray in Christ’s name is not to use His name as a charm or talisman simply, as though the bare repetition of it were all that is required to open the treasures of infinite grace. The name of Christ stands for Christ Himself. And to pray in the name of Christ is to pray in Christ, in the mind and spirit and will of Christ. Finally, we pray in the name of Christ when we are in intimate and vital union with Him. Christ has declared: “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (*Ibid.*, pp. 295-296)

Praying in the name of Jesus is not just verbally concluding the prayer with the words “in Jesus name.” It is praying to God the Father with a true and living perspective of who Christ is in our relationship with God the Father and it is praying with a true perspective of Christ’s word and will. Obviously, the more we know and obey God’s Word, concerning the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the more accurately and intelligently we are able to pray. Every time we bow our heads in prayer, we should both spiritually and verbally acknowledge that access to the Father and the ability to bring requests to Him is solely based on Jesus Christ. Praying in Jesus’ name is not just repeating words; it is repeating words with a heart and mind that recognizes the Word and will of God as it pertains to the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

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Theological Reality #3 - There is prayer communication between God the Father and God the Son.

As we have seen in this study, God the Son has a special ministry of intercession, which He carries out for the believer and there are several passages that speak of this:

- 1) **John 17:9-19** - Jesus prayed a remarkable prayer for His disciples.
- 2) **John 17:20-24** - Jesus prayed a remarkable prayer for all believers.
- 3) **Romans 8:34** - Jesus still intercedes for all believers.

One question we certainly would ask is what exactly is it that Jesus Christ prays? Based on John's writings, we would suggest that there are at least seven intercessory items about which Jesus would pray:

(Intercession #1) - Jesus Christ prays that the Father will keep us. **John 17:11a**

This prayer guarantees our eternal security regardless of our fleshly sinful humanity.

(Intercession #2) - Jesus Christ prays that the Father will unify us. **John 17:11b, 21, 23**

Loving unity within the family of God, especially within the church, makes a powerful statement for God. Unity is critical to evangelism. When an unsaved person comes into the church and sees that the people are united and committed to the Word of God and they stand together, it is a powerful witnessing tool.

(Intercession #3) - Jesus Christ prays that the Father will protect us. **John 17:15**

The specific prayer is that we will be kept "out of the evil one." Satan may attack a believer, but he cannot ever indwell or lay claim to the believer because of this very prayer.

(Intercession #4) - Jesus Christ prays that the Father will sanctify us. **John 17:17**

Notice carefully Jesus Christ prayed that God would sanctify His people through His Word. God's people will not be sanctified without a careful understanding of the written Word of God. Jesus prayed that His people would be so dedicated to the Word of God that the Father would set them apart more and more.

(Intercession #5) - Jesus Christ prays that the Father will use us. **John 17:21**

Christ prays that we will be so united and linked to God that God would use us to make a statement to the lost world. As we are sanctified and unified we make a difference.