

Praying in Jesus' Name – 2

John 15:1-16

Last week we saw what it means to pray in Jesus' name from a positional standpoint. To pray in Jesus name is to use God's name thus signifying you know Him. It is to come before God in Jesus' merits. It is to be beloved of God.

But praying in Jesus' name means more than a position. It also means something practically.

To Pray in Jesus' Name is *Make His Will Your Will*

When we speak of using someone's name, we often mean, to stand in their place; to act on their behalf; to speak on their authority and under their authority.

I have in my wallet a card with the name of my wife on it. It belongs to her and is linked to a bank account she had before we were married. But now it carries her name and my surname, and the bank and my wife have given me permission to use it. Effectively, when I go into a store, I am using her name to make the purchase.

Positionally, I am in a relationship with my wife and that authorises me to use her name. We saw in the first sermon on praying in Jesus' name that to be born again is to have that relationship with Christ, and therefore to be able to pray in His name. You are calling on God by His name; His merits become yours, and you are beloved for His sake.

The fact that I am my wife's husband positionally, means I can use her name lawfully. But what does it mean practically? What kind of things can I use her name to buy? The answer is - things that she herself would buy! To use a card with her name on it, to buy something to which she would object, is to abuse her name.

To pray in Jesus' name means more than being in Christ, and therefore accepted and favoured by God. It means you have a certain practical responsibility as well. It means you must be so aligned with the will of Christ that you ask for and desire the same things He would ask for and desire.

The only way to know the kind of things Jesus would ask for is to examine the attitude of Jesus as revealed in Scripture.

So what we have to study then is – what did Jesus will? What was His attitude on earth?

Jesus was completely submitted to the will of the Father

John 4:34 - Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.

John 5:30 I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

John 6:38 *For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

John 12:49-50 *For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. ⁵⁰ "And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."*

Jesus was completely dependent on the grace of God the Father

John 5:17 *But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."*

John 5:19 *Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner"*

John 7:16-18 *Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. ¹⁷ "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. ¹⁸ "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him..."*

John 8:26 *I have many things to say and to judge of you: but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard from Him."*

John 8:38 *I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father."*

John 14:10 *Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.*

Jesus Lived For the Love of His Father

John 8:28-29 *Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. ²⁹ "And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."*

John 8:49-50 *Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. ⁵⁰ "And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges..."*

He kept His Father's commandments in a loving relationship. Jesus rests obedience entirely upon love:

John 14:15 *If you love Me, keep My commandments.*

John 14:23 *Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.*

John 14:24 *He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.*

John 14:31 *But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.*

John 17:4 *I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.*

Jesus was so God-centred, so submissive and dependent, because He loved the Father. He enjoyed the Father. He desired the Father. Submission, dependence and obedience were not heavy, crushing words to Jesus. They were opportunities to love; opportunities to honour and trust.

When we look at such a self-denying attitude, we suspect that there will be nothing left for us in it. We agree it is noble, but we are not sure it will be enjoyable. But Jesus makes it clear that love, the most enjoyable of all states, is behind this kind of life.

So here is what we see so far. To pray in Jesus' name would be to have Jesus' attitudes and ask as He would. We have seen His whole life was dominated, not by selfishness, but by an all consuming desire to do God's will, by God's grace, out of love.

Now Jesus took these concepts of *depending on God's grace, submitting to God's will and being motivated by God's love* and tied them together with one word. One word captures this idea of living for God's will by God's grace for God's love.

It is the word '**abide**'. Abiding, as Jesus used it, seems to be a reference to remaining in a loving, submissive relationship with Him. Let me show that to you. In **John 15** Jesus uses the illustration of the vine and the branches to teach a lesson. The Father is the husbandman. Jesus is the Vine. We are the branches. God will act upon the branches to bring about fruit. As long as the branches abide, they will bear fruit.

Well, what does that mean? Verses 7 to 10 make it very clear.

John 15:7-10 ⁷*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.* ⁸*By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.* ⁹*"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.* ¹⁰*If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."*

Verse 7 says 'if my words abide in you'. What does Jesus expect that we will do with His words? Obey them. Verse 10 – 'if you keep my commandments – you will abide in my Love.' This is it, *if you live that dependent submissive and loving relationship, Jesus says – you will be abiding*. And then, to make it very clear, He says – 'just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.'

What does all this have to do with prayer? **Everything**. The point of Jesus' lesson is that if you abide, you will bear fruit. The fruit is answered prayer. The fruit is branches that are so living this life of loving, dependent obedience, that when they ask, they are asking for God's will, by God's grace, and God gives it to them. Put simply – when you abide in Christ, you are living a life like Jesus, and so when you ask, you will be asking in Jesus' name. You will be using the 'card' where He would, because your life is caught up in His will. Just like I am able to use my wife's bank card as mentioned above, because I have permission.

John 15:7 *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*

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 remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*

Compare **John 15:11** with **16:23-24**.

In other words, abiding is asking in Jesus' name, and therefore your prayer will be answered. To not abide is to not ask in His name.

Once again, asking in Jesus' name is not something you add to the end of your prayers. It is to have His attitude toward the will of God, so that when you pray, you ask what He would ask.

Prayer, as Jesus taught it, is not something you do without any reference to your life. The way Jesus teaches - you live a certain life so you can pray a certain prayer. Live a selfish life, and you will pray selfish prayers. James tells us what happens to selfish prayers – you ask and you receive not, because you ask amiss, with a view to consuming it on your own lusts.

I hope you can see the vital connection between a life of abiding and the kind of prayer which pleases God. Let me take the **three elements of abiding and compare them to prayer**.

1) The more you live the will of God, the more you are going to know the will of God, the more you are going to ask for the will of God. We often ask – how do I know if I am praying God's will? The shortest answer is, when you are obsessed with doing His will on a continual basis. People who make the will of God their life do not come to prayer confused.

Our problem is that we become interested in God's will for some major decisions, but not on an everyday, regular basis.

If you are *abiding*, then in all of your life you are going to be obsessed with the will of God. What does God want here? How does God want this done? What is God's will for this individual? What does God want me to say to this person now? Who does God want me to call now? How does God want me to reply?

Prayer which pleases God is prayer obsessed with **His** will, not ours.

1 John 3:22 *And whatsoever we ask, we receive from him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

1 John 5:14-15 *Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.*

2) The life of **abiding** is one of continual dependence:

- Crying out to God for grace to obey.
- Looking to Him for wisdom.
- Looking to Him for answers.
- Watching for His work before we move.
- Considering His example.

Trusting His leadership.

If you are abiding, then all of your life is a continual statement of need for grace. What is prayer if not the same thing? Prayer which pleases God is a cry for grace. A self-sufficient person doesn't keep coming to God for strength throughout the day, so they will not do so in times of prayer.

3) If you are **abiding**, then all of life is acts of love for Christ. Like Christ, you want to honour Him; please Him; glorify Him.

True prayer is a time of communing and loving Christ. It is a time to enjoy and honour and thank and praise. If you do not ever thank Him in your every day experience, you will find it strange, if not abnormal, to seek to do so in prayer.

You cannot separate the two. *The degree to which you abide, is the degree to which your prayers will be powerful and effective.* Prayer is the natural result of a life of abiding. If you are seeking the will of God every hour, it will only follow you will desire to plead with God to perform His will. If you are dependent on Him every moment, it will only follow that you come often to God in secret to ask for grace. If you love Him continually, it will only follow that you come to Him in secret and thank and adore Him.

It is impossible to live for your own will, live in your own strength, love yourself, and then come to prayer and have any success. It is impossible for you to abide in Christ, and not have success. It is this which explains why Jesus said 'if you ask in my name, you will receive.'

These words are similar to **Psalm 37:4** - If you abide in Me, I will flow through you, your desire will be mine and what you ask for is what I want for you in the first place.

This starts to answer the question of how we pray in faith. How do I pray in faith if I don't know if it is the will of God? The more you pursue the will of God, the more you know it, the more you can pray with great confidence, persistence and urgency.

In a word, to have this kind of powerful prayer is to abide. So the last thing we want to ask is this:

How do I learn to abide in Christ more and more?

I. Consciously commit Christ's attitudes to memory.

Abiding is something the Lord Jesus did. His many statements were recorded not as mere testimonials, but as patterns for us to follow. More than anything, during the day, we need His words ringing in our ears.

I challenge you to take a few of Christ's statements and memorise them. Seek to take His mind and imprint it on your own, until you are looking at life through those lenses.

You won't gain the mind of Christ by merely observing how Jesus thought. You will gain the mind of Christ when you think as Christ thought. And the way to do that is to immerse your mind in the very words which came out of His mouth, which revealed His mind.

What if you took this attitude and put it on, like a garment you will wear all day? What if you took these attitudes and they became the lenses through which you viewed life?

I live to do God's will.
 I cannot do anything by myself.
 I do not do things for myself.
 I do not speak on my own.
 I do not judge on my own.
 I do not seek my own will.
 I do not seek my own glory.
 I speak what I learn from Him.
 I judge what I hear from Him.
 I get my doctrine from Him.
 I do only what I see Him doing.
 My food is to do His will.
 I always do what pleases Him.
 I glorify Him and seek his honour.
 I abide in His love.

Total dependence, total obedience and total love. If just a small percentage of Christians began to live this way, it would revolutionise the world.

If you increasingly seek to adopt the attitudes and approaches of Jesus, something is going to happen quite naturally. As you keep eliminating your own will and your own strength, it is going to create a kind of vacuum inside you. You are used to depending on your own self-will and strength; now you turn away from that and desire God's will instead. Well, if you are desiring His will over your will, but you don't know His will, it will be like a vacuum that craves or hungers to have God's will.

And that will lead you to -

II. Saturate yourself with the will of God.

The will of God is revealed in the Word of God. The people most interested in the Word of God are the people busy doing the Word of God. The people who are filling their lives with questions about how God wants my finances, my parenting, my speech, my leisure time, go searching in the Word. Every opportunity they get – they take in the Word. Reading it, hearing it, memorising it (**Col 3:16**). Here we find the will of God, or to put it another way – the mind of Christ.

If you adopt the posture of abiding as Jesus taught it, something else will follow. You will need to –

III. Be sensitive to the ministry of the Holy Spirit -

as He applies the will of God to your life all day. You'll notice Jesus mentions the Spirit almost every time He speaks of knowing the commandments.

John 14:15-17 *If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - ¹⁷ the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you, and will be in you.*

John 14:23-26 *Jesus answered and said unto him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our home with him. ²⁴ He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. ²⁵ ¶ These things I have spoken unto you, while being present with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

John 16:12-1 *I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth: for He will not speak on His own authority; but whatever He hears, He will speak: and He will tell you things to come.*

The Spirit becomes the one who keeps applying and reminding you of the will of God throughout the day. He shows you what the Father is doing. He alerts you to where God is busy. He tells you what to say. He gives you the judgement. He gives the conviction. He gives you the will of God.

He also gives you the grace to perform it - **Phil 2:13**.

To **abide** is to keep in step with the Spirit of God as He seeks to keep you saturated and submissive to the will of God.

Verses 8 and 11 give us the reason why this is important. God will be glorified and we will be satisfied. We will find fullness of joy when we live abiding in Christ, and see answers to prayer, and God will gain much glory from it.

Jesus' name is not a name to be chanted, it is a life to be lived.