

Prayer 202: In His Will
Series: School of Prayer
John 14:12-14
July 17, 2022

Good morning, class.

I was informed that Professor Cow of Patty could not teach today. His wife Myra said “no.” Therefore, I will be teaching your lesson today.

I am Professor Stench of Lazarus. I’m the cool professor you always wanted. Therefore, you don’t need to take notes. Who cares about grades? And show up if you want to.

Today’s lesson will be Prayer 202: In His Will.

I direct your attention to the words of Jesus as He spoke to His disciples in the Upper Room; from John 14:12-14:

*I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!*¹

As the title of this lesson indicates, we are looking at the phrase “In Jesus’ name.” There are four times in the Book of Acts where there are references to “the name of Jesus.”

When the lame man at the Temple asked for alms from Peter and John, Peter said:

*“I don’t have any silver or gold for you. But I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!”*²

Afterwards, he spoke to the crowd that had gathered:

*Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus’ name has healed him before your very eyes.*³

Then when Peter had to defend his actions before the religious leaders, he said:

*Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead.*⁴

The last occurrence in Acts involves Paul:

One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a demon-possessed slave girl. She was a fortune-teller who earned a lot of money for her masters. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved.” This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And instantly it left her.^{5,6}

¹ John 14:12-14 (NLT2)

² Acts 3:6 (NLT2)

³ Acts 3:16 (NLT2)

⁴ Acts 4:10 (NLT2)

⁵ Acts 16:16-18 (NLT2)

⁶ Also Luke 24:47; John 20:31; Ephesians 5:20

Of course, we have this reference 3 times in the Upper Room. Today's lesson came from John 14:13. There is also John 15:16:

*You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name.*⁷

Finally, we have John 16:26:

*In that day you will ask in my name.*⁸

We will talk about what "in His name" means in a moment, but each of these are talking about acceptable and answerable prayer. These are about our prayers being accomplished.

I'm certain we would like every prayer we pray to be answered in the positive, but what makes for acceptable prayer? How do we know our prayers are acceptable? Well, for prayer to be acceptable, it must be:

First, In His Name.

What does that mean?

Note carefully what Jesus said not that all our prayers would be granted, but that our prayers made in His name would be granted. The test of any prayer is: Can I make it in the name of Jesus? No one, for instance, could pray for personal revenge, for personal ambition, for some unworthy and unchristian object in the name of Jesus.

I can pray to sell a million books so that Myra can retire. I can pray for an airplane. I can pray for a miracle and the Reds come back and win the World Series. But are those in Jesus' name?

It seems to me that to pray in Jesus' name means to pray in the character of Jesus. Would Jesus pray this kind of prayer? Sometimes, we convince ourselves that our will, the things we want, are what Jesus wants. But that is not in His name, in His will. Praying in Jesus' name is praying for Jesus, as if He could not speak, and we must utter His words.

When we pray, we must always ask: Can we honestly make this prayer in the name of Jesus? Is our request in the character of Jesus? "The prayer which can stand the test of that consideration, and which, in the end says, 'God's will be done,' is always answered. But the prayer based on self cannot expect to be granted."⁹

Second, acceptable prayer is sincere.

Hebrew 10:22 reads:

*let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts...*¹⁰

Sometimes, I think we pray in the manner of "Hey God, could You do this or that, but if not, whatever." That is not sincere.

You know what sincere prayer is? It is that prayer when you are having a kidney stone, or a back spasm, and you are begging God to take away the pain. That's as sincere as you can get.

But we don't have to wait for pain to pray that way. Pray sincerely with every prayer you make.

Third, acceptable prayer is offered in the faith.

Back to Hebrews 10:22:

⁷ John 15:16 (NLT2)

⁸ John 16:26a (NIV)

⁹ Barclay's Daily Study Bible, John 14:12-14

¹⁰ Hebrews 10:22a (NLT2)

*let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him.*¹¹

Your prayers will not be answered if you are just tossing them up to heaven hoping they might work, that they might come to be. We must pray knowing that God is, that He is the hearer and answerer of prayer, and He can do all things.

James puts it this way:

*But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.*¹²

Fourth, acceptable prayer is offered with reverence and godly fear.

One of the things we have done in modern Christianity is we have made access to God so easy, as if it is just another encounter. Access to God is easy, but we have deceived ourselves and painted a simpler picture of God than is true.

Look throughout the Old Testament, and you will see how people looked at God with reverence and godly fear. They could not bear to witness His glory and holiness and power. The cloud on Mt. Sinai was there to hide God's appearance from the people. The Lord used a rock to block His appearance to Moses. The Holy of Holies, the place where God dwelt on Earth, had a curtain that kept the people from looking inside. Only those worthy and sinless can look upon any part of the glory of God.

Therefore, in our prayer, they must be offered in reverence and godly fear. We must pray in the attitude that God is holy and righteous, far above and beyond and better than a single atom of our bodies.

Philippians 2:12 reads:

*...Keep on working to complete your salvation with fear and trembling,*¹³

Fifth, acceptable prayer is offered in obedience.

When you were a kid, did you expect to get things from your parents even if you were disobedient?

I got a lot of "clean your room or you can't go swimming." "Do your chores or you can't go to the movie?" I didn't get to borrow the car if I had done something that took away my parent's trust in me.

Paul wrote in Colossians 3:17:

*Everything you do or say should be done to obey Jesus your Lord.*¹⁴

Obedience is required for acceptable and answered prayer.

Sixth, acceptable prayer is offered with unhesitating submission to divine will.

Prayer is not the demands of a spoiled child.

CARLY AND THE POPCYCLE.

How often are our prayers of this nature? We throw a hissy-fit. We want what we want.

Acceptable and answered prayer is offered in submission to the will of God. When we pray, we want God's will: nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

¹¹ Hebrews 10:22a (NLT2)

¹² James 1:6-8 (NLT2)

¹³ Philippians 2:12b (NCV)

¹⁴ Colossians 3:17a (NCV)

During the Wesleyan Covenant service that is traditionally done at the beginning of the year, we pray this prayer:

I am no longer my own, but Yours.

Put me to what You will, rank me with who You will.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed for You, or laid aside for You.

Exalted for You, or brought low for You.

Let me be full, let me be empty,

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and gladly yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal.

O Lord, my God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You are mine and I am Yours. So be it. And may this covenant made on earth be confirmed, remembered and rewarded in heaven. Amen.

Finally, and this may seem obvious, but acceptable prayer is offered.

Period.

We must ask. How often do we not pray because we think we don't need God on this one, that we got it covered, no need to involve the "Big Guy" on this one?

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"¹⁵

The requirement here is to ask.

Richard Baxter wrote, "Prayer is the breath of the new creature." If we are new creations in Christ, we will pray.

A pastor once told the story of the church building being broken into. The robbers didn't steal much, and they didn't really damage all that much (they broke a couple of doors, and stole a few small items). The church called the police and reported the incident. After the police left, our youth minister and pastor were talking in the youth room and a thought came to them, "The robbers are going to get caught some day. Wouldn't it interesting if – once they were arrested – we got the chance to talk to them about Jesus?" They agreed to pray for that specific opportunity.

The next day, three men were arrested. And two of the men called the church! They didn't call the other churches they broke into. They called that church. And they wanted to talk to the pastor.

So, the pastor went down to the jail, and the men told him they wanted to ask for forgiveness for breaking in. The pastor responded, "Well, forgiveness is what we do... but would you be open to doing Bible study with me?" They jumped at the chance.

They met every week for the next few weeks, and as a result, one was baptized, and the last the pastor knew, they were involved in the church their family went to.

We need to be praying more like that!¹⁶

¹⁵ Matthew 7:7-11 (NIV)

¹⁶ From a sermon by Jeff Strite, God's Idea of Church, 5/2/2011, downloaded from sermoncentral.com