

# Praying “In My Name”

By Harry Allen Ironside

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By H.A. Ironside

John’s Gospel was written to unfold the glories of Christ as Son of God, and because of its wondrous theme is of the four divine biographies, the deepest and most precious, in a volume where all is deep and all is precious! And it is perhaps not saying too much if we add that the very holy of holies of this tabernacle of truth is the chapter-series from thirteen to seventeen. In this section we see our blessed Lord, shut in with “His own,” instructing them as to their path, revealing secrets hitherto unknown, and praying for them in the most sacred intimacy.

And it is here that we get much valuable instruction about prayer, which is to be the resource of His tried and needy people during His absence.

He first speaks of prayer in connection with service. In chapter 14:12-14 He says, “Verily, 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 ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

Perhaps few of His sayings have been more perverted or misunderstood than these. Let us weigh them carefully as He evidently desired that we should. His solemn “verily, verily,” is always a challenge to our hearts, and bids us pause and thoughtfully consider what follows.

His works have testified to the Father’s delight in Him, and attested His Messiahship. Now He is going away, and He empowers His disciples to continue the hallowed service which He had begun. Undoubtedly this involved, for a time at least, the power to work miracles, though it would be a great mistake to confine it to that. What were “the works” He did? Luke 7:22 gives the answer. “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard: how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.” These were His works, and of these the last is by no means least. As for the other works we have only to read the Acts to see how truly they did follow His believing apostles, thus corroborating the message they carried to a godless world. They did not heal everybody, nor were there many occasions when the dead were raised, but they *did* “go everywhere preaching the Word.” This was their great ministry, and miracles were but signs to attest their divine commission.

But what are the “greater works” which he promised they should do? Surely not miracles, as commonly understood. If we think of these, who has ever performed greater works of power than He? Have any of His disciples called from the tomb a man four days dead, and whose body was already corrupting? Have any stilled the waves, and quieted the winds by a word? Have any multiplied food so

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as to feed greater multitudes than He? The centuries answer, “No.” The “greater works” cannot therefore refer to such wonders as these.

But surely, the opening chapters of Acts, and in fact all the pages that follow, indicate what He meant. The conversion of thousands, the eventual overturning of the paganism of the Roman Empire by the advancing light of Christianity, the miraculous changes wrought, not only in a few individuals, but in whole communities, and even nations, by the power of the gospel, the widespread dissemination of the Holy Scriptures carrying light and salvation to myriads—these are the greater things which have been accomplished through the power of the promised Paraclete and linked with this promise is His assurance regarding prayer. It is only as His servants pray that they see the glory of the Lord and behold His power working. And so He says, “Whatsoever ye shall ask *in My name*, and that will I do.. If ye ask anything *in My name*, I will do it.:

And again in chapter 15:16, He links the Father with Himself in thus answering, “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.” Here is complete furnishing for the servant’s path. All that is needed, all that faith can ask in His name, the Father and the Son engage to supply.

But let there be no mistake here. To present a petition and then to add, “In the name of the Lord Jesus,” is not necessarily to pray in His name. If it were so, the promise would have failed more often than it has been fulfilled! For millions of such prayers have gone unheeded, as every thoughtful person knows. Yea, have not *you* often so prayed only to be denied?

But does this invalidate the promise? Surely not. It should lead one to inquire, “What is it to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus?” And the answer is clearly this: To pray in His name is to ask by His authority; and to ask by His authority is to ask in accordance with His will as revealed in His Word, thus bringing us back to what we were considering in our last paper.

Let me illustrate what I mean by citing three prayers that recently came to my attention. At a political convention some time since a chaplain offered the invocation. He prayed “that it may please Thee to give wisdom to select a man for this high office who will lead the party to victory, and he closed with the words, “This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ Thy Son.

At a rival convention a very similar prayer was offered and closed in almost the same language.

Now were either or both of these petitions “in the name” of Him whom the world rejects to-day as it rejected Him of old? Certainly God could not answer both of them. Nor if He seemed to answer one, by permitting the choice of one party to become President would that in itself be proof that the prayer

of the chaplain had been in the name of Jesus.

About the time that my attention was called to these rival “prayers,” I attended a little gathering where a few simple-minded Christians had met together to wait on God. There I heard one and another fervently pray for the country, for those in high office and for those aspiring thereto, that all might be so ordered that blessing might come to a man and God be glorified, and that His people might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness. This was prayer in accordance with the Word (1 Timothy 2:1 - 14), and therefore in the name—that is, by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

The conclusion is this: To pray in the name of Jesus I must be intelligent as to the mind of Christ, and be in fellowship with Him as to God’s present and future plans.

If we go through the Acts and Epistles and notice how the expressions, “In the name of the Lord,” “For His name’s sake,” and similar phrases are employed, we shall see this very clearly.

Baptism is in the name of Jesus Christ, or in the name of the Lord Jesus—that is, by His authority—therefore as owning subjection to Him. To the lame man Peter said, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” The apostles disavowed any personal holiness or power, but what they did was by His authority—as representing Him (Acts 3:12-16).

They prayed, “when let go,” that “signs and wonders may be done by (or in) the name of thy Holy Child Jesus.” This was in exact accord with the promise we have been considering. Preaching was in His name. Forgiveness was offered only through His name. Demons were cast out in His name; but when unregenerate men attempted to use that Holy Name as a part of a magical formula, they retreated in confusion, overcome by the power of Satan (Acts 19:13-16).

In the Epistles we learn that valid discipline was “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ: (1 Corinthians 5:4), and forgiveness was to be extended to the repentant offender “in the person of Christ, that is, by the apostle acting in the name, or by the authority of the Lord (2 Corinthians 2:10). Evangelists went forth “for His name’s sake, taking nothing of the Gentiles: (3 John 7), but cast entirely upon Himself, and therefore to be cared for by His people.

To these instances might be added many more, all proving clearly that “In my name: implies “By my authority.”

As the soul enters into this, what a solemn thing does prayer become! It is no light matter to come before God bringing the petitions that the Holy Spirit lays upon the heart, in accordance with the revealed will of the Lord. To pray aright we must walk in the Spirit. To pray aright we must study to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth. To pray aright we must be in communion with Him who has said, “Whatsoever ye ask *in my name*, I will do it.” Lord, teach us to

pray! As we become intelligent as to what it is to pray in His name we shall be saved from many a disappointment.

Take, for instance, the question of bodily healing, which occupies so large a place in the thoughts of many today, when an ever-increasing emphasis seems to be laid upon what is purely physical. If the Lord had promised continued health of body to all obedient believers in this dispensation or if His atonement was for sickness as well as for sin, then we would be authorized, not only to pray for, but claim healing on all occasions, providing there be self-judgment and confession of all known sin and our part. But facts are stubborn things, and facts prove conclusively that many of the godliest saints are familiar with affliction, with pain and sickness.

Moreover, those who advocate prayer as the divine and only remedy for illness, invariably succumb at last to some disease from which they pray to be healed, only to be denied. What then is the conclusion? Either that they are not praying in faith, or that it is *not the will of God* always to heal the bodies of His people in the present age. The latter is clearly the testimony of Scripture. We are “Blessed with all *spiritual* blessings in heavenly places in Christ, but we are not promised all temporal or physical blessings. We still await the redemption of the body. Therefore the prayer for health would be supplemented by subjection to the Father’s will. We dare not demand healing “in the name” of the Lord because He has not authorized us thus to pray.

As one becomes better acquainted with the Word of God, and walks in the power of the Spirit, he will understand better what it means really to ask in the name that cannot be denied.

### **My Prayer**

If I can bear His cross  
What matters scorn of men, my grief and loss,  
Ambitions, failure, all that I have sought,  
Except what I in love for Christ have wrought?

If I can see His face,  
By faith a vision of His beauty trace,  
What matter if my path be thorny now?  
I see the radiant light upon His brow.

If I can hear His voice,  
My throbbing heart, though wounded, shall rejoice:  
What though I wander through bewildering ways?  
My soul shall evermore my Savior praise.

If I can feel His hand,  
That guides me onward to the better land,  
What though my tears must fall? I see a light  
Through mists of sorrow, ever shining bright.

Dear Lord, I turn to Thee—  
My hope in life, through death, eternity!  
My cross is radiant now with flowers fair,  
Oh, make my life through love a living prayer.

Author Unknown.