

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

January 28 – February 1, 2008



January 28, 2008 **Our Friend in High Places**

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”¹

God isn’t just a ‘clean freak’. The Son of God did not sacrifice himself on the cross to cleanse us from sin as an end in itself. Christ made atonement for our sins so that we could enter into the relationship with God that was meant to be ours all along. God wants us to approach him in worship and prayer. He wants to speak into our lives by his Word and he wants us to open up our minds and hearts to him.

When we approach the Father’s throne, we come through/with Christ, who in his continuing high priestly role is our intervener and advocate before God.

We do not come alone, confident in our own goodness or even in our new status as ‘children of the King!’ We come claiming the privilege of approaching God because Christ died to wipe out our record and make us a holy people. We come ‘clothed’ in his spotless garments of righteousness.

At the same time, we are exhorted to come even if we think we shouldn’t. When we have failed God and others, when we feel that the Father is ashamed of us and would only turn his back on us if we dared to approach his presence, Jesus is at the door of the throne room beckoning us to come – urging us to enter and “receive mercy and grace in our time of need”.

¹ Hebrews 4:14-16 (TNIV)

January 29, 2008 **Asking in Jesus' Name (1)**

“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”¹

Jesus said that when we bring our requests to God, we are to pray ‘in his name’. We often add the phrase to our prayers, but what does it mean?

Most commonly, we tend to pray “in Jesus name” as though it were some sort of password with God. As in, “Hey, when you go to that store, mention my name. The owner’s a friend of mine and will give you a discount!” We would similarly ‘drop’ Jesus name to get what we want from His Father.

Instead, praying ‘in Jesus name’ means that we are to pray as we believe Jesus would pray in that situation. If a leader sends someone in ‘her name’ she expects that person to understand what her interests are and what her perspective might be. Sometimes this is clear-cut and sometimes it calls for much wisdom and discernment, but the representative’s task is not to speak for himself, but for his leader.

Rather than praying “in Jesus’ name” in an automatic way after expressing what WE want, the privilege of praying in Christ’s name should cause us to sincerely reflect and seek God’s leading as we pray. Is my request tinged with selfishness, anger or a desire to promote myself in some way? Like Jesus, am I truly surrendered to the Father’s will as I pray this? Lord, in this situation, what do you want? How would you pray?

If we are confused, we should ask for God’s help.²

¹ John 16:24 (TNIV)

² James 1:5; Romans 8:26-27

January 30 **Asking in Jesus' Name (2)**

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.”¹

The invitations to pray in Jesus' name are not given in isolation. They all come in the context of the teaching that Jesus gave in the Upper Room on the night before the crucifixion.² His followers had been with him almost constantly for the past two years. He makes it clear that this privilege is given because they know him well: *“I no longer call you servants, because servants do not know their master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”³*

These people had come to know his 'heart', his values. When Jesus indicates that they are to abide in him and 'bear much fruit', praying in his name to that end, they had a good idea what he was talking about. They had been working together to proclaim and build the Kingdom. Jesus is charging them to continue that work and authorizing them to do so 'in his name'. In particular, as they have followed Christ in service, they have grown in love toward one another. The command to pray 'in his name' is specifically linked to that 'new commandment'.

Praying “in Jesus' name” is prayer that seeks to promote the interests of Jesus' kingdom: 'bearing fruit' in the lives of people by helping them to become disciples who are growing in their relationship with Christ and in their love for one another.

¹ John 15:16-17 (TNIV)

² John 14:12-14; 15:7-8, 14-17; 16:23-26

³ John 15:15 (TNIV)

January 31, 2009 **Asking in Jesus' Name (3)**

*"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*¹

"Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" is a conditional promise. The condition is that we 'abide in Christ and his words abide in us'.

In these verses, Jesus uses the metaphor of his being 'the vine' and our being 'the branches'. When we commit to Christ as Saviour and Lord we are 'grafted into' him. We are connected to him as part of his kingdom people. We belong to him and his spirit gives us life and vitality. If we separate ourselves from Christ by falling away and going back to living our lives on our own terms, we no longer abide in him. He must remain Lord of our lives.

Christ abides in us as his Spirit quickens the teaching of his Word in our lives. The first disciples had Jesus' teaching from his own lips. We have it recorded in the Scripture. As we read, meditate upon and study the Word – as we let it saturate our minds and hearts – we find that, more and more, we are 'on the same page' as God. His values and passions, goals and ways of living become ours. We find our decisions more shaped by his wisdom. Our consciences become more attuned to his righteousness.

Saturated with the Word, it becomes easier for us to "pray in Jesus name". With something of the mind of Christ we hope to discern what Jesus might want in this situation and pray accordingly. His will and desires are becoming our will and desires.

¹ John 15:7-8 (TNIV)

February 1, 2008

“Praying the Word”

Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request."¹

The Bible not only works in our lives to transform us so that we can pray as Christ would. It also is a wonderful resource for prayer.

In the early church, many of the ‘liturgies’ (models for worship services) contain extensive prayers that are largely quotations from Scripture. The Bible is filled with examples of prayer, expressions of praise and heartfelt petitions that may be used to lift up our hearts to God. Many believers find that ‘praying God’s word back to him’ (especially from the Psalms) is a meaningful devotional practice.

‘Praying the Word’ is a practice which is to be heartily encouraged, but it must be done with discernment. Many passages of praise or petition can indeed be expressed as the legitimate prayer from our own hearts because they apply to many or all situations. Others require strict attention to context or be seen as a ‘testimony’ to a work in process by God.

In context, the prayer of Jabez is a powerful example of an abuse victim reaching out to God. It is not a formula prayer that we should all pray so that we can become rich or healthy. In many Psalms, the writer begins by expressing doubt, frustration or a desire for revenge, but then continues on to a place of a place of trust and surrender to God. Not every verse is a ‘good’ prayer for us to pray if taken by itself.

Pray the Scriptures – with discernment!

¹ 1 Chronicles 4:10 (TNIV)