

What Does it Mean
To Pray in the
Name of Jesus?

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“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it*.” **John 14:13-14** KJV

A. T. Pierson once said that there were different *levels* of prayer beginning with our Lord’s words, “Ask and it shall be given you.” This was a wise observation for Scripture encourages us to grow deeper in our prayer life, which means every new child of God begins at the most basic level. This spiritual level would parallel that physical time in our own lives when we were young children growing up in our families and we were wont to ask our fathers for many things, perhaps, a treat while in the market, or, perhaps, permission to do this or to do that. There is nothing wrong in this most basic level, either in one’s spiritual life or in one’s physical portion of one’s lives, for by feeling free to ask a father for anything, a child learns to discern what is allowed and what is not allowed, what is deemed foolish by their father and what is not deemed foolish, and, indeed, what

pleases the heart of their father and what does not please the heart of their father.

As children of God, being born again of the Spirit, it is no different. As we feel free to bring before our Father in heaven any request of our heart, we begin to realize that sometimes God answers our prayers with a *yes*, but other times God answers our prayers with a *no*. And in that process we begin to learn what pleases our Heavenly Father and what apparently does not please our Father. Perhaps, over time we realize that certain prayers are not answered because, in reality (even though we did not realize it at the time) the thing we prayed for was really something that was very selfish and unedifying. James speaks about this in Scripture. He says in James 4:3, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”

But this is why it is good for a new Christians to bring everything to God in prayer. As we fellowship with God in prayer we learn many truths about God and about ourselves.

For example, perhaps, we are a new Christian living in an area like London or, perhaps a large city like Los Angeles, where we are in need of transportation, which we believe means we need a certain automobile. And since we read the portion of Scripture in question regarding our Lord’s promise to us, where he says, “If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it,” we ask the Lord for a particular automobile, praying, “Dear Father

in heaven, you know I am in need of transportation. I pray you given me a new car for my new job—in Jesus name, Amen.”

(This is not meant to belittle one ending a prayer with the words, “in Jesus name,” as if that is only for the new Christian. This author, himself, routinely ends most of his prayers with those three words, or, at least, with variations of those same three words. They are precious words that are a privilege to repeat. But we must all be careful, for those same three words have become—at least to some—almost a liturgical form of prayer that is automatically attached to the end of a prayer without any aforethought to their deep meaning. This is the purpose of this little booklet—not to change the form of our prayers, but to enlighten our hearts to the deep meaning and great privilege of praying in Jesus name. So let’s continue our story.)

Now, because, we are a young Christian and we do not know the depths of the vanity and the selfishness in our heart, perhaps, we ask God for a fancy new sports car. We think to ourselves, people will admire me seating in my fancy sports car. We rationalize away our prayer by thinking, God gave me this wonderful job, but it is clear cross the city and public transportation is not readily available to that location, so I am justified in asking Him for a car.

However, as time goes by God does not answer our prayer, and so in the meantime we borrow the car of

a friend and keep praying. But day after day passes and God continues to answer our prayer with an obvious “no,” and so, being a young Christian, we do not understand why, especially since Jesus said if you ask anything in My name, I will do it. And so we go to a wise and older Christian and explain to him our situation and our prayer.

After listening carefully, he wisely counsels us to continue praying for the fancy new “sports car,” encouraging us to do so with the Lord’s words from the gospel, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matt. 7:7). But he adds one thing; he says that when we are praying for that fancy new sports car, we should also be careful to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to us down deep in our heart or spirit.

Well, with the advice of the older brother we continue with more resolve to ask God for the sports car and this time with the promise of Matt. 7:7 before us. But still the car does not come. And then one day we remember we took only part of our older brother’s advice to keep praying according to Matt. 7:7. We realize we did not take his advice to listen for the still small voice of the Holy Spirit in our heart.

And so, we keep on praying, but this time we end our prayer with the little petition, “And Lord please speak to me by Thy Holy Spirit in my heart regarding my prayer for this new sports car.” And as we utter that

little petition we begin to become a little unsettled, sensing in our conscience that somehow we are displeasing the Father. And so we begin to ask the Lord, “Lord is there some reason this prayer for a new sports car displeases you?”

Well, the next Sunday in Church we hear a sermon about two things. First about asking amiss in our prayers, as James said in James 4:3, and then, about not loving the things in the world as John says in I John 2:16. But our elder or pastor uses a different translation that morning. He uses the American Standard Version, which reads: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the **vain glory** of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

Well, when we hear the words “vain glory” we are cut to the quick, for we had always been vain, always dressing and seeking attention from others. And then, at that moment, we realize what we had been doing. The Holy Spirit shows us that, in essence, we were seeking to “dress” ourselves in a fancy new sports car, hoping to draw the attention of others. The Holy Spirit shows us that it was nothing but vanity and pride in ourselves, and that we were seeking only the best, and most expensive sports car so we could be admired by others.

Then, finally, the elder or pastor ended his sermon with one other verse—II Cor. 8:9, which says, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that,

though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

This verse then convicted us all the more as we saw our prayer in the light of our Lord. The Lord Jesus became poor for us. He did not decide to be born in a rich family with fine raiment, but was born in a manger in a poor family in swaddling clothes. He emptied Himself completely for us, not counting it robbery to be equal to God (Phi. 2:10).

Well, immediately we go home and confess our vanity to the Lord and we change our prayer and say, “Lord, forgive me for wanting only the most expensive and best car. Forgive me for my vanity. Now I know why you did not answer my prayer for I was asking amiss. I was not really asking in your name, but in reality was asking in my own name, not according to your nature, but according to my nature. Lord, forgive me, please provide me with any car that will do. It does not matter if it is new or old. I only want what you want. Amen.”

Well, the next day after work, the boss (who was also a Christian) calls us into his office and says, “I have a car I do not need anymore. It is old, has a few dents, and the paint is chipping, but it is still a sound and reliable car. I want you to have it. I know you must drive a long way for work, but you have been a good worker, conscientious and faithful, so here are the keys; it is now your car.

Well, we are overjoyed and immediately in our heart we thank the Lord and then relate to our boss what he had learned at Church that Sunday about prayers. But more than simply receiving a car, we learn that there is a deeper level to prayer and that as Christians we must learn to pray in accordance to the will and desire of God and not according to our own desires and selfish ways. More than receiving a car, we learn an important spiritual lesson regarding prayer in Jesus' name, according to His nature, and not our own.

But all this would never have come about if we had not been encouraged by that older and wiser brother in the Lord to keep on praying for that fancy new sports car—but with the added caveat to begin listening for the still small voice of the Spirit. If he had chastised us instead, telling us that our prayer was foolish, selfish and vain, perhaps, we may not have learned this lesson, nor learn what it means to hear and discern the voice of the Holy Spirit down deep in our heart. If it was not for that older brother, we may never have learned the spiritual lesson as to what it means to pray in accordance with the will of God and not in accordance with our own self-centered desires.

And that is what we would now like to discuss, as that is the purpose of this little booklet—praying in the name of Jesus and progressing to a deeper level of prayer. What does praying in Jesus name actually mean? Does it mean ending a prayer with those three words—*in*

Jesus name, especially since some believe if those three words are not included, then one is not praying aright. And if that is true, does it mean if we end it with those three words we will automatically receive what we pray for. It is to those questions that we will now turn our attention.

We all desire to obey Scripture. As such, we read it with a prayerful spirit seeking the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. However, the seeking heart should also realize we are not special or unique in that the Holy Spirit is going to reveal to us something he has withheld from his children over the past two thousand years. In other words, the attitude that God will reveal something to us that he has not revealed to anyone else is a dangerous attitude. It contradicts Scripture for Paul told us that he has declared to the church the whole counsel of God. There is no more revelation for the child of God, only illumination of the revelation already given to us in Scripture.

As such, we should realize that we need each other in our understanding of Scripture. God has declared that on the basis of two or three witnesses every fact should be established. The early church followed this practice, the apostle Paul followed this practice, and, indeed, the Lord in his humanity followed this practice (cf. Jn. 5: 16-47; 8:1-20; II Cor. 13:1; Gal. 2:2). How

much more should we follow this practice in our study of God's Word?

How then can we put this principle into practice in our study of the Word of God? First, we must realize that Scripture was given to each individual by God. Thus, we should encourage each other to personally study Scripture, seeking the Holy Spirit to direct our hearts to the truth (John 16:13; I Jn. 2:18-20). Secondly, we should seek the fellowship of other saints in our understanding of Scripture, for not only is Scripture a lamp unto our feet, God has also declared that the Church is a lamp to all and is the pillar and ground of all truth (Rev. 1:20; I Tim. 3: 15). So we would be wise to also seek the fellowship of other Christians in the Church in our study of God's Sacred Word.

As such, when we come to the question before us regarding what it means to pray in the name of Jesus, let us seek the fellowship other believers. Does praying in the name of Jesus mean ending our petition with the words, "in Jesus' name," or with the words, "in the precious name of Jesus," or does it bespeak an attitude of the heart being led into prayer by the Holy Spirit in conformity to the heart of Christ and the Word of God?

Let us first look to the prayer of one dear saint of God that was led by the Holy Spirit in thousands of answered prayers for the glory of God. That saint was George Müller of Bristol. I will reproduce one of his prayers below.

“O Lord, bless this dear servant now before Thee more and more, *more and more, more and more!* And do Thou graciously guide his pen in what he may write in regard to this Thy work and our conversation today. I ask it through the merits of Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!”¹

Here we see a prayer by a man who had learned what it meant to be one who prays by the Holy Spirit (Jude 1:20), in the name of Jesus, unto God. We all know the testimony of his life and the miraculous answers to thousands of his prayers. We were given a promise by Jesus that if we ask anything in his name we will receive the petition we desire of him. George Müller was living proof of this precious promise, so I believe it would be a good thing to look at the example of his life.² Remember, Scripture gives us the exhortation, “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith (Heb. 13:7 NASB).

I do not think anyone would deny that George Müller was a man who prayed in the name of Jesus, and

¹ George Müller, A. Sims, ed., *An Hour with George Müller* (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids) pg. 15

² There are many fine biographies about George Müller. One of the classic biographies is by A. T. Pierson, entitled *George Müller of Bristol*. Equally, there are many fine books of his journal that record his insights and testimony regarding faith and prayer, such as: *Answers to Prayer*, and *The Autobiography of George Muller*.

yet, as we see by his prayer above, he did not end his prayer with the words, “in Jesus’ name.” Apparently, his understanding of what Jesus meant, when he encouraged us to pray in his name, did not include the thought that one should, necessarily, end a prayer with that phrase. Such is the example of George Müller.

And yet, we must remember that even though George Müller is a good brother by which we can learn much about prayer, we must never assign to him, or any other of the brethren, infallibility. Only the original apostles were infallible in their teaching and example, being led by the Holy Spirit to record certain truth about prayer in the pages of Scripture.

So, if we are looking for an infallible example to follow, it is to Scripture that we must first go if we wish to find an answer to the question before us. Only after looking to Scripture will we then return to see what some of our fellow believers today have said regarding this important truth.

If we desire to understand how the original apostles and those with them understood what it means to pray *in the name of Jesus*, it only makes sense to look at their prayers recorded for us in the Bible. There are not many, but two or three prayers will be sufficient for us to see if they considered praying in the name of Jesus

also meant one should conclude one's prayer with those exact words, or, at least, similar words.

The first prayer we would like to look at is by those who were originally given this injunction by Jesus, the apostles Peter and John. We have their prayer recorded for us by the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts 4:24-31.

“And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the Name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” Acts 4:24-31 KJV

Here we see a mighty prayer and yet they did not end their prayer with the words, “in Jesus name.” I do not deny that their prayer was still done in the name of Jesus, but their prayer clearly shows us that praying in the name of Jesus does not necessarily entail ending it

with words, “in Jesus name.” Apparently, that admonition by the Lord meant something much more, or, otherwise it does not seem the Holy Spirit would have borne witness to their prayer.

Another prayer is preserved for us in Scripture in the book of Ephesians. Paul writes down for us one of his prayers. It goes as follows –

“Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” **Ephesians 3:20-21** NASB

How precious it is to have this prayer for us in Scripture. It shows us an example of a prayer by the apostle Paul. And yet, neither did Paul end his prayer with the words, “in Jesus’ name.” But, of course, that does not mean he did not pray in Jesus’ name.

Now, perhaps, someone might say this is not a true prayer, just a doxology. However, if we compare Scripture with Scripture, we see the Holy Spirit, indeed, considered doxologies prayers and petitions in their own right.

Psalms 72:18-20 gives us a doxology of David when he says –

“Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, Who alone works wonders. And blessed be His glorious Name forever; and may the

whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” NASB

Yet we see that the Holy Spirit, in verse 20, specifically calls such a doxology a prayer. Knowing this, how blessed are these other doxologies given to us in Scripture—true prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit.

“He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! **Amen.**” I Tim. 6:15-16 NASB

“Now the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. **Amen.**” I Peter 5:10-11 KJV

“Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. **Amen.**” Heb 13:20-21 NASB

In all of these prayers we see them end with a simple, “Amen,” and not with the words “in Jesus’ name,” and yet, I do not believe this means they were not given in the name of Jesus either.

And finally, we see the prayer of the twenty-four elders, along with the angels and the four living creatures in the book of Revelation.

“And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. **Amen.**’” Rev. 7:11-12
NASB

Now someone might say, “But that is not a prayer but a statement of praise.” Indeed, it is a statement of praise! But one forgets that the Biblical meaning of the word “Amen,” in and of itself, is a prayer to God! Amen, literally means “May it be,” or “Let it be so!” We know this is the meaning of that original Hebrew word because of the Jewish translators of the Hebrew Old Testament. When they translated the Hebrew word “amen” in the LXX, they used the Greek word γένοιτο which is an aorist verb in the optative mood (e.g. Ps. 72:19 [71:19] LXX). In Greek, the optative mood is the mood to use if one is expressing a desire or a wish. This shows that they understood the Old Testament Hebrew word for *amen* to not simply be a word of affirmation; they also understood it to be a word conveying a desire or wish—a prayer of “May it be.”

Therefore, by concluding a statement with “Amen,” one turns the praise into a prayer! For instance,

when Paul concludes his epistle to the Galatians with the statement, “Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit,” and then adds “Amen” (Gal. 6:18), he is turning it into a prayer to God. He is asking God to allow the grace of the Lord Jesus to remain with all their spirits. He is saying, “Dear Lord, please allow the grace of the Lord Jesus to remain with the spirits of my brethren in Galatia.”

And so we see many inspired prayers given to us in Scripture that were led and inspired by the Holy Spirit, all meant to be examples for us today. What better pattern do we have for our own prayers, than prayers that were given by the Holy Spirit? And yet, in each instance, they did not end with the words “in Jesus’ name, Amen.” This should give us pause and cause us to delve more deeply into what the Lord meant when he told us that we should pray in His name.

To do this let us now turn to the witness of other saints in the Church and allow them to share with us their Biblical understanding of the words “in Jesus’ name.” We will provide some examples from a few brothers.

William MacDonald shares the following in his *Believer’s Bible Commentary* about these words in John 14:13.

“This verse does not mean that a believer can get anything he wants from God. The key to understanding the promise is in the words, **in My name—whatever you ask in My name**. To ask in Jesus’ name

is not simply to insert His name at the end of the prayer. **It is to ask in accordance with His mind and will.** It is to ask for those things which will glorify God, bless mankind, and be for our own spiritual good. In order to ask in Christ's name, we must live in close fellowship with Him. Otherwise we would not know His attitude. The closer we are to Him, the more our desires will be the same as His are.”³

And another brother, R. A. Torrey, said the following. I will give an extended quote from two different books of his, as his words are so helpful in understanding our Lord's exhortation.

“It was a wonderful word about prayer that Jesus spoke to His disciples on the night before His crucifixion, ‘Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it’

Prayer in the name of Christ has power with God. God is well pleased with His Son Jesus Christ. He hears Him always, and He also hears always the prayer that is really in His name. There is a fragrance in the name of Christ that makes acceptable to God every prayer that bears it. But what is it to pray in the name of Christ?”⁴

“When you come across a word or a phrase in the Bible and do not know what it means, the thing to do is not to run off to a dictionary, or a commentary, or to some book of theology, but to take your concordance and go through the Bible and look up every place where that word or phrase, or synonymous words or phrases, are used. Then you will know just what the word or phrase

³ William MacDonald, *Bible Believer's Commentary* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1995) pg. 1546

⁴ R. A. Torrey, *How to Pray* (The Bible Institute Colportage Association, Chicago, 1900) pg.48

means...Now I have done this with this phrase, “In my name” and with synonymous phrases, “In his name” or “In the name of Jesus Christ.” I have looked up every passage in the Bible where they are found, and I have discovered what I suspected at the outset, that these phrases mean exactly the same in the Bible that they do in ordinary everyday speech. What does it mean in ordinary everyday speech to ask something in some other person’s name? It means simply this—that you ask the thing that you ask from the person of whom you ask it, on the ground of some claim that the person in whose name you ask it has upon the one from whom you ask it.”⁵

“If I go to a bank and hand in a check with my name signed to it, I ask of that bank in my own name. If I have money deposited in that bank, the check will be cashed; if not, it will not be. If, however, I go to a bank with somebody else’s name signed to the check, I am asking in his name, and it does not matter whether I have money in that bank or any other, if the person whose name is signed to the check has money there, the check will be cashed.

If, for example, I should go to the First National Bank of Chicago, and present a check which I had signed for \$50.00, the paying teller would say to me:

“Why, Mr. Torrey, we cannot cash that. You have no money in this bank.”

But if I should go to the First National Bank with a check for \$5,000.00 made payable to me and signed by one of the large depositors in that bank, they would not ask whether I had money in that bank or in any bank, but would honor the check at once.

So it is when I go to the bank of heaven, when I go to God in prayer. I have nothing deposited there, I have absolutely no credit there, and if I go in my own name I will get absolutely nothing; but Jesus Christ has unlimited credit in heaven, and He has granted to me the

⁵ R. A. Torrey, *The Power of Prayer: And the Prayer of Power* (Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987) pg. 104

privilege of going to the bank with His name on my checks, and when I thus go, my prayers will be honored to any extent.

To pray then in the name of Christ is to pray on the ground, not of my credit, but His; to renounce the thought that I have any claims on God whatever, and approach Him on the ground of Christ's claims. Praying in the name of Christ is not merely adding the phrase "I ask these things in Jesus' name" to my prayer. I may put that phrase in my prayer and really be resting in my own merit all the time. On the other hand, I may omit that phrase but really be resting in the merit of Christ all the time. But when I really do approach God, not on the ground of my merit, but on the ground of Christ's merit, not on the ground of my goodness, but on the ground of the atoning blood (Heb. 10:19), God will hear me. Very much of our modern prayer is vain because men approach God imagining that they have some claim upon God whereby He is under obligations to answer their prayers." ⁶

"In Melbourne, Australia, as I went on the platform one day at the business men's meeting, a note was put in my hands [that read] 'I am in great perplexity. I have been praying for a long time for something that I am confident is according to God's will, but I do not get it. I have been a member of the...Church for thirty years, and have tried to be a consistent one all the time. I have been Superintendent in the Sunday school for twenty-five years, and elder in the church for twenty years; and yet God does not answer my prayer and I cannot understand it. Can you explain it to me?'

I took the note with me on to the platform and read it and said, 'It is perfectly easy to explain. This man thinks that because he has been a consistent church member for thirty years, a faithful Sunday school superintendent for twenty-five years, and an elder in the church for twenty years, that God is under obligation to answer his prayer. He is really praying in his own name, and God will not hear our prayers when we approach Him in that way. We must, if we would have God answer our prayers, give up any thought that we have any

⁶ R. A. Torrey, *How to Pray* (The Bible Institute Colportage Association, Chicago, 1900) pg. 49-50

claims upon God. Not one of us deserves anything from God. If we got what we deserved, every last one of us would spend eternity in hell. But Jesus Christ has great claims on God, and we should go to God in our prayers on the ground of any goodness in ourselves, but on the ground of Jesus Christ's claims...'

At the close of the meeting a gentleman stepped up to me and said, 'I wrote that note. You have hit the nail square on the head. I did think that because I had been a consistent church member for thirty years, a Sunday school superintendent for twenty-five years, and an elder in the church for twenty years, that God was under obligation to answer my prayers. I see my mistake.'

Multitudes are making the same mistake. They fancy that because they are faithful church members, and active in Christian service, that God is under obligation to answer their prayers, that they have some claim on God, Not one of us has any claim on God. We are miserable sinners. But Jesus Christ has claims on God and He has given us the right to draw near to God in His Name, that is, on the ground of His claims on God.

To pray, then, in the name of Jesus Christ, means simply this: That we recognize that we have no claims whatever on God. That we have no merit whatsoever in His sight, and furthermore, that Jesus Christ has immeasurable claims on God, and has given us the right to draw near to God not on the ground of our claims, but on the ground of His claims. And when we thus draw near to God in prayer, God will give us what we ask.

What a precious privilege it is to pray in the name of Jesus Christ! How rich we are if we only realize that Jesus Christ has given us the privilege of drawing near to the Heavenly Father in His name, on the ground of His claims on God."⁷

⁷ R. A. Torrey, *The Power of Prayer: And the Prayer of Power* (Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987) pg. 106-107

And finally, A. T. Pierson, in speaking of George Müller, said the following regarding this privilege of praying in Jesus' name.

“When this grand man [George Müller] began his orphanage work, now more than half a century ago, he was so poor that he had absolutely no bread to eat save as his Heavenly Father fed him. Of course in such poverty there were no resources from which to draw for a great enterprise like the housing of homeless waifs. But this work was laid on his heart to do for the Lord, and he ventured somewhat timidly to ask for a small house and a few orphans with which to begin his ministry to the Lord's poor... One day he read these words, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,” and a new thought flashed on him. “Like the children of Israel in the desert I have been limiting the Holy One by my unbelief. He yearns to give largely, but my faith is so small that it hinders my capacity to ask and receive... Then Mr. Müller remembered how, when the mother bird brings a dainty morsel to her little fledglings, they open their beaks as wide as they can stretch them, waiting to receive the food which is to satisfy their wants. God likes to see his children open wide their mouths in expectation of great gifts... Faith and prayer are so intimately associated that we cannot speak of one without at least implying the other. But let us mark that there are different *levels* of prayer.

Our Lord's first lesson on prayer was, “Ask and it shall be given you,” etc... But when we come to the Gospel of John, we read the most marvelous words which our Lord ever spoke on prayer: “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name,” “whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name he will give it to you.” This is something beyond simple asking, beyond simple asking by faith. This is asking by virtue of and because of our identification with Christ. His Name is His person, so that God does not look upon us as we are in

ourselves, but looks on us as we are in Jesus Christ. Here is a “region beyond” in the matter of prayer, of which one man or woman in a thousand has scarce dreamed. When any one presents a request in the name of another, it is really that other person who asks the favor; and when I go to the Father in Jesus' name—reverently let me say it—Christ is the suppliant; and because the Father can deny the Son nothing that He wants, it is certain that what I ask in His Name I shall receive—nay, it is my privilege to believe that I have already received it, so certain is the answer.

Let us suppose that the Christian Church should get hold of this power of prayer, and get above the level of simple asking in faith, and realise her identity with the Lord and the privilege of praying in the name of Jesus; then, keeping in fellowship with Christ, nourishing and cherishing this daily walk with Him, and therefore having, within, the groanings unutterable awakened by the Holy Ghost—these presented in the golden censer of Christ before the throne would certainly be heard and heeded by the Father, and so without doubt the greatest need of to-day is new prayer—on the highest level of prayer.”⁸

So in conclusion, this brings us back to the prayer of George Müller we provided at the beginning. Perhaps, we can now understand why he did feel it was necessary to conclude his prayer with the words, “in Jesus’ name.” He was already praying in Jesus’ name before he even uttered his first word! Why? Because he was approaching God the Father in his heart through the merits and claims of Jesus Christ, not according to his

⁸ Arthur T. Pierson, *The Making of a Sermon* (Gospel Publishing House, New York, 1907) pg. 277-279

own desires or will, but according to the true heartfelt desires and will of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what it means to pray in Jesus name—first finding out what is on the heart of the Saviour, perhaps, in regard to our work in the Lord—finding out what is His heartfelt desire, then, once ascertaining that desire, ask the Father for it based upon the merit of who He is, and by what He has done, and because of the fact that it is His will.

We must remember that when we are praying in Jesus' name we are allowing the Holy Spirit to minutely guide our prayers so that all our petitions are in complete conformity to God's will. In fact, I believe the Apostle John's words in his first epistle are, in one sense, a commentary upon what the Lord said in John 14:13-14.

When John tells fellow believers in his epistle the following—"And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (I John 5:14-15)— he is explaining to us what Jesus meant when He told us that if we ask anything in His name, He will do it (John 14: 13-14). What a wonderful promise it is!

So what we have is John repeating in his epistle, this same promise of Jesus, in his gospel (albeit with different words inspired by the Holy Spirit), and that is why John says that "if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us...we

know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him!”

And so we see that asking according to His will under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is, indeed, the same as praying in His name.

As such, the important question that arises in our heart is how does one find out what the will of God is. The answer is—by learning to pray in accordance with God’s Word. When our prayers are based upon the desires of God as found in His Word, and not upon any of our own selfish or misguided desires, we can be assured we are praying according to His will.

For example, James tells us the following in his epistle.

James 1:5-8 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸ *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. NASB

These verses reveal the desires and will of God. He states for us that it is His will that we ask Him for wisdom and that it is His desire to grant it to all who ask in faith. Remember that John said that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us and so will grant us our request.

So, dear brethren, let me ask, “Is not this promise found in James 1:5 God’s will?” Indeed, it is. By reading God’s Word we have found God’s will for us. So, because of that, we can pray with assurance and confidence that if we ask God for wisdom He will, indeed, answer our prayer with wisdom. But the pray must be done in faith, nothing doubting.

Now, this does not mean positive thinking. No, no, no. It means faith that believers God’s Word. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Faith is not positive thinking; faith rests upon something outside of one’s self; it rests upon the sure Word of God! God can never lie, so if He makes a promise to us in His Word, we can believe it is true and so rest upon it, knowing that it is His will to grant us our request.

Hebrews 6:17-18 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath: ¹⁸ That by two immutable things, in **which it was impossible for God to lie**, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. KJV

This, beloved, is what it means to pray in Jesus’ name—finding out Jesus’ will through the pages of God’s Word, ever seeking out the promises that God has given to us in Scripture, based upon the merits, blood, and righteousness of Jesus Christ His Son, and then

conforming our prayers to that will and desire of God, with nothing but the imputed righteousness of Christ.

There is nothing wrong with concluding our prayers with the words “in Jesus’ name” if we fully understand what those three words mean—that is, if we realize that our petitions are being made only through the merits of Jesus Christ. If we understand that we can only approach God by the blood of Christ Jesus, if we understand that when we appear before God, it is not in our righteousness, but only in the righteousness of Christ Jesus, and, if we allow our prayers to be led by the Holy Spirit in accordance with God’s Word, then, indeed, we can be sure we are praying in the name of Jesus, whether we use those three particular words or not.

In fact, if the truth be told, if we desire to approach God with the words, “in Jesus’ name,” they might be better placed at the beginning of our prayers, rather than at the end of our prayers! Why? Suppose we were to approach an earthly king in whose presence we were not worthy to stand. Would we not immediately state to the king, before we even spoke one word, that we are approaching in the name of someone other than ourselves, one whom the king considers worthy? Perhaps, we would state something like, “O king, I know I am not worthy to approach you, but my master, whom I know you love and respect, told me to approach your throne and present my request.”

Now, if we would do so to an earthly king, how much more should we do so when we approach the King of the Universe! Would it not be better to first state to the King of Kings, “O King, I know I am not worthy to approach you, but my Master and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom I know you love and respect, told me to approach your throne in His Name and present to you this request of mine, so please hear my prayer.”

So in a real way, if we desire to use the words “in Jesus’ name,” it would be completely fine to begin our prayers with those words, rather than end our prayers with those words. Yet we must remember, as shown by the example of the prayers in the New Testament, it is not those three words that determine if a prayer is in the name of Jesus. It is the attitude of the heart that determines whether a prayer is in the name of Jesus or whether it is not.

If we approach God with the right heart attitude, then it is not necessary to use the exact words, “in Jesus’ name,” as was shown by the examples of the prayers of the apostles recorded for us in Scripture. What we do need to do, however, is to make sure our attitude is right, by approaching God only through the merits and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then, if we use the words “in Jesus’ name,” either in the beginning, middle, or end of our prayers, it will still please the Father, for our prayers will then be led by the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the Word of

God, and so will be according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May we all truly approach God, not by our own righteousness, but only by the righteousness of His dear Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and pray in His wonderful Name. Amen and Amen.

“O Lord, bless us, thy servants, more and more as we serve Thee! And do Thou graciously guide us all by Thy Blessed Holy Spirit to pray according to Thy Holy Word, in the Name of Thy Beloved Son, and in accordance with His sacred desires and will, so that Thy will might be done on earth as it is in Heaven. I ask it not by any righteousness of my own, but by the righteousness and merits of Thy dear and Only-Begotten Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ—in who’s precious and wonderful Name I pray, Amen!”

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