

## The Always-Answered Prayer - Week 63

Those seeking to be Christ's "faithful sheep" are right to take their prayer lives very seriously, for prayer is such an amazing gift given to us by Almighty God our heavenly Father. He gives us access to Himself, anywhere, any time, to speak about any thing. There are no queues, no delays, no interruptions, no time pressures; we are granted nothing less than a personal, private, loving audience with the King of Kings whenever we wish and wherever we are.

Strangely though, there is often much misunderstanding amongst Christians concerning what we could term the "mechanics" of prayer. Too often many hours are spent in well-meant prayer sessions, when the very basics of what is going on are ignored. This can sometimes result in our thinking privately that God doesn't seem to respond as we wish to our prayers - so why should we bother in the first place?

Let us briefly remind ourselves of some of the things that the Lord Jesus tells us about those "mechanics" of prayer.

First and foremost, we are normally to address our prayers **TO God the Father**. They are conveyed from us to Him **THROUGH the Lord Jesus Christ** and **IN THE POWER of the Holy Spirit**. A mature and rounded Christian prayer is thus always set within the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for we only have access to Almighty God because of the shed blood of His Son Jesus Christ (see for example Hebrews 10.19 / Titus 3.4-7 / I Timothy 2.5-6 / and many other references).

Secondly, the always-answered prayer is the prayer that is uttered to the Father, from redeemed sinners such as ourselves, **"in Jesus' name"** (for example John 14.13 / 15.7 / 15.16 / 16.23). The Father ALWAYS grants such a prayer, because *it is actually the prayer of His only Son*.

My prayer requests and yours are full of silliness and error! - and the Father is being only merciful to us when He does NOT always grant what we tell Him we want. Just as a human father in love sets aside the foolish demands of his children, so our heavenly Father is loving enough to do the same with us, with a firm No.

But He doesn't want things to end there. He longs to respond with Yes, with blessing and joy and fellowship with us, all within the blood of the New Covenant (for example II Corinthians 1.20). And the prayer that brings forth His Yes is Jesus' own prayer, that is, the prayer we lift "in Jesus' name".

So this brings us to two vital tasks in our asking prayers: get these right and the Father will say Yes to our requests every single time - because they are Jesus' own requests, yet spoken through our lips.

(a) We are thus to "abide" in the Lord Jesus and then, "ask what you will, and it shall be done (John 15.7). Abiding is all about living consciously in His presence, alongside the Lord Jesus, at every step through each busy day - modern-day disciples treading as it were the dusty tracks of Judea with our Lord and Saviour. As we do this - and it has to be learned and practised - we absorb into our beings, by the Holy Spirit, the character and ways and wishes of the Lord Himself.

So, gradually, imperceptibly, *our* wishes become closer and closer to the *Lord's own wishes*. We slowly learn to see life more and more as *He* sees it. Before any prayer to the Father, we can actually ask the Lord Jesus, informally as it were, "Lord, what is *your* wish in this situation?" - and the Lord's reply *becomes our own prayer*.

(b) When we come to the Father Himself in prayer, we acknowledge Him indeed as, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name ....". We can then bring our own requests, emphasising to Him *that that is all they are* - but that we hope they are in line with *Jesus' own requests*. The closer they are to Jesus' requests, the more that our requests can truly be said to be lifted "in Jesus' name". Finally we ask the Father that *His* will may be done, come what may - and His will is of course identical to the will of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our prayer to the Father ends with the words "through Jesus Christ our Lord", to emphasise to all concerned that Jesus is the one and only means by which we can address God as "our Father" (I Timothy 2.5).

In this season of Lent may we grow in our abiding in Christ, that our prayers may become closer to His prayers, that God our Father may delight to say .... Yes.

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