

## 449 Prayer-Promises from the Lord

Last week we came across first the “sphere of Scripture”, within which all human existence is contained in one way or another, and then the “spread of Scripture” concerning any question we may be facing. Without an understanding of that “spread” it is easy to take one single text as being “the final word” on some matter when it may well not be, leading to our getting things wrong under the Lord.

This time we will therefore take a closer look at some basic “prayer-promises” within the New Testament: that is, what exactly has the Lord God promised to do regarding our prayers, and what exactly are we to do in lifting prayers that are acceptable to Him? We are not concerned this time with the content or examples of New Testament prayers, all of which are worthy of prayerful study in themselves.

To set the scene, we remember that prayer is to be a normal, habitual part of the Christian life, practised individually and corporately (egs., Luke 11.5-12 / Philippians 4.6 / I Thessalonians 5.17). It is not to be a chore or a bore, but a precious time of fellowship and conversation with God the Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord’s basic prayer-promise is simple: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you ... I have chosen 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” (from John 15.7 & 16, KJV).

Two truths are crucial in those words. First is our need to “abide” in Jesus: the closer we are to Him in our daily lives, the closer we shall gradually become to Him in understanding and outlook, and the more genuine, lasting spiritual fruit will be grown in and through our lives (egs., Romans 8.29 / II Corinthians 3.18 / Ephesians 4.12-16).

Second are those words “in my name”, which grant us our God-given authority in prayer. When our prayers are lifted to the Father “in Jesus’ name”, those prayers have “clout” with God the Father because they are in effect Jesus’ own prayers being voiced by “Jesus abiders”.

This “abiding in the Lord” will also ensure that we retain a right attitude in our prayers. Thus we acknowledge the authority and holiness of God the Father, as at the start of “the Lord’s Prayer” for example (Matthew 6.9;

Luke 11.2). We come through no merit of our own but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the saving power of His shed blood (egs., Ephesians 2.4-10 / I Peter 1.3-9 / I John 1.7b). When praying alone, we come quietly, privately, humbly and simply, without fancy oratory or “vain repetitions” designed to impress! (eg., Matthew 6.5-8). We come with no withholding of forgiveness from anyone who has sought that forgiveness from us (eg., Mark 11.25-26 / Luke 17.3-4). (Forgiveness itself is another topic where the spread of scripture is important: see note at end of this Reflection).

The key to our prayers being answered as we would wish thus rests in our being “in step” with the Lord Jesus as much as we are able, so that our desires are closely akin to the Lord’s own desires. God the Father and God the Son being One, the Son’s prayers, in which, please God, we have played a small part in the uttering, are willingly granted by the Father (eg., John 14.10-14). What is more, the Son and the Holy Spirit are also interceding before the Father on our behalf (Romans 8.26-27,34b).

From our abiding in Christ come a real authority and a right attitude in our prayers, each of which in turn fosters solid faith: the faith of confidence, assurance and settledness - that the Lord God our Father is indeed interested in us, that He knows what He is doing and He does know best! There will be times when His greater knowledge and higher will shall cause Him to say No to our requests, just as Jesus Himself recognised in His Gethsemane prayer, “nevertheless not my will but thine be done” (Luke 22.42b). That is always a fitting way to end our own prayer requests, by acknowledging that God the Father has the right always to have the last word – in His wisdom and mercy.

In view of the “spread of Scripture” revealing these gracious prayer-promises centred in abiding, authority and attitude, we do indeed “come boldly before the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4.16). And we “pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5.17), for by God’s grace our prayers are probably having far more effect than we can imagine - right now (eg James 5.16b)!

(Some previous Weekly Reflections: on Prayer – see bottom of This Week page on the website, “Your Prayers and Bible Reading” heading: Numbers 63, 215 – 219, 256; and on Forgiveness, “Practical Discipleship” heading, Nos 127, 128).

