

Prayer

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Preacher: Philip Wells

[0 : 00] So you remember this morning we were saying that Jesus had gone away and was going to go away and this was a source of great consternation and distress for the disciples because at first sight there can be no such thing as Christianity if Jesus isn't there but the Lord teaches in these chapters about what Christianity will be in the absence of Jesus when he's gone away what will it be like to be a Christian and how will things go forward and I suggested that you could imagine these chapters as explaining that like a cord a long cord with different colors in it so the different colors representing the different strands the different teachings that go all the way through and pop up at different places.

One of them was prayer. One of them was a life of loving obedience including love for one another and then we could add to that in this chapter love for one another compared with hostility rejection from the world.

Another strand is the life of faith believing in Jesus words which cropped up in the reading that we had if you remain in me and my words remain in you that's in verse 7.

One of them was a person and then also the fact that the Christian life is not lived just by things but by the person of the Holy Spirit.

I mean there are things there is a Bible that's a thing it's not a person but these things are sort of as it were brought to life and reality through the Holy Spirit.

[1 : 54] And he was mentioned in our reading in verse 26 the counselor as he was mentioned in verse 26 the counselor comes whom I will send to you from the father.

So those are the four strands that we looked at and in the in chapter 16 the work of the Holy Spirit is going to be expanded in terms of his convincing the world.

About things that we couldn't convince the world of without him. So in 16 verse 8 when he comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.

So the Holy Spirit is immensely important in all these areas. So those are the four strands and we looked at an overview this morning. And it was actually Lindsay who said can we talk about prayer. So I thought we would look at the subject of prayer this evening. And let's look at the texts. And then I've got some questions. The questions are are we in a different position to pray now that Jesus has gone to the father?

[3 : 09] To whom do we pray? What prayers can we pray? Some people use the letters A-C-T-S. Acts.

Which stands for? Adoration. Confession. Thanksgiving. Supplication. It's quite a good division of prayer. Acts. Adoration. Saying how great God is.

Confession is saying I've sinned I need forgiveness. Thanksgiving is obvious. Supplication is a way of asking. Asking God for things. Acts. And on the basis of John's gospel what answers or results can we expect?

So that's what we'll do this evening. That's all there is to it. We'll look at the texts and look at those questions. So let's look at the texts first of all. Which according to my reckoning are as follows.

Chapter 14. Around verse 13. And I'm going to ask you. What the text says.

[4 : 10] And what it's connected to. Because the way these texts work. They're all. All the strands are sort of knotted round one another. And connected to one another. So in chapter 14.

So I won't just read verse 13. I'll go back. When it says. Verse 12. I tell you the truth. Anyone who has faith in me.

Will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these. Because I am going to the father.

And I will do. Whatever you ask in my name. So that the son may bring glory to the father. You may ask me for anything in my name.

And I will do it. Okay. So let's stop and think about those verses. Do they connect to anything else in particular?

[5 : 10] So there's something there about prayer. But does it connect with anything else? Or would anybody else bring any observation from those verses? Thank you.

It's asking in Jesus name. That's in verse 14. Thank you very much. And who does the answering? Interesting. So somebody says the father. Somebody says Jesus.

I will do it. It says in verse 14. Who's the I? The son. Okay. Thank you very much. I think it's connected to what Jesus has been doing.

Would you agree with that? Would you agree that the prayer is linked to the doing things? Verse 12 is linked to verse 13 and 14. Whoever has faith in me will do what I have been doing.

[6 : 21] He will do even greater things than these because I'm going to the father. I will do whatever you ask in my name. Do you agree that the deeds of the disciples or the believers seems to be linked to the prayer?

Do you agree with that? Or do you think they're two different things? Let me just say what I'm thinking here.

So in verse 12 it says this remarkable thing. The believer will do greater things. Will do what I've been doing and greater things. Yeah. And then the next verse says I will answer prayer.

Do you think those two things are connected? Yes. Okay. Some people say yes. Some people are not too sure. Well, I'll put that on hold.

I think the next verse about prayer is 15 verse 7. So this is the bit about the vine.

[7 : 26] And without, you see, it's almost impossible to talk about the prayer bit without talking about the vine bit. The vine to Jewish readers would have been what God said in the Old Testament.

Israel is the vine. Israel, the nation, is the place of fruitfulness, the place where God is at work, the place to belong to.

Israel is the vine. But Jesus says very radically, actually the vine is me. I'm really the place to be, the place where God is at work.

And the connection that you need to have is not actually to Israel as an ethnic or political or geographical group. But the connection you need to have is to me. This was a very radical statement.

So let's pick it up at verse 6. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

[8 : 29] If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

I think that is where we stop reading. Actually, we can go on further. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love. I think we'll stop there. So what about, what's the promise about prayer there?

What does the promise say? Verse 7. If we're walking with Jesus, he will hear our prayers?

Sorry. I don't want to say answer because then we think anything we ask. I think that anything you wish needs to be taken in the context. I think he will hear what he's saying.

[9 : 51] Yeah. Okay. So you're going to, you're thinking we want to just keep this within. Because the text seems to want to explode into everything, doesn't it?

It seems to say that the promise is, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. So I'm thinking instantaneous healing for Martin and Colleen and Brenda's hip and Ross's back and Aaron's knee. So I'd like to ask for that. And Ferraris and Ferraris for everybody. So it says, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you.

So that's the, it's quite a big promise, isn't it? Okay. So it does, it does ask to be connected. It's not just a free floating promise. It is connected to things.

So Roberto was going to say. Yeah. It's a condition. It's a condition. It's a condition is the unity. The unity between Christ and God is, people want us to be united with Christ, the same way Christ is united with the Father.

[11:03] So we become a unity here. Yeah. Another condition is whatever we ask is to bring glory to God. Thank you. For our son. Yes. Those two conditions use your thought. Yeah.

It, I can't, I can't easily. see a situation where my having a Ferrari brings glory to God. I think what God would say, you get it. There is sufficient in having an old Ford Mondeo. That's enough. But you're absolutely right, because it says if, there's some ifs. If you remain in me, verse 7, and my words remain in you. So if we are saturated by God's, by Jesus's words, and that's the way we're thinking, that's what we're thinking about, then the things that comes to our minds to ask for, will, Jesus says, I've got no hesitation in answering those things.

So it is a big encouragement to prayer. You know, it isn't couched in terms of but, but, but, but, but, but, but. I mean, there are conditions, but the main thing is saying, here's a great thing to do, to pray. And this is, you know, it's a pretty big promise, isn't it? If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. So it's a big promise for when Jesus has gone away.

A promise for us to live by. Can we just go back to 1412? How is that connected to Jesus going to the Father? Just going back to 1412, 1314. How is that connected to his absence? Is there any connection?

[12:52] The gift of the Holy Spirit. Thank you. Yeah, that's, that, that's, um, under the surface of it, uh, chapter 14, verse 12. So under the surface, that is the gift of the Holy Spirit. There's, it mentions the going of Jesus. Okay, that's, yeah, that's verse 13. I was looking at the word because in verse 12. So it's doing greater things because I go to the Father. So there is a connection there that if Jesus hadn't gone to the Father, the great things would not have been done.

There's an interesting connection, isn't it? That, that, that, and we can enlarge on that as, as Chris was thinking in a moment, I think. Let's look at chapter 15, verse 16.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command. Love each other. Okay, so is there, is there a promise about prayer there? Is there any mention of prayer or promise of prayer? I will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Yep. And who does the giving? The Father. The Father, yes. And what sort of limit is put on the request?

[14:37] It's fruit. Thank you very much, yes. Because you've got the word whatever in verse 16. So that's the big word. And then the context is supplied by the idea of fruit. Is this fruit? Is it what you're asking for?

Fruit. Is there going to be what Jesus would count as fruit? Fruit that will last. Does this, so that's, yep, thank you very much.

Is there any other connections to any of these other threads? Yes. Yeah, as the Father sends me, so I send you. So there's certainly an echo of that going on. Yes, thank you.

These things I command in verse 17. So that ties to the thread of Jesus' words. It does. These things I command you. Yes, that ties to the thread of Jesus' words. And what is the command? Loving one another. So you've got prayer linked with fruitfulness, linked with obedience, linked with a community of love.

[15:50] And they're all sort of tied together in a very beautiful way. Let's look at chapter 16. Let's look at chapter 16. Now, have I got the right verses, I think?

Yes. Okay, chapter 16, verse 23. So Jesus has said in verse 22, Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice and no one will take away your joy.

So there's a theme of joy around as well. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete. Okay, is there a promise about prayer there?

Yes. What's the promise say? That those who have been in these beliefs will receive what they ask for from the Lord himself.

[17:06] Okay. They will receive what they ask for from whom? Verse 23. From the Father.

Yes. And is there... Okay, thank you very much. What... I probably interrupted Ben while he was telling us this.

So what sort of limits are put on this? Or not limits? Yes. Yes. He said, now you can ask.

You have asked now. But after, he actually just opened up, and he mentioned that the apostles could understand that. Because he's talking about before he died, and after, when he comes back, and after, when he comes back, you will rejoice.

It looks like open up, sir. He gave it about defeating the dust or eternal life. I think it looks like, in the background, you talk about something that a fruit can last forever.

[18:13] You see, it's like a connection. Thank you. Yeah, there's certainly connections with Jesus going away, isn't it? Because he says, until now, you haven't asked me for anything.

But now, it's going to be different. I'll tell you the truth. My Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. And I'm sure all this is connected with the coming of the Holy Spirit, although it isn't necessarily spelled out every time.

But we're going to be, at the point of Jesus speaking, we're going to be in a new era where prayer is so much more, I don't know, more fundamental, more powerful than it was before.

In that day, you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth. My Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now, you have not asked for anything in my name.

Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. Who gives the answers to the prayer in this? I will say, look and see what it says.

[19:23] Verse 23. The Father. And through what process or through what, on what basis would the Father do this?

Asking in the name of Jesus. Asking in the name of Jesus. There's a similar passage. I mean, one John at the end, one John, I think, 5, 13.

It's similar. It says, I write these things for you, and believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God.

If you ask anything, call it a peace will. He hears us. Hmm. It is, isn't it?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. We're in a place where prayer has got a whole new confidence, access, promise to it.

[20:32] Whatever we ask. Just say it again, what it said in your text. John, John. It's the end of the one John. It's not the same writer, verse 13. I write these things to you, and believe in the name of the Son of God, so you may know that you have eternal life.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. Hmm. Yeah.

Thank you very much. We have this confidence. If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. So those are the texts. Thank you for those thoughts.

I think with prayer, we might come to it two ways. We might say, those promises are really big, but I've prayed, we've prayed for Martin to get better, and he didn't get better instantaneously.

By God's grace, he is considerably better, but it wasn't instant, and we did ask for that. And we've prayed for a long time for our children to be converted, but they haven't necessarily been converted.

[21:42] So where does this leave these promises? I think another way of looking at it would be to say 2,000 years ago, there were 12 disciples in a certain geographical location, and if you spread it out, maybe there were 100 or maybe a few hundred people that you could call disciples in those days.

And from that time onwards, we now are in a situation where 2,000 years later, a considerable proportion of the world's population follow Jesus Christ.

Whole nations have been changed through Jesus Christ. Has something just happened to the sound, or is it my ears that have just gone funny? Maybe my ears. There are churches in, well, I won't necessarily say every country, but in many, many countries, and how has this been achieved?

And I would say it's been achieved through prayer. Have any of these things happened without prayer? I think the answer is no. And I think if you look at it that way, you would say, what a powerful thing prayer is.

How great the work of the Holy Spirit. not necessarily instant answers to every flippant prayer, but through the prayers of God's people, the fruit of Jesus Christ's work, down across the world, down through the centuries, what a powerful thing prayer is.

[23:27] And Jesus has acted as he promised. Would you like to turn to your neighbor? We've just got five more minutes.

Those were the questions. Are we in a different position to pray now that Jesus has gone to the Father? What do you think about that? To whom do we pray? What sort of prayers can we pray? And what answers and results can we expect? So would you like to find your neighbor or a couple of neighbors and just see what people have thought about that and then we'll come to a conclusion. Okay, ladies and gentlemen, let's draw to a conclusion.

I think if there was one point for us all to take away this evening, it would be let's pray. I mean, that's simple enough.

[24 : 42] That's what it, there are these wonderful promises about prayer. I will ask just for some quick feedback. Did anybody think there's any difference for praying now that Jesus has gone to the Father?

Does it, any thoughts on that? What would you think possibly, when Jesus was on earth, you might have prayed to Jesus himself as he was on earth? Yeah. How Jesus is praying to the Lord.

It's part of the Trinity anyway. Ultimately, you're praying to all three, in a way, which you're praying to Jesus, the Lord, and the Holy Spirit. Chapter 14 in John, is actually where we're directly the first Holy Spirit, Jesus refers to the coming of the second comforter.

Yes. So, really, you're praying to all three ultimately. That is correct. That is correct. Yes, we're not tritheists. We don't have three gods, and we pick one of them.

We have one God in three persons, and the way the three persons work is such that they're undivided. The Son does what the Father's will is, and the Spirit makes known the things of the Son, and there's a very beautiful unity.

[26 : 00] So, that's certainly true. But let's just think, has anything changed since Jesus has gone to the Father? Yes. Before we were talking to Jesus as a new movie, after we were talking to Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit's right. Okay, so... So, does that mean Jesus was not divine before he went to the Father? Jesus was divine. Uh-huh. The apostles were then all you did again.

Okay. Right, thank you very much. Has anything else changed since Jesus left this earth and went to the Father, or left this dinner party where he was talking to them?

Well, yeah, I mean, we approach the term of grace through the sacrifice of Jesus. Through the sacrifice of Jesus, yes. In the Old Covenant, presumably, they didn't pray.

Presumably, they thought it was on the basis of the sacrifice of sheep. Yeah. But now, the actual event has happened, so, in a sense, that's changed.

[27 : 06] Yeah. I mean, the New Testament paints this in different ways. It says, the way to the holy place is made open. We have access to the Father. After Jesus was raised, he said, I'm going to my God and your God, my Father and your Father.

So, there is a step change from before the atonement and the ascension to afterwards, and we're in a far greater privileged position, which is perhaps difficult to get the hang of it, but it does say that. You know, these things are so much better because I have gone to the Father, says Jesus. I mean, you might think of it in terms of his intercession for us, that there's somebody at the right hand of God saying, hear the prayers of those peculiar people down there at Calvary Evangelical Church. There are loads of sinners, I know that, but I've died for them and here I am in heaven for them. Please, Father, hear their prayers and answer them with all your almighty power from the throne of God.

So, I think there is a, you know, we're invited to ponder that there's some sort of step change there. To whom do we pray? Any thoughts on that? Who do we pray to? To the Father?

[28 : 20] Okay. To the Father? Want to enlarge on that? In Jesus' name?

Yes. So, there's a, it doesn't mean we always have to repeat in Jesus' name, like you put yours sincerely at the end of a letter, but it's good to remind ourselves that we are praying not, not because I am so and so, you know, with such and such, you know, what you put on your CV. That's not the reason we expect God to hear us. We expect God to hear us because we belong to Jesus Christ and we're praying because our hands are in the hands of the one who is right next to the Father.

Father. So, that's why, Lord, hear our prayers, not because we deserve it, but because he deserves it. Bold, I approach the eternal throne or something like that.

What prayers can we pray? So, the text that we have looked at, of that, of those four, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, what do the texts refer to?

[29 : 33] It's all phrased in terms of asking. It is, isn't it? Yeah. Is it any supplication, though? I mean, in the Lord's Prayer, how far, I think, come over to your name, that's kind of an asking, even though it's adoration, it's kind of asking.

It is. It's saying, you know, praying, the Lord's name will be regarded as holy. It's asking something for God. I have been to, I have heard people pray, not count people, but people among the churches, who, I wondered whether they were actually asking, they were sort of asserting sometimes.

Hmm. And, and I thought, maybe that's, I wasn't convinced that's actually praying. Certainly here, it's all praying in terms of asking. It is all asking.

Yes. And I'm sure there's a, there's a sort of balance of this, because we need to be thankful. If God has answered our prayers, it would, it would be, at the very least, impolite not to be thankful.

And we do adore the Heavenly Father, and, and to come without realizing who we're coming to is, is just foolish. And we do confess our sins. How can we approach God without confessing our sins?

[30 : 45] But having said all that, these texts, I think, without exception, say, here's something of prayer, which is asking. And it's asking in the process of the fulfillment of the progress of the kingdom of God.

It's asking for the production of fruit. It's asking so that your joy will be complete. So, yeah, I mean, we would need to get a balanced picture, but it's, it's, it's prayers of request.

We shouldn't be embarrassed to do that. Lord, bless your gospel. Lord, build your church. Lord, bring people to come to believe in you.

Send laborers into the harvest. Provide the things that are needed for your churches, et cetera. So I answered that question myself, didn't I? What answers and results can we expect?

Miracles. Okay, yes. The things that will not, cannot be done by human power that will be done by prayer. And, and, and one might say that the biggest miracle of all is somebody coming to faith.

[32 : 00] Miracles. Let's stop. Let's, let's sing a song and then we'll come to communion. Let's go!