

John 14: Jesus' "Father" Theology

Jesus' "In" Teaching: "Ask in My Name"

John 14.13-14

Jesus' "in" theology

¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?

The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority.

Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work. > "in-living"

¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me;

or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. > "in-believing"

¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name,

so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. > "in-asking"

¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Jesus' "Anything You Ask" Promise

"And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

- ❖ Remember that Jesus' "in teaching" was a response to Philip's request: *"Lord show us the Father and that will be enough for us."* To which Jesus replied: *"Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."*
- ❖ The first part of his answer emphasized "in living"—the indwelling union that characterized his relationship with the Father. Jesus is the visible representation of the Father; he is not to be identified apart from the Father and it is through him that the Father works and makes himself known. In every way, they are indivisible.

- ❖ In the second part of his reply, Jesus introduced a third party: “whoever believes in me.” He moved from the works that the Father had been doing through him, to the works that will (potentially) be done by those who believe in him. Just as Jesus was not to be identified in his works apart from the Father, so the person believing in him would be identified by doing the works that Jesus has been doing.
- ❖ Thus, the same paradigm of identity, revelation, and effectiveness that defined the relationship of Jesus and the Father, must also characterize those who believe in him.
- ❖ To this extension of works—*the Father in me doing his work, the one who believes in me doing the works I have been doing*—Jesus added a powerful enabling promise, one that he would reiterate throughout this last evening with his disciples:

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

- ❖ This promise has been a source of despair to many and the object of abuse by others. What *exactly* is Jesus promising his disciples?

Jesus' "ask" promises —

- ❖ *And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. (14.13-14)*
- ❖ *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (15.7)*
- ❖ *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. (15.16)*
- ❖ *In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. (16.22)*
- ❖ *Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. (16.23)*
- ❖ *In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. (16.26)*

Jesus' "Asking" Paradigm

"And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

"I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave me to do."

JOHN 17.4

- ❖ *"The Father glorified in the Son"* - we have seen that this is the bottom line for Jesus. He never sought his own glory (8.24), advancement or enhancement. His sole ambition was to do the Father's will and to bring Him glory by completing the work of salvation that the Father had entrusted to him to accomplish (17.4)—a work that Jesus emphasized he did not do on his own.
- ❖ "In living" and "in asking" are inseparably linked—for Jesus: *"it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work"* and for us: *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."*

- ❖ It is inconceivable that Jesus would ask or do anything that would not bring glory to the Father; everything he does is to reveal the Father's character, heart, and purposes. Nor would he ever do anything that is contrary to the principles that governed his life: submission, dependence, obedience.

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the One who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

HEBREWS 5.7

This is why, James wrote, our prayers can go unanswered; in our self-orientation, we are praying contrary to the "asking" paradigm of Jesus—

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

JAMES 4.3

- ❖ What does Jesus ask—for example, when he prayed at the end of this evening? What did he teach us to ask in the prayer he gave his disciples? What did the apostles ask in prayer? Answering those questions must inform our asking if it is going to truly be “in” his name.

My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent me. (17.15-21)

How many of our prayers reflect the priorities and requests of Jesus? Jesus’ prayer in chapter 17 represents what Jesus stands for—what both he and the Father have determined is of the highest priorities for revelation and salvation—the most critical spiritual concerns and the most necessary spiritual work for us to have an effective witness for Christ in this world. Are we asking the Father what Jesus is asking?

I Will Do Whatever You Ask

“And I will do whatever you ask in my name . . . You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

EPHESIANS 1.22-23

- ❖ Within 24 hours of speaking these words, the life of Jesus and the expectations of the disciples will come to what seems to be a disastrous end (cf. Luke 24.19-21). In reality, Jesus will have disarmed powers and authorities (Colossians 2.15); by his death, he will have become the mediator and guarantee of a better covenant with better promises (Hebrews 7.22; 8.6). From this standing of new covenant accomplishment, implementation and authority, Jesus truly is positioned to do whatever his disciples ask in his name.

- ❖ This simple word “do” is prolific in its original meaning, covering the full scope of ability and accomplishment. The fact is, that as the One through whom all things were created (John 1.3) and as the Fullness of Deity who is head over every power and authority (Colossians 2.9-10), Jesus truly is in a position to do, create, ratify, execute, and accomplish whatever we ask in prayer.
- ❖ Our prayers should be shaped by this understanding of the position of authority that Jesus possesses and that he wants to work through our prayers “so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” We should pray with boldness and largeness—with great faith and for big things. Nothing is impossible or too unlikely; nothing should be too daunting or intimidating. He is every reason we need to boldly pray.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to His eternal purpose that He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Asking in His Name

“You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

“While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.”

JOHN 17.12

- ❖ The disciples have not yet grasped the significance of Jesus' name nor do they understand the merit of prayer in his name—

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. (16.23)

And although they have no perception of what has been happening spiritually (for example, Satan wanted to “sift” Peter, but Jesus prayed for him), Jesus has been protecting them by the power and efficacy of his name—*“that name you gave me.”*

- ❖ More than anyone in the history of humanity, Jesus' name carries unmatched authority and efficacy— *“You shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.”* After his ascension, the disciples would exercise this efficacy and proclaim the exclusiveness of the name of Jesus (see Acts 3.6-7; 4.10-12; 4.30). Thus, to pray in his name is to have faith and confidence in who he is and to pray according to all that he embodies and accomplished through his death and resurrection.
- ❖ To pray in his name is to approach prayer—and to approach God in prayer—on the basis of the merit and mediatory work of Jesus. He is our basis for access to God and our reason for confidence as the writer to the Hebrews emphasizes—

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings . . .

When Asking In His Name Doesn't Work

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

ROMANS 8.28

- ❖ Unanswered prayer is difficult to reconcile with Jesus' "anything" promise—it seems like a blatant contradiction; the inability to understand why can result in discouragement, disillusionment, and for some, a loss of faith. And yet, it is a reality that every Christ-follower has experienced. The Apostle Paul described a time when repeated prayer did not work for him:

... I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

- ❖ We are often guilty of giving standard spiritual responses to painful issues. We have a repertoire of scriptures that, while they may be true, lack real empathy and “bearing” of one another’s burdens (Galatians 6.2). We would be better off just keeping our mouths shut!
- ❖ With that caution in mind, there are a wealth of insights in Scripture to inform us:
For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.
ROMANS 15.4
- ❖ One important truth we should remember is that even when our prayers don’t seem to have worked, God is still working. This is the encouragement of Romans 8.28: in all things God is working for the good of those He has called. Verse 29 tells us that His ultimate purpose—and our greatest value—is “to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”

- ❖ The Apostle Paul understood this greater value in his unanswered prayer and wholeheartedly embraced his Lord's strategy and sustaining grace—

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 CORINTHIANS 12.9-10

Far from being a Plan B, this outcome produces a greater spiritual and eternal worth in us (see 1 Peter 1.6-8). And if we are praying for healing and the outcome is death? As painful as it may be us to accept, it is, in fact, the ultimate answered prayer, for Jesus prayed: *“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”* (JOHN 17.24)

- ❖ Unanswered prayer is difficult to accept—but the truth is that it is not really unanswered and if we can respond as Jesus, God will be glorified in and through us.