

Incredible promises: the bestowing of power...

John 14-17 is what scholars call The Upper Room Discourse. This was the Last Supper where Christ prepared the disciples for His departure: a) He was going away, b) He would die, c) one among them will betray Him, and d) Peter will deny Him 3 times. The disciples were troubled and uncertain at this time. But as Jesus reassured His disciples, He made some incredible promises about prayer.

If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. (John 14:14)

If you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. (John 16:23)

Why is there a subtle difference between John 14:14 and John 16:23 when asking “in Jesus’ name?” In John 14, Jesus states that He will answer prayer. In John 16, Jesus states that God will answer prayer. The context of each passage appears to explain this difference.

Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you for so long a time, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own, but the Father, as He remains in Me, does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. (John 14:8-14)

The context of John 14 is about Jesus while present on earth. If the disciples had prayed to God “in Jesus’ name”, Jesus would fulfill the request. But note carefully that Jesus indicates that He is in His Father and His Father is in Him; Jesus’ words and actions are His Father’s.

And on that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full. These things I have spoken to you in figures of speech; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech, but will tell you plainly about the Father. On that day you will ask in My name, and I am not saying to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.” (John 16:23-28)

The context of John 16 is about Jesus after His death, resurrection, and ascension. With Jesus’ departure from earth, when disciples pray “in Jesus’ name,” God Himself will fulfill the request.

Preceding Jesus’, “if you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it,” the topic of work is prominently mentioned:

Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (John 14:11-14)

Jesus had promised the disciples that: 1) they will do what He had been doing (equivalent to), and 2) they will exceed His work. These promises of power and accomplishment were fantastic! But notice these promises had conditions. The promises begins with the condition “he who believes in me” and concludes with the condition “because I go to the Father.”

“And in this context, whatever you ask in Jesus’ name, He will do it” for the purpose of glorifying His Father.

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Jesus states elsewhere what the work of God is:

Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate some of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." Therefore they said to Him, "What are we to do, so that we may accomplish the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, **"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."** (John 6:26-29)

As Jesus passed by, He saw a man who had been blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, **"It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must carry out the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.** While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." When He had said this, He spit on the ground, and made mud from the saliva, and applied the mud to his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he left and washed, and came back seeing. (John 9:1-7)

More than simply evangelism, the work of God is providing the real, historical, and tangible evidence of Jesus Christ. God's **judgment of sin is the reality of life.** Jesus Christ's **historical death of atonement and resurrection** paid the judicial price of our sins. By providing His only Son, **God's love becomes tangible.**

The very nature of the disciples' faith changes after Jesus' death when they meet the resurrected Jesus. Scriptures show how the disciples did what Jesus had been doing, and how they exceeded His work by the explosive growth in Christianity recorded in the book of Acts and beyond.

When Jesus states, "if you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it," and "if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you," He places an emphasis on claiming in His name.

The proper name "Jesus," translated from the Greek name "Iēsous," originated from the Old Testament Hebrew name of "Yēšua'." The ancient form of Yēšua' was Y^ehōšūa', and it means "Yahweh is help" or "Yahweh is salvation."

To pray in the name of Jesus is praying in "God is salvation." In this light, the work of God is also about God's New Covenant. Because the nation of Israel misrepresented God to the world by their unfaithful behavior, God endeavored to restore His holy name (Ezek 36:22-23). That restoration came in the form of Jesus Christ "so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

The nature of one's faith determines to some extent the outcome of one's prayer request. The apostle John indicates that with an abiding faith in God, one can "ask anything according to His will," and God will hear and fulfill the request. The authority to make these prayer requests is bestowed on the Believer who knows Jesus, His Character, His Priorities, and God's Will.

The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has the life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. **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. (1 John 5:10-15)

Thus, "asking anything" in Jesus' name is conditioned on "according to His will," which is doing the work of God.

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Jesus Himself stresses the importance of the quality of one's faith.

But Jesus said to him, "If You can?" All things are possible for the one who believes." Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again!" And after crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him, and he got up. When He came into the house, His disciples began asking Him privately, "Why is it that we could not cast it out?" And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything except prayer." (Mark 9:23-29)

In another account of this event, Matthew records a different answer by Jesus:

And He said to them, "Because of your meager faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." (Matt 17:20)

In this passage, the disciples wonder why they could not exorcise this boy despite having the authority to do so (Matt 10:1).

With their question, "why is it that **we** could not cast it out," they did not recognize that their work of God was intended to glorify God. This is the basis of their "meager faith." As Jesus would say later in the Upper Room, "And whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

Ever been disappointed by unanswered prayer? Failure is often the result of not observing the conditions of God's promises. Bible study is learning about God, His character, His Priorities, and His Will. In the process, we learn the truth about ourselves, deceptions that make us stumble, and make the painful changes towards holiness. Ever been disappointed by unanswered prayer? It's ok to be; but don't forget to learn from it and try again.