

PROVISIONS, PROMISES AND PRACTICES
2 Peter 1:2-4

INTRODUCTION:

When we have actually entered into His presence and begun a holy dialogue with the Lord God Almighty, should we not take Him at His word and believe what He has said? Faith is not drummed up, nor do we pump ourselves up to try to believe something we hope will happen. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Therefore, when we ask something in faith, we can believe it and expect it because God is perfect in faithfulness and cannot fail to keep His promises.

II. RESOURCES TO BE EMBRACED

--Rather than leave us powerless and frustrated over our inability and incompetence regarding prayer, the Lord loves us and loves prayer and provides all that we need to be able to pray well.

***2 Peter 1:3-4** seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.*

--Therefore, we need to embrace these resources and count on the Lord to provide sufficiently for all our prayer needs to be met in full through Jesus Christ.

A. THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

--Apart from Jesus Christ, we cannot expect for our prayers to be answered or for a relationship to exist with the Lord God.

--He has opened the door for us to enter the holiest place where God dwells in majestic splendor and brilliant glory...in holiness and righteousness reigning over all things.

--The very idea that sinful human beings would be allowed near that place contradicts common sense and divine revelation!

--But Jesus Christ came to seek and save that which was lost, to reclaim and to reconcile, to win and to welcome, those who once were far off but who have now been brought near through the cleansing blood of His perfect sacrifice.

***John 16:24** "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.*

--What kind of promise is this and how are we to understand it?

***John 14:13-14** "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.*

1. Mistaken Understandings

--Serious abuses abound when it comes to current understandings of what it means to pray in the name of Jesus.

a. Not a magical phrase

--We cannot pray and ask for anything that suits us and then make it godly by tacking on "in the name of Jesus" at the end of the request.

ILLUS. I have heard people do that and “claim” all kinds of answers to their requests, in essence demanding that God has to honor their request because they added the magic words. Everything from selfish possessions to healing to weather has been claimed in the name of Jesus...but He was not amused or intimidated into such mystical manipulation.

b. Not a mantra

--Nor is it intended to be a substitute for substance in our praying to simply repeat the phrase over and over again to induce something like a trance, or to produce a mystical effect on the one praying.

--We love the name of Jesus Christ but are not to take the Lord's name in vain by mindlessly repeating it as if the sound of the name itself can produce the desired effect.

ILLUS. In group prayer settings, I have heard His name spoken in this manner in an effort to work up emotions and generate passion. That is not what it means to pray in the name of Jesus!

2. Essential Meaning

--What does the Bible mean when it speaks of believing on the name of Jesus Christ and praying in the name of Jesus Christ?

--This is not some kind of secret knowledge that only a select few can access, but a broad biblical teaching that incorporates the simple but profound truths about the person and work of our Savior.

--When we approach the Lord God in prayer, we dare not approach Him on our own merit, but wholly on the merit of Christ alone.

a. The Results of His Salvation

--As a result of His salvation of sinners like us, we have gained access to the Father in His name.

Acts 4:12 *“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”*

--Therefore, the sin which kept us from entering the presence of the Lord has been forgiven and washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ.

--When we pray in His name, we take our stand in the presence of God on the merits of His name, He being an acceptable substitute who took our place on the cross.

Hebrews 7:25-27 *Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.²⁶ For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;²⁷ who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*

b. The Worth of His Name

--In the presence of the Father, the name of the Lamb of God, is revered and He is worshiped as throngs gather around Him and honor His infinite worth.

Revelation 5:11-13 *... myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,¹² saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”¹³ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who*

sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”

--When He speaks on our behalf, and if He takes a stand for us, as we pray in His name, the Father receives us on the basis of the eternal merit of His Son.

c. The Affections of His Father

Romans 8:31-32 *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*

--What I could never count on God to do for me, condemned sinner that I once was, I can now expect confidently because I know that what the Son has promised, the Father will honor...so deep is His love for His Son that anything endorsed and anything to which Jesus is willing to attach His name to is sure and certain.

ILLUS. When any friend of my sons comes to me and says, “Your son told me that if I told you he had sent me, you would give me a book...take me to the airport...have me over for dinner” you can be sure that out of love for the honor of my son, I will do all that I can to uphold the integrity of his name. So it is even more so with the Father when we present the promise of the Son with our request.

d. The Power of His Resurrection

--Because of the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, when we pray in His name, we appeal not only to our identification with Him in His death, but we are also blessed to share with Him the power of the resurrection.

Romans 6:5 *For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection,*

Philippians 3:10-11 *that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

--Therefore, when I pray in His name, it is also with His power to pray that which is pleasing and acceptable to His Father.

--Made alive by the power of the Spirit, we now live with all things made new because of the matchless name of Jesus Christ who transforms us, renews our minds and restores us to life the way God intended when He created us.

B. THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

--How can we pray if we have no power to do so, no ability to overcome our human weakness and spiritual emptiness?

--Left to ourselves, we have nothing to offer the Lord except powerless words born out of empty hearts and minds.

--Therefore, prayer becomes viable when we turn in faith to the Holy Spirit who dwells in us through Christ.

1. Breathing Life into Our Prayers

--In a powerful vision, the prophet Ezekiel describes the futility of life apart from the Spirit...and by comparison, prayer apart from the Spirit.

--In Ezekiel 37, the vision was a valley filled with dry bones with no remnants of life remaining.

Ezekiel 37:3-5 And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, Thou knowest." ⁴ Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.' ⁵ "Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life.

--What followed was extraordinary because the Lord moved on what had long been dead and not only reconstructed bone, sinews and skin, but then took what had no life and breathed life into them.

Ezekiel 37:9-10 Then He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'"⁹ ¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life, and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

--The Lord then explained the vision to Ezekiel so that he could understand that the Spirit of the Living God could bring life and power where once there was nothing but death and dust!

Ezekiel 37:11, 14 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' ...¹⁴ "And I will put My Spirit within you, and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD."

--Throughout this passage, there is an interesting word play introduced by the Lord.

--The word for 'breath' and the word for 'Spirit' are the same in the Hebrew text: אַרְוָה (ruach)

--So the Spirit came and breathed life into the dry, dead bones.

Note: In Acts 2, again there is a correlation between wind and the Spirit as the church gathered together, seeking consolation, direction, a way to resume life now that Jesus had returned to His Father's right hand.

Acts 2:2, 4 "A noise like a violent, rushing wind (pnoe)...filled the house where they were sitting... and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (pneuma) ..."

So in the NT and the OT, in Greek and Hebrew, the wind, the Spirit, breathe life and breath into the dry bones of our humanity and awaken the life of the Lord in us! We not only cannot live until the Spirit gives life, but we cannot have life in our praying until the Holy Spirit gives it!

2. Giving Direction to Our Prayers

Romans 8:26 And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;

a. Abiding with Christ

John 14:16-17 "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

--Since we are no longer present with Christ (seated as He is on His throne at the Father's right hand), His provision is perfect in that He has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us and from that holy dwelling place give direction, power and focus to our lives...and in the present case, all that He gives to our praying.

Ephesians 6:18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints (see also Jude 20)

--"Praying at all times in the Spirit" only makes sense because we have no natural understanding of how to pray otherwise.

b. Focused on Christ

--He does not lead us without points of reference, so He takes what Christ has said and gives meaning to it, teaches us how to apply it.

John 14:26 *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*

--He then makes sure that when He guides us in prayer, all that we pray for and every word that we speak at His direction will be filled with truth and will glorify Christ in every way.

John 16:13 *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.*

--Did you realize what a significant role the Holy Spirit has to play in your prayer life?

--Trying to pray without engaging the Holy Spirit and acknowledging our dependence upon Him guarantees that even our best efforts will fall short.

--Jesus said that apart from Him we can do nothing...no where is that more certain than in our prayer lives!

C. THE CONFIDENCE OF A BELIEVING HEART

--Prayer that believes rightly believes in what God has spoken and trusts in what He has revealed to be His will.

--If we enter into times of prayer filled with hesitation and uncertainty, we cannot pray confidently and the result will not be very satisfying.

--That does not mean that we have to muster up self-manufactured faith or pump ourselves up into a frame of mind that claims more assurance than is there.

--God has provided all we need to have confidence in Him...not our faith; confidence in the eternal trustworthiness of the God who is ever able to keep His word and fulfill His will.

Romans 4:20-21 *yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,²¹ and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.*

--The assurance we seek is not generated by our own faith (or downgraded by our lack of it!), but our assurance is based on the unfailing ability of God Almighty to keep His promises.

1. Faith in His Promises

--Sometimes we confuse faith with the idea of blind wishing or positive thinking or even naïve optimism.

--Faith properly conceived is actually quite certain, something of which we are assured and confident, because of the absolute faithfulness of the One in whom that faith is placed.

--Faith is only secured like this when it is based on what has been promised in the Word of God.

<p>R. A. Torrey – “Believing what God has said in His word is faith.” (<i>How To Pray</i>, Moody Press, 1984, p. 57)</p>

Romans 10:17 *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

--And so like Abraham, we pray in faith believing God, counting on His perfect sufficiency with complete confidence that what we ask He is more than able to accomplish.

Note: Notice how different that is from the claims of some who say they pray in faith for things they want, not what God has promised...for results to turn out like they desire instead of what might bring greater glory to His name...for a show of spiritual power and influence with God rather than a humble dependence upon and contentment with what God desires.

--When we pray with faith in His promises and make sure that we have understood either the promise itself or the principles that would justify our confidence, we become men and women of faith—faith in God and His Word, not faith in faith!

2 Peter 1:4 *For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature...*

2. Trust in His Will

--Another desire we have in prayer is to pray according to the will of God—His will as He has revealed it, not as we would like to adjust it to suit our own!

1John 5:14-15 *And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ 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.*

--In order to pray in this bold manner, trusting that His will is best and therefore what we ultimately want, we need to settle in our hearts and minds that we can know and trust what He has said.

--Timid, cautious prayers sprinkled with “if it be your will” when He has already said that it is do not honor the Lord or impress Him with our desire to yield to His will.

--In fact, they are more likely to communicate that we doubt what He has said and are not sure we can trust what we already know!

R. A. Torrey again – Doubtless there are many times when we do not know the will of God, and in all prayer submission to the excellent will of God should underlie it; but when we know God’s will, there need be no *if*’s; and this passage was not put into the Bible in order that we might introduce *if*’s into all our prayers, but in order that we might throw our *if*’s to the wind, and have “confidence” and “know that we have the petition which we have asked of him.”

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