

## JOHN

### I. Introduction

- A. **John 14:11-20** . . . Believe Me that **I am in the Father and the Father is in Me**; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. [12] Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. [13] Whatever you ask in My name, **that will I do**, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14] If you ask Me anything in My name, **I will do it**. [15] If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. [16] 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 see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. [18] I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. [19] After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. [20] **In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.**
- B. **Vs 11-20** are part of a larger section that begins at **vs 8** and continues through **vs 24**. Last Sunday we looked at **vs 11-12**, which are just two verses out of this whole section.
1. And though our primary focus today will be **vs 13-14**, neither **vs 11-12** nor **vs 13-14** stand alone. In other words, they do not present two different topics that unrelated to each other and the larger context of **vs 8-24**.
  2. Therefore, though we are focusing on just two verses today, we will use their immediate context of **vs 8-24**, and the larger context of John's gospel, and those sections of the OT and NT that address the subject of praying and receiving what we have prayed for.

### C. Pray

### II. Is it true that whatever we ask in Jesus name, He will do?

- A. If we treat these words of Jesus in **vs 13-14**, as a stand alone statement, it can seem reasonable to conclude there are no conditions or limitations to the words, **"Whatever you ask in My name,"** and **"If you ask Me anything in My name."** Therefore, the question we will deal with today is as follows: **"Is it true that whatever we ask in Jesus name, He will do?"**

- B. The simple answer to this question is “NO!” And if we will look beyond these two verses to the context in which we find them – which is **vs 8-24** – it becomes reasonably clear that the answer is “NO.”
1. However, if we will look beyond the immediate context to the larger context of the gospel of John, and if we will include the even larger context of those places in the Bible that address the issue of prayer in relation to asking and receiving, we can know without a shadow of doubt that the answer is “NO.”
  2. It is **NOT true** that **whatever we ask** in Jesus name, He will do.
- C. For example, on examining **John 14:13-14**, we see that it is Jesus himself who says He will be the one who will do whatever we ask in His name.
1. On the surface, it can appear that the only restriction to receiving anything and everything we ask for is to ask in Jesus name.
    - a. However, we know from **John 5:19** that Jesus said He can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing. And He went on to say that whatever the Father does, these things He also does in like manner.
    - b. In **John 6:38**, Jesus said that He came down from heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of Him (*God*) who sent Him.
    - c. And let me add one more statement from Jesus. This one comes from **John 12:49-50**, where Jesus said, “I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. [50] I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”
  2. What I am asking you to see from these three statements by Jesus is that He did not, does not, and will not act on His own. Jesus will only do what God directs Him to do.
    - a. Therefore, if we apply this truth to our understanding of how far Jesus will go in doing “**whatever we ask in His name**,” we see He will not do anything that departs from or contradicts or is against what God directs Him to do. In other words, if God is not in agreement with our request, Jesus will not do it.
    - b. Now without looking any further than this, I submit to you that this is a significant limitation or condition to what we can ask for and receive.
  3. However, this is not the only limitation or condition God places on prayer in relation to asking and receiving. And so, beginning in John and branching out to the rest of scripture, we will look at more.

- D. Within the space of three chapters, Jesus makes four similar statements about asking and receiving what we ask for. The first one is the one we are looking at today.
1. **John 14:13-14** . . . Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14] If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.
    - a. In vs 13, Jesus links doing what we ask with a specific goal. And the goal is, “So that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”
    - b. This raises the question, “Is God glorified simply because Jesus is giving us whatever we ask for?”
      - (1) What if we ask for something that dishonors God or goes against His will or works against the good of His kingdom or feeds selfishness and sin in us?
      - (2) Is God glorified by Jesus giving us these things?
    - c. I suspect you can see that such requests on our part would not bring glory to God if Jesus gave us what we asked for. And this means that the phrase, “Whatever you ask in My name,” is limited to requests which Jesus can answer in a way that brings glory to God.
    - d. Therefore, the two phrases, “Whatever you ask in My name,” and “If you ask me anything in My name,” are limited or conditioned by the requirement that what is asked for, Jesus is able to do in way that brings glory to God.
  2. The **second statement** of a similar nature to **John 14:13-14** is found in **John 15:7**, “*If (this is a conditional if) you abide in Me, and (if) My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*” Here Jesus presents two conditions for asking whatever we wish and receiving it.
    - a. The **first condition** is that of abiding in Jesus as a branch abides in a vine. And the **second condition** is that His words must abide in us – just as the life of the vine must abide in the branch for the branch to live and bear the fruit produced by the vine.
    - b. Since we are prone to using words carelessly or without taking seriously their implications, I want us to consider the word “**abide.**”
      - (1) According to Webster's 1913 Unabridged English Dictionary, to abide means to remain stable or fixed in some state or condition.
      - (2) An example of “abiding” is to make a specific place your home so that you continue to dwell there. Or if you are a branch,

to abide is to remain attached to the vine because you know it is the source of your life, the source of your strength, and the source of whatever fruit you will bear.

- c. If we apply this understanding to **John 15:7**, then to fulfill the first condition of asking whatever we wish, we must make Jesus our source of life, and our source of strength, and our source of whatever fruit we will bear. In other words, we must abide in Him as the branch abides in the vine.
  - d. And applying Webster's definition of "abide" to the second condition requires thinking, speaking, and behaving according to what Jesus says and teaches about how to live.
  - e. Therefore, the phrase, "ask whatever you wish" is limited or conditioned by the requirement of abiding in Jesus and His word abiding in us.
3. The **third statement** of a similar nature to **John 14:13-14** is found in **John 15:16**, but I want to read **vs 14-16** because it is this larger context that brings clarity to the meaning of the words, "so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."
- a. **John 15:14-16**, "You are My friends **IF** you do what I command you. [15] No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. [16] You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."
  - b. This time, Jesus states two conditions that, if met, put us in the position of being able to ask God for whatever we want, and receiving it.
    - (1) **First**, we must be His friend – and according to Jesus, He will consider us His friend if we do what He commands us to do. This condition naturally limits our requests, for if we are keeping His commandments, we won't ask for anything that prevents us or dissuades us or distracts us from doing what He commands us to do.
    - (2) The **second** condition that must be met before we can ask for whatever we want is to be chosen by Jesus and appointed by Him to bear fruit – which, according to the context, is the fruit of the vine – that is, the fruit that our Lord Jesus wants us to bear.

- (3) And as we know from other places in the NT that this fruit includes the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the Light – which is made up of all goodness, righteousness, truth, and a sincere effort to learn what is pleasing to the Lord, the fruit of thanksgiving and praise to God, the fruit of good works, and the fruit that comes from evangelism.
    - (4) Therefore, the two conditions for asking whatever we want from God and receiving it are (1) meeting the requirements of friendship with Jesus (*obeying His commands*) and (2) being appointed by Jesus to bear the fruit of godly living and good works.
  4. The **third statement** of a similar nature to **John 14:13-14** is found in **John 16:23-24** . . . “In 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. [24] Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.”
    - a. There are no obvious conditions or limitations within these two verses. It can be argued that the surrounding context presents a condition, but that may be reaching beyond the obvious, and I don’t want to do that.
    - b. I do believe the first condition I presented, which is a blanket condition for asking anything in Jesus name, applies here. And to refresh your memory, the blanket condition is the fact that Jesus did not, does not, and will not act on His own, but only according to what God directs Him to do. Therefore, God must agree with whatever we ask before Jesus will do it.
- E. Beyond Jesus’ statements in the Gospel of John regarding conditions and limitations to prayer, God provides a number of others in both the Old and New Testaments. For example,
  1. **Psalm 34:15**, “The eyes of the LORD are toward **the righteous** and His ears are open to their cry.”
    - a. **Psalm 145:18-20**, “The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. [19] He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them. [20] The LORD keeps all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy.
    - b. **Psalm 66:18**, “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”

- c. **Proverbs 28:9**, “He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination.
  2. **Psalms 37:4**, “**Delight yourself in the LORD** (*make God your primary source of pleasure, joy, contentment, peace*); and He will give you the desires of your heart.”
  3. **James 4:3**, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”
  4. **1 John 3:21-22**, “Beloved, **if our heart does not condemn us**, we have confidence before God; [22] and whatever we ask we receive from Him, **BECAUSE** we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.”
  5. **1 John 5:14-15**, “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.”
- F. Not that you need this, but to show that the Israelites accepted as fact the conditions or limitations God places on asking and receiving what we ask for, we can turn to **John 9:31**, where the man who was born blind and healed by Jesus included this statement in his answer to the religious leaders when asked about his healing, “We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, God hears him.”
- G. Finally, it is possible to press God for something you ought not to have or which dishonors God, but there is also a cost for pressing God in prayer for something you ought not to have.
1. I say there is a cost because if God ultimately gives in to your impassioned and/or repeated pleas, you will not only get what you are asking for, you will also get the negative, self-destructive, and what will turn out to be unwanted consequences of having what you should have never asked for in the first place.
  2. We see this in the history of Israel, who soon after crossing of the Red Sea quickly forgot God’s works – that is, they quickly forgot the miracles God performed on their behalf in bringing them out of Egypt with some of the wealth of Egypt, opening the Red Sea so they could cross on dry ground, and closing the Red Sea on the Egyptian army which destroyed the power of Egypt to re-enslave them. But the Israelites not only forgot God’s works, they did not wait for His counsel, but instead rushed ahead and did what they deemed best – and as a result they intensely craved what they ought not to have

craved, and tempted God with their repeated requests for what they craved. So God gave them their request, but sent a wasting disease or a leanness into their soul (**Psalm 106:13-15**).

3. The truth to be absorbed here is that we can become so fixated on wanting what we ought not to want that we will ignore the fact that God is not answering our prayer and continue pressing God to give us what we want. If God gives in, it will cost us more than it will profit us, so that in getting what we want we will have done more harm to ourselves than the supposed good we were hoping to gain.

### III. Conclusion

- A. My purpose in looking at all these scriptures regarding the limitations and conditions on prayer is not to discourage praying, but to bring sensibleness, thoughtfulness, and even wisdom to our praying.
- B. We ought to pray – often. We ought to see God as wanting to be involved in our lives. We ought to want a personal relationship with God – which is encouraged by talking to Him and trusting Him to hear what we have to say and do the right thing with it.
- C. And so, rather than being deterred by today’s teaching, it is my prayer that you will be encouraged to pray more, but also to pray more wisely, more sincerely, more honestly, and with a greater desire to bring honor and glory to God through receiving what you ask for.