

# OpenTheo

## Upper Room Discourse (Part 3)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the recurring themes in the Upper Room Discourse in John 14-17, including the promise that believers will do greater works than Jesus, a concept that is difficult to understand and interpret. While some individuals, such as John Wimber and Reinhardt Bonke, may hold the status of apostleship due to their ability to perform signs and wonders, the promise of greater works may have been primarily applicable to the apostles as a confirmation of their apostolic credential in the early church. The use of "in Jesus' name" in prayer is meant to be an act of authority on behalf of Jesus for his interests, and prayer is a labor that involves promoting God's interests and purposes.

### **Transcript**

We're turning now to John 14, and we'll pick up today where we left off last time, which was in verse 12. I had scheduled to cover all of John 14 in the last session, and obviously I didn't even come close, but one of the reasons for that was that we took the first 40 minutes of the class to survey the entire Upper Room Discourse, and to point out the various topics that recur throughout chapters 14, 15, and 16, and to a certain extent also in chapter 13 and chapter 17. So, this block of chapters, which is all taken up with the last meeting that Jesus had with his disciples before his crucifixion, is laden with many references to certain ideas that are recurrent.

We won't go over those again, although we will run into some of them, and hopefully you'll remember that we had talked about them when we come to them. Let's go into verse 12 now. Jesus said to his disciples, Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do, he will do also.

And greater works than these will he do, because I go to my Father, and whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it. Now, these verses have, of course, been favorites of certain groups of Christians, and an embarrassment to other groups of Christians.

I mean, on the one hand, those churches and denominations and groups that emphasize Pentecostal power for today, and the miraculous as the norm in the Christian life, they

like these verses a lot. Jesus said, the person who believes in me will do greater works than the works I've done. And then he goes on to say, Anything you want, just pray for it.

Anything you ask in my name, I'll do it. And obviously, that seems to give, first of all, powers superior to those which Christ manifested to his church. And also carte blanche, to pray for anything one wants, and to receive it.

There are other verses like that. For instance, later on in chapter 15, in verse 7, Jesus said, If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. This, of course, is one of the promises that Jesus gives to his disciples to help bolster their spirits, to help comfort them, help them not let their hearts be troubled, in view of the fact that he's going away.

One of the consolations, certainly, is that while he is going away, his power will still be available, and his name will be invested in them. Now, in understanding the meaning of the verses, this is a challenge. I say that these verses have been an embarrassment to some groups, because there are some who simply don't see this kind of stuff going on.

There are some Christian groups who don't see any miraculous things, and rarely see an answered prayer. By the way, I want to say this, that even those groups that tout these verses as their banner, as it were, and insist that the miraculous should be a daily occurrence, a great number of those people who say those things, and who love these verses, and emphasize them, I would have to say they don't really see the miraculous power on a daily basis, necessarily, as much as the way they talk would cause you to expect. In fact, there are miracles taking place in the world today, in many places.

Some of them, no doubt, are happening in this country. A great number of them are happening in third world places, on the frontiers of the mission field. But it's interesting, where a great deal of talk about the miraculous is going on in this country, in churches here, on the Christian TV, and Christian radio, and in the largest churches in the land, in many cases.

Real miracles are still fairly scarce. Real documentable miracles are still not seen as often as these verses have led some of us to think they should be. And the question then, of course, becomes why? Has God failed to keep his promise, or is it our fault? Now, if it's our fault, there's two possibilities.

One is that we're not meeting the conditions, and one of those conditions would be to have faith, because Jesus said in verse 12, he who believes in me, the works that I do, he should do the same works and greater works. Another thing is that we might not be adequately understanding what it means to pray in Jesus' name, and there might be some other considerations, too, that we're failing in. Another way that we may be failing is that we might be failing to understand what the verse is really promising.

We might be setting our expectations on a certain set of phenomena in a particular setting that maybe the verses aren't trying to engage us to expect. Now, I don't want to in any way take away from anything Jesus said, because my concern would be that Christians have more faith, not less. But it does no good to have faith in that which is not true.

Faith is only useful if it is in something that is reliable or faithful. And if somebody's interpretation of a passage of Scripture is unreliable and not in accord with truth, then of course having a great deal of faith in it isn't going to make it any better. It's better for us to try to understand what Jesus said.

Now, I can't tell you that I understand everything about this passage. I will say that verse 12 has been difficult for me through most of my ministry, because although I have in fact been in the midst of charismatic circles and I have seen miracles wrought, I really can't say that I've ever seen in my entire career in ministry, in charismatic circles, I've never seen a miracle that could be said to be a greater work than any that Jesus did. In fact, I'm not sure I could even imagine what would be a greater work than what Jesus did.

And this is one of the problems of the passage, is what in the world does he mean when he says his disciples who believe him are going to do greater works than he did? Well, what kinds of things did Jesus do? Well, if we're thinking of miraculous works, they don't really get much better. They just don't get much greater than what Jesus did. Jesus did far more spectacular supernatural works than any Old Testament character, although Elijah and Moses had ministries and Elisha that were full of the miraculous.

I dare say that the miracles of Jesus exceeded them all, both in number and in, I guess, quality or the stupendousness, the sensational nature of them. I mean, to be able to speak to a storm and have it stop instantly. Now, we know that Elijah prayed and a drought came.

That's only because, actually, I don't even remember that he prayed for the drought to come. He just predicted it would because God told him it was going to. And when it came time for the drought to end, he did pray, but he had to pray seven times before even a little cloud appeared.

Eventually, his prayers were answered, but Jesus just spoke to the wind and the waves, and they stopped immediately. It's far more spectacular than Elijah's stuff. Moses did bring water out of a rock and did, seemingly, at least predicted that manna would come.

I guess we can't say that Moses brought the manna. Jesus himself said that Moses didn't give you bread from heaven in John chapter 6. But the miracle of the manna is associated with Moses' ministry, and yet Jesus fed multitudes from a very small amount of food and multiplied it. And Jesus did everything as good or better as any miracles that had ever been done by God through any human instrumentation before.

And to my limited imagination, I have a difficult time imagining what kind of miracles could exceed what Jesus did. I mean, he raised the dead. Now, I suppose it would be more magnificent if somebody walked into a graveyard and raised all the dead bodies there all at once.

That would be a greater work than Jesus did, I suppose. Jesus cast demons out of people, usually individually. I suppose if someone went into a mental institution and cast all the demons out of the whole place and everybody walked out sane, that would be a greater work.

But I've never heard of those kinds of works being done. It would take something like that to be a greater miracle, I would think, than what Jesus did. And then it's greater, of course, not in terms of quality, but only quantity.

Doing the same kinds of things Jesus did, only on a larger scale. True. That's a good point, too.

When Jesus rose from the dead, we don't know that all the dead saints rose, but many did. I mean, there was a rising of many people from the dead on the occasion of Jesus' rising. So there you go.

So I guess what I'm saying is, I've always found difficulty. I must say, there was even a time in my life when I was a young minister, young Christian, and began in ministry, I was even into the word of faith for a while. And that's, of course, the stream that would be most likely to be advertising that they do these kinds of things.

And yet, even in that stream, I found difficulty with this verse. Because it was hard for me to know exactly what was meant by greater works. And my assumption always was that he meant greater miracles.

Now, Jesus made frequent references to his works. And sometimes, those works, I think, did refer to his miracles. But throughout the scripture, the word works doesn't necessarily always refer to miracles.

When James said faith without works is dead, he didn't mean faith without miracles is dead. Although, come to think of it, I imagine some people might like to see it that way. But that's not the meaning that anyone I've ever assigned to it.

Works means behavior. Works means deeds. And the Bible says that God has foreordained good works that we should walk in them.

And that Christians would be zealous for good works. And certainly, Jesus was a person whose life was characterized by a great number of good works. Many of them, of course, were miraculous works.

But some of them were not miraculous. And to say that people do greater works might refer to the miracles or might have a broader meaning, not necessarily focusing on the miraculous. It's hard, as I said, very hard to know.

But when Peter was in the house of Cornelius and was preaching there, in Acts 10, 38, Peter said that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. So there was the healing aspect, which was the miraculous, but there was his doing good. His life was characterized by goodness, by righteousness.

He was the paragon of good works. Now, once again, it's hard to say, even if we interpret works as not necessarily referring to miracles, but just good deeds, it's hard to imagine people doing better deeds than what Jesus did. I mean, you can't get any better than him.

Yes. Let's see here. In verse 12.

It's interesting because in the first case, it's not in italics. It is in the second case. Yeah.

He says, the works that I do, he will do also, and greater than the second word works is italics. You make a good point there. I've assumed that the word works is implied because it's found earlier, but it is possible that the second occurrence of works, since it's not in the Greek, might not be implied there.

Let me just say that I personally think that greater is a quantitative term and that for one thing, Jesus' life of good works was cut short. He died young. He died in the midst of his days.

Anyone who lives out a natural lifetime in service to Jesus Christ during that time might have occasion to do more of the same kinds of things, whether they're miraculous things or the other things, simply good deeds, righteous works than Jesus did. Greater is itself a word that means something. It speaks of a quantitative thing, not necessarily qualitative.

Now, I'm not opposed to the idea that Jesus, through some member of the body of Christ, might do some miracle that's greater than any miracle Jesus did on earth when he was here. I'm not opposed to that philosophically. I just don't know of any case that I could say is like that, and therefore it makes one wonder about what did he mean when he said this.

To tell you the truth, I'll be quite honest with you, I still grope with the meaning of this, not only because it speaks of greater works, but it suggests almost by the wording of it that any believer will do greater works than Jesus did. And even if this means more works, that's not necessarily true. Some people get saved on their deathbed and don't end up doing more good works than Jesus did.

So it's difficult. Now, there's also a possibility that since he is describing this promise to his disciples whom he was leaving behind, that the promise is principally applicable to the apostles. As far as we know, all of the apostles did signs and wonders.

Not all Christians did, even in the early chapters of the book of Acts. We don't read of any case where all the Christians were running around doing miracles. In the book of Acts, we read that miracles were done by the apostles, and also a couple of other guys, Philip and Stephen, who were both deacons, they also had some miracles in their ministry.

But apart from those two, no miracles are recorded in the book of Acts except those done by apostles. In fact, miracle ministry was so much a part of the apostolic credential that Paul spoke of his own apostolic credentials as being established by the fact that he had done such works. In 2 Corinthians 12:12, in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12, Paul said, truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

Now, signs and wonders and mighty deeds sounds like miraculous stuff. But he calls those things the signs of an apostle. In other words, the fact that he did them was a confirmation of his apostleship.

That would suggest that it wasn't very common for such things to happen through people who were not apostles. There might be a few cases, but like through Stephen and Philip, but it would seem like Paul is addressing a situation where it was considered normative that apostles did this kind of thing. But it wasn't very normative for others to do so.

And that's why such signs and wonders could be regarded as signs of apostleship, generally speaking. When you look at the book of Acts and its description of what did happen in the early days of the church, it says in Acts 2:43, well, Acts 2:41 through 43, it says, then those who gladly received his word, Peter's, were baptized. And that day, about 3000 souls were added to them.

And they, that is the 3000 souls, continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching and fellowship and the breaking of bread and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now here we have 3000 converts.

And what is said of the activities of the converts? They prayed, they fellowshiped, they ate together, they sat and listened to the apostles teach. The fear of God was upon them. And the apostles did signs and wonders.

So it sounds as if it was fairly apostolic privilege in most cases for the signs and wonders to be done. Now, I believe, and I said this a moment ago, I believe there are signs and

wonders today. In fact, I have doubts as to whether there's any apostles of this sort that the Bible, you know, makes the 12 out to be.

But if there's anyone today who would have a claim to being an apostle, it would seem to be persons like, I don't know, maybe John Wimber, maybe Reinhard Bonnke, and some people like that who are actually, um, there are signs of apostleship in their ministry. It is said of John Wimber that I think he, uh, I believe he had something like a 30, someone did a, um, sort of a checkup on, on the effectiveness of John Wimber's miracle ministry. And I think they said something like 33, 30% or 33% of the people he prayed for got healed.

Uh, and, um, that's, that's supposed, that's very, it's a very high ratio. I had heard some years ago that there was no healing evangelist ever in history who had more than a 10% success rate. Uh, I heard that from an assembly of God pastor back in Germany sometime ago, and he was in Reinhard Bonnke's denomination.

Uh, and he knew Reinhard Bonnke, but, but, uh, you know, there are certain guys around who no doubt are doing signs and wonders. I'm a little reluctant to call these people apostles. And interestingly, I'm not, I don't believe that any of them call themselves apostles, but these kinds of things are not happening.

Generally speaking, there's a lot more people talking about signs and wonders than there are doing them. And, uh, and I don't mean to say that these people should stop talking and start doing. I'm saying maybe they should start letting their talking agree with what they're doing and, uh, and realize that maybe our expectations are, are based on a wrong interpretation of what maybe this person is trying to say.

Perhaps Jesus is saying this to his original listeners. Wouldn't that be a shock for his original listeners to be the ones to whom it applied? The apostles were in the room with him. And as far as we can tell from the book of Acts, they did go out and do things at least similar to what Jesus did.

And perhaps more in number as well, because we don't know the full number of, uh, miracles done by the apostles. We have in the book of Acts, a handful, perhaps of Peter's miracles and of Paul's miracles recorded. But then there's the general statement that signs and wonders were done by the apostles, which means we don't know how many miracles may have been done by Andrew or Philip or, or, uh, you know, Bartholomew or any of these other apostles.

They're not, there's no record of their individual miracles, but we're just told that they, the apostles did signs and wonders. So there may have been a far more miracles done through the apostles and far more good deeds in general done through the apostles than through, through Jesus during his lifetime. But that's not really putting them above Jesus in any sense, because as the book of Acts opens, it's opening words suggest that what

the apostles did, Jesus was doing through them.

They were simply, uh, the instruments through whom Jesus worked. And Peter himself, when called to account for healing, a lame man before the Sanhedrin said, you know, we didn't do this by our own godliness or our own power. This is just in the name of Jesus.

This is something Jesus did. So, uh, anyway, uh, I don't, I don't consider that I've necessarily given a final word on this difficult verse, but I don't want to deny it's difficult. And I think the difficulty is somewhat alleviated if we consider, maybe it applied to the apostles who were in the room with him when he said it and not necessarily something that all Christians are supposed to be expecting.

Yeah. Works of servanthood like mother Teresa. Yeah.

She'd done a great deal of work, probably more in the, in the particular line she's working in. She probably helped more people than Jesus had opportunity to do in his time. Probably worked with more lepers, for example, than Jesus has and stuff.

So that is a possibility too. And also some have thought, well, collectively, you know, even though the verse doesn't word it that way, it doesn't say those who believe in me will collectively do greater works. It says he that believes in me as if it's saying that an individual believer can expect to do greater works than what Jesus did.

And maybe each of the apostles did for all we know, if all we're told of every miracle they did, maybe they did more than what Jesus did. I don't think that we should understand this to be every believer will do more at the same time. I don't think we, we are, we should be discouraged about asking God for miracles.

I just, I just think that one should not think himself to be sub normal Christian. If he's not seeing every sick person he encounters healed or a miracle happened every day. Yes.

Well, that's a good question. You know, the work of saving, getting people saved. It's hard.

It's really hard for me to say, as far as getting people saved, there's no one who did anything greater than Jesus did in dying and resurrecting and, and sending his Holy Spirit. But the, but the apostles certainly, well, I mean, obviously their evangelistic efforts reached far more people with the message of salvation than Jesus reached in his lifetime. Well, they were saved through faith like Abraham.

You know, Abraham was justified by faith. There's a sense in which grace was, was a basis of the salvation, but he didn't receive grace as Christians do. I mean, grace is a living dynamic in the life of a regenerated person.

I don't know that we could say the old Testament saints knew that grace in their lives. I, I



don't know of any case where it says so. But there's a, there's a thought to bringing people into the kingdom of God after Jesus had occasion to establish it and suspend his Holy spirit could be called in itself a greater work than what Jesus had done on earth.

You remember that Jesus said about John the Baptist, that among those born of women, there's none greater than John the Baptist that has arisen, but he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. That's a strange thing to say, but it seems to be saying that once the kingdom has been inaugurated, once the kingdom has come in power, the person who participates in that has a, a, a greater privilege, a greater standing than even John the Baptist knew who is the greatest of once born people. So it's possible that the whole regeneration experience of salvation being born again, um, the bringing of people into that kingdom was a greater work than what J that Jesus was essentially able to say, well, the kingdom is at hand just like John the Baptist was able to, but those after Jesus was gone and had established the kingdom in power and so forth, that, you know, maybe the work of the church in a sense and of every believer in bringing people to Christ is a greater work than what Jesus was able to do.

That's a possibility. That's very possible. Yes.

Because I go to my father, I, now that's, yeah. Why does he say, because I go to my father here, there's two possibilities. One is that he's saying, because I'm leaving and my life has been cut short here.

My career has been cut short. There's limits to how much I can do. Therefore you who may not have your life cut short, may be able to do more than I have.

In other words, because I go to the father, just as a reference to the fact that he's not going to have much longer on earth to do anything. And therefore his works have been cut short and limited that way here on earth. And a greater number will be available to be done by the disciples.

But I think more likely it means that because he's going to the father and sending the Holy spirit, the spirit will work through the apostles in a way, even mightier and maybe through the church in general, in a way, even mightier than he was able to work through Christ. Because a little later he talks about how it's good for us that Jesus is going away because if he doesn't go away, the Holy spirit can't come. So Jesus going to the father is that which allowed the Holy spirit to come down here.

And that, I think that could be the connection in which he means that you'll do greater works of the church. The believers will do greater works than I have done because I go to the father. That is, I'm going to the father.

I'll send the Holy spirit and that will allow the church to do the same kind of work and more of them. Now there is another, another possibility here, of course, and that is that

there is a sense in which the works that the average Christian does, which may be simply being a witness to the kingdom of God and helping to bring his neighbors to Christ is itself a greater work than even the miracles that were considered by most to be the greatest things Jesus ever did. Healing people's physical sickness, um, raising them from the dead physically.

Those are astounding and stunning miracles, but are they really in the long run in the final analysis, are they better miracles than the miracle of bringing someone eternally into salvation and allowing them to experience a spiritual resurrection that gives them eternal life? I mean, when Jesus raised Jairus's daughter, I don't know that that really guaranteed that she would live and die a believer after that and go to heaven. She might have, but we're not told that that's the case. So miracle was began and ended with a physical thing, raising her physically from the dead.

Whereas the work of the church affects people at a more eternal level. Now, of course, Jesus did a great deal that affects us at an eternal level too. And that, that may be a fault of this, but if the disciples were thinking in terms of his miracles as his great works, he could be saying, well, the work that the Christians are going to do is a greater work, even than this, not necessarily saying a greater miracle, but maybe a more important service to mankind.

Getting a person healed is appreciated in the short term, but that person who gets healed eventually gets old, probably gets sick again and eventually dies. Whereas a person who gets saved, that person has been helped forever. And that may make winning souls a greater work than the miracle.

So these are all possible ideas. I mean, I'm glad for all these suggestions because any of them might be true. I just, I don't know for sure, but there's several ways of looking at that.

Now, as far as praying in Jesus name, now there's an area where I do believe it's not only the apostles who are permitted to pray in Jesus name, because I think that Christians in general are told elsewhere, for instance, in Colossians, that whatever we do in word or deed should be done in the name of Jesus. Colossians 3.17 says that. And so the name of Christ has been given to us to use as the body of Christ.

But what does it mean to act in his name? Now there's a bit of confusion on this matter, especially in verse 14, and it's a textual problem. In the New King James, it says, if you ask anything in my name, I will do it. But in the NIV, for example, in those texts, those translations that follow the Alexandrian, Jesus says, if you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

Now you might say that's a minor point. It, I don't know that it is a minor point. It's, if the Alexandrian text is to be trusted, then it makes Jesus the person that we're supposed to

be asking for things.

Now, if it does, then it's the only place in the entire Bible, and in the teaching of Jesus in particular, where Jesus encouraged people to pray to him. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray on both occasions, he says, when you pray, say our father and pray to the father. Furthermore, later in this discourse, in chapter 16, he tells them that he's not going to talk to the father for them, but they should speak to the father themselves.

He says in verse 26 and 27 of chapter 16, John 16, 26 and 27, in that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say that I shall pray to the father for you, for the father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came forth from God. And also, he says in verse 23, a few verses earlier, and in that day you will ask me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the father in my name, he will give it to you.

So Jesus, all through his ministry, encouraged us that our prayers should be to the father, not to him. Furthermore, even in this discourse, he clearly says, the day is coming when you won't ask me for these things, you'll ask the father in my name. And that's what makes it unlikely that the Alexandrian text is correct at John 14, 14, where it says, if you ask me anything in my name.

First of all, the concept of asking me anything in my name is a weird concept. It seems to reflect a total disregard for what it means to do something in someone's name. That's very, very common for people who pray, and I hope if any of you do that, do what I'm about to say here, you won't be embarrassed, because I don't mean to embarrass people, but I'll just let you know, it's probably more common than not.

When Christians pray, they pray to Jesus. They say, oh Lord Jesus, or dear Jesus, or Jesus please this, Jesus that. And frequently at the end of the prayer, they say, we ask this in your name.

So obviously, in my opinion, when people say, we are asking this in your name, it seems to reflect a lack of understanding of what it means to do something in somebody's name. Now, here's what it means, and I think we've probably brought this up on other occasions. To act in the name of another means to invoke the authority, and to act on behalf of a person, to act as their agent, to do in their name what they would do themselves.

Now, the Bible nowhere, well, I don't know if I can say the Bible nowhere, so I can't do a quick in my brain every text in the Bible to know that, but I'll just say this. The Bible usually doesn't say that we should do things in the name of God, but it does say we should do things in the name of Jesus. But our prayers should be directed to God the Father, and prayed in the name of Jesus.

Therefore, they're not prayed to Jesus in Jesus' name, and they're not prayed to God in God's name. They're prayed to the Father in Jesus' name. And what that means is that we approach the Father, but in no sense do we approach him on our own authority, our own merits.

We come as agents and representatives who have been delegated the authority of Jesus Christ to come before God as if we were Jesus. That's what it means to do something in someone's name, is you do it as if you were that person. You can act, it's like the power of attorney.

You know, if I was going overseas, and I needed someone to administrate my property, and I wasn't going to be here to, let's say I was going to rent out my property, and someone had to collect the rent checks and pay the taxes on the property and stuff while I was gone for, I was going to be gone for some years, I could give somebody the power of attorney, and these people could collect money in my name, they could pay my bills in my name, and so forth. And basically what they're doing is they're doing what I would do if I was there. I just am not there, and I've delegated that authority to them.

I've asked them to do for me what I would do for myself if I were here. That's what it means to do something in the name of another person. Now, when Jesus says, if you ask in my name, he doesn't mean if you say, please Jesus, because Jesus is his name, it means that you ask the Father to do something, and you ask him the thing that Jesus would himself ask, because you're acting in his person, in his place, in his name.

And he has authorized you to do this. He has authorized you to pray to God the very kinds of prayers that Jesus himself would pray, and to do so with the same authority that he would pray with. Now, we have Jesus' name because we are in him.

We are part of him. When God made Adam, he gave him authority over all the things that God had made previously. And, of course, then he created a woman for Adam, and declared that the two were one flesh.

So, Adam had all authority over the kingdom that God had created. Then he made a woman and declared them to be one flesh. The woman, because she was one with Adam, shared his authority and his name.

In fact, in Genesis 5, and it's not as clear in the translation that I'm looking at, the New King James, as it is in the King James, but in Genesis 5, 1 and 2, it says, this is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them, and called them mankind.

Some translations may just say man, but the word in the Hebrew is Adam, which means man. So, I mean, you can translate it or not. You can take it as a proper name or use it as a word to translate.

Obviously, the New King James has translated it, although the King James just left it in the Hebrew and took it as a proper name. He called them Adam. Now, the point is that it was to Adam, to man, that God gave authority over all creation.

But the woman who was one with Adam also shared his name. God called them Adam. God called them by the same name.

He saw them as one flesh and sharing in the same authority over the creation. Whatever authority Adam had, Eve had also by virtue of her being one with Adam and sharing his name. Now, in the New Testament, in Ephesians chapter 5, Paul is alluding to this Genesis stuff and talking about husbands and wives today, which, of course, Adam and Eve were the first husbands and wives, but Paul indicates that modern husbands and wives, there's something they have in common with Adam and Eve, and it is what their relationship represents.

But he says, for example, in verse 30, Ephesians 5, 30, For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Now, he says that relationship between Adam and Eve, that one flesh relationship, is like our relationship with Christ. We're one flesh with him. We're of his flesh and of his bones, Paul says there.

Now, that means that since Adam and Eve, the oneness they shared, conferred to Eve the right to use Adam's name and share his authority, so also if we are in Christ, we have his name and his authority. In fact, we have given up our former identity in order to be Christians. We are no longer Jews or Gentiles or Scythians or barbarians or bond or free.

We're now all one in Christ. We've given up, just like a woman, when she marries a man, she gives up her family name that she had before and she takes on the name of her husband, and her husband's assets become hers, and she becomes legally one entity with him in many respects. So also, when we come to Christ, we forsake our past, we forsake our old identity, we have a new identity, we take his name upon us, we're now known by his name, Christians, Christ, owned by Christ, Christ's servants.

And that means that we have his name and we have his authority, because we are in him. And so when Jesus said to the disciples, whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, if you ask anything in my name, I will do it. He says he will do it, but you're supposed to ask the Father.

The Father hears the prayers, and when honoring the prayers, he commissions Christ to act. He commissions Christ to act through his people. The qualifications, therefore, of prayers are pretty stiff.

He's not just saying that you can pray anything you want to and just tag on the formula at the end, I pray in Jesus' name, and suddenly that makes it a prayer in Jesus' name. Do you know, you can say at the end of your prayers, in Jesus' name we pray, but it may be that nothing in your prayer was really prayed in Jesus' name at all. If you prayed something that was entirely your own agenda, entirely your own wishes, entirely building your own kingdom, that wasn't praying in Jesus' name.

Praying in Jesus' name means you act as his representative and pray for the thing he would pray for. If you pray for your own interests merely, and not for the interests of Christ, you have not prayed in his name, no matter how many times you say his name in the prayer or at the end of the prayer. Furthermore, it is even possible to pray in his name without saying his name at the end of the prayer, because praying in Jesus' name is not to be identified with saying, we ask this in Jesus' name.

Praying in Jesus' name is a reality that simply means that you're praying as Christ's agent. You're praying the thing that he would pray and expecting God to do it as he would do it if Christ asked, because you have his name and his authority to act on his behalf. Now, of course, we don't always know what we should pray for, we don't always know what Christ would pray for.

It's not the case that we always know as perfectly as he apparently did what the will of the Father is. And for that reason, sometimes our prayers are not answered, because we prayed as best we knew how in the will of God, but we didn't know for sure, and it may be that we missed the mark. And that's why some prayers, no doubt, are not answered even when they're offered in good faith by Christians.

But you see, we don't get upset if God says, I'm sorry, that one wasn't my will, so I'm not going to do it. We don't say, I thought you were supposed to answer my prayers. See, as soon as God says, I'm sorry, that wasn't my will, I'm not going to do it.

We say, oh, I'm glad you corrected me. I'm glad you didn't do it then. You know, I don't want you to do anything that's not your will.

I don't see prayer as an Aladdin's lamp to get a genie to come out and give me, you know, my wish is his command. That's not what prayer is. Prayer is simply asking God to have his way, to do his will.

And if he happens to not answer my prayer because it wasn't his will, I rejoice that he didn't, since it wasn't his will. And this is the biblical way of looking at prayer. Prayer is not our ticket to whatever we want.

Prayer is our continuation of Christ's prayer ministry, acting as his agents, as members of his body, of his flesh and his bones. He continues to pray through us. Now, that's an interesting concept in light of something that God said to Jesus recorded in Psalm

chapter 2. The father makes a promise to his son, to Jesus, and what he promises has to do with prayer.

In Psalm 2 and verses 7 and 8, the speaker is the Messiah, Jesus. He says, I will declare the decree, the Lord has said to me, you are my son, today I have begotten you. Then the father continues speaking to the son and says, ask of me, that's the father saying to Jesus, ask of me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession.

Now, the father invites the son to ask him that the nation and the far corners of the earth will be given to Jesus as his inheritance and as his possession. That's one thing we know is the will of God for Jesus. We know that Jesus is actually invited by the father to pray for this.

And if we pray in Jesus' name, we pray his prayers on his behalf. And so, we can always know that we're praying in the will of God when we pray that God will give Jesus the nations, that God will give him the heathen, to pray for the world to be given over to Christ. Of course, God can take his time and he can do it in his way, but we can always pray that prayer knowing that it's the will of God.

We can always pray that in his name because he's the one who's commissioned to pray it and we're commissioned to ask in his name. Why pray about something if it's already God's will? And it'll happen anyway. The Bible doesn't say that God's will automatically happens.

Now, in the overall scheme of things, God will have the last say about everything, you know. I mean, but we know God's not willing that any should perish, but a lot of people do anyway. It's not his will, but it happens.

In the end, there won't be anyone defined as well because the ones who he wishes got saved and didn't will end up in hell and they'll, you know, that's that's his other will. His other will is that the people that don't get saved, that they're out of picture, but his preference would be for everyone to get saved and no one to be in hell. In the final analysis, God's going to have his way with the world, but in terms of individual events in the meantime, there's a great deal that's left to man.

And so I don't go with the assumption that everything's going to happen the way God wants it anyway. Now, one way that the distinction between God's sovereign will in the earth and man's free will has been illustrated by some is if you could imagine a cruise ship crossing the Atlantic from New York to, say, England. It is the captain of the ship that determines the course of the ship.

There's no passenger on the ship that can alter the course of the ship, but the passengers may have a great deal of freedom to decide on how they're going to enjoy or

occupy themselves on the ride. They may complain about the direction the ship's going, but it still goes there. But they can play shuffleboard on the deck, or they can go swimming, or they can read a book, or they can do good deeds or bad deeds, they can rob their fellow passengers, they can do all kinds of things, but nothing that they're doing is changing the fact the ship's getting closer to its destination, because the captain has still got him the ship in general.

As the ship's moving, though, there's a great deal of freedom on the part of the individual passengers to do what they wish, and it will affect them. They could even die before they get to their destination if they commit suicide, or they can do terrible. Terrible things could happen that aren't at all the will of the captain, but that's not going to change the fact the ship's going where the captain wants it.

And some have understood the tension between God's sovereignty and man's free will in that way, that God is sovereignly going to bring the ship to its destination. The world's going to reach the goal that God has for it. The glory of the Lord is going to fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

As surely as I live, God says, that's going to happen. But it may take longer than he'd prefer. He may not have as many cooperative participants as he wishes.

A lot of things can happen that he wishes weren't going to happen. A lot of people are going to end up in hell that he wished wouldn't. And that shows that a lot is still left to us, working with God, being laborers together with God.

And the principal way in which we labor, at least one of the two principal ways, is through prayer. I understand our labors and our prayers to be two parts of one activity. We live every moment of this life to advance the kingdom of God and to promote God's interest.

Some things we're able to do with our own energies, our own skills, our own hands, our own money, whatever we have available to us, we are able to promote his interest by our own works and our own behaviors. But some things are way beyond our power. We just don't have enough money, don't have enough time, don't have enough skill.

We're just not powerful enough. And those things we ask God to do. But whether it's what we're doing or what we're praying for, they're just two parts of the same thing.

We're seeking to advance the kingdom of God, the purpose of God. There's no other agenda for the Christian but to see the will of God done. And we are working toward that end, what we can do, and praying toward that end, what we can't do, what God alone can do.

And we're even praying for his blessing on the part that we can do. You know, we have to pray about everything. So, no, I don't necessarily go with the idea that prayer doesn't



change anything because God's going to do his will anyway.

James said you have not because you ask not. And that certainly implies that if you had asked, things would be different than they are now. The reason things are as they are is because you didn't ask.

Prayer would have changed something had you asked, but since you didn't, that something wasn't changed in the way that you wish it had been. So, the suggestion is that there are some things that will not happen if we don't pray, that would happen if we did pray. There are some things that are the will of God, which he would do in response to our prayers, that he will not do without us praying.

Now, why this is so has been speculated about, but probably the most common explanation is given that God has given authority to man to rule the world. He is not an Indian giver. He's not happy with the way man's done things, but he did give dominion to man and he's never taken it back.

Therefore, if God wants to have his way in the world, he seeks to win over men who have dominion. And it's up to those men, human beings that is, to invite God to act. God can act supernaturally to bring his will to pass in the earth, but he doesn't just intrude without an invitation because he did after all give it to us.

It hasn't been for our good ultimately that it was left in our hands, but that's nonetheless what happened and God waits to be invited to intrude to do things other than what men do. So, prayer is a way of inviting God, asking God to do what he wants to do in the world, and some of the things he wants to do, he won't do if he's not asked. That's the reason for prayer, I believe.

Okay, so the teaching about prayer that Jesus gives is that if you ask anything in Jesus' name, it will be done. God the Father will be asked, he'll hear your prayers, he'll receive it as if it was Jesus' praying, and he'll commission Jesus to exercise his power to accomplish the thing asked for, and he'll do it through the church, usually. The works of Christ continue to go on through the church and in response to our prayers.

So, if you ask anything in Jesus' name, it will be done. But, you see, that doesn't mean that if you ask any selfish thing you want and then tag on the words in Jesus' name at the end, that that'll be done, because that's not necessarily what it means to pray in Jesus' name. There are other conditions, yeah.

Faith. Right. Well, the thing is, we pray for people to be saved, but we don't pray that they'll be saved against their will, because Jesus doesn't want them to be saved.