

PRAYING IN THE NAME OF JESUS
By Derek J. Morris

Preaching passage: John 14:13
Subject: Why Jesus promised that if we ask anything in His name He will do it
Complements: that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
Exegetical idea: Jesus promised that if we ask anything in His name He will do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
Preaching idea: **When you pray in the name of Jesus, miracles will happen.**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers to pray in the name of Jesus, standing under His authority and surrendered to His will.

When I first met Yasmin she was walking down a hallway at a conference in Blomfontein, South Africa. She was literally glowing. Do you remember the description of Stephen the deacon's face shining like the face of an angel? That's what I saw at the conference in South Africa. Yasmin's face was shining like the face of an angel.

Yasmin grew up with her family in Kolkata, in the eastern part of India. As part of an orthodox Muslim family, Yasmin was trained in the traditions of Islam. She was taught to pray five times a day and given her regular Scripture readings from the Quran. While Yasmin was reading through the Quran, she had many questions. When Yasmin was sixteen years old, she decided to find answers to her questions and bought a translation of the Quran by Allama Yusuf Ali. When she still did not find answers to her questions, she stopped reading the Quran and saying her namaz. Her parents were angry, but they did not force her to continue. She had fulfilled the minimum requirement of reading through the Quran once. Yasmin was excelling academically, but there was a hunger in her soul.

Yasmin heard about Jesus at the parochial school she was attending, and she

began to ask, “Who is Jesus?” She knew nothing about Him. After completing class ten and taking her government examinations, Yasmin had a 3-month break from school. She decided to join a group of six other classmates for some window-shopping and looking around the city of Kolkata. One of her friends told the group about a seminar nearby where free lunch was provided. They didn’t know anything about the meeting, but decided to go anyway. The seminar was in a small building on one of the busy streets in Kolkata. A sign outside said something about “REVIVAL,” but they had no idea what that meant. The group of girls went inside and ate the free food. After lunch, the speaker started a presentation about ancient civilizations. Yasmin had no clue what he was talking about. The girls had missed the first part of the seminar and they felt totally lost. Then the speaker started talking about the Bible and how the prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled. He showed evidence from ancient history. Some of her friends wanted to leave after the free lunch, but Yasmin decided to stay. She was there until the evening. When the seminar ended there were people standing at the door. Yasmin had no idea that this was a Christian church. The people shook her hand and said, “Please come tomorrow!”

She said, “Oh, you have this meeting again tomorrow?”

“Yes, it’s all week!” It was a revival meeting the Christian pastor was presenting on the book of Revelation.

Yasmin could not have attended during the school year but it was summer break, so she said, “OK. Fine.”

The next day her friends wanted to go window-shopping again. Yasmin said, “No, I don’t want to go. I want to go to that meeting.”

“What’s wrong with you?” they said. “Are you just going for the free food?”

“Ah, sort of,” Yasmin replied. She was searching for a different kind of food—spiritual food to satisfy the hunger of her soul.

She attended the seminar all week with about one hundred other participants. The meetings began every day at 9:00 a.m. and continued until 4:30 or 5:00 p.m. It was very intense. So many of her questions were being answered. The presenter was teaching from the Bible. Yasmin took careful notes of every word the pastor was saying. At the end of the week, they had a quiz. Yasmin got the highest score! The prize was a small red Bible—her first Bible. She still has that Bible today and treasures it. She had to take it home secretly because her parents had no idea what she was doing.

Yasmin learned during that seminar that the Bible is a reliable testimony, inspired by God. That was an important lesson for an orthodox Muslim. She also learned more about Jesus. It wasn't hard for her to accept Jesus as a prophet. Muslims accept Jesus as a prophet, but she regarded Jesus as one of many prophets with Mohammed as the greatest prophet. It was challenging to hear the teaching about Jesus as God. So when Yasmin was given that small red Bible she started reading it.

She read the words of Jesus, “whatever you ask in my name, I will do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:13-14).

We are going to consider this radical teaching of Jesus today. It's found in the Gospel of John, chapter 14 verse 13. “Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

It sounds quite simple really, until you think about it for a while. Then you find yourself asking, What exactly is Jesus saying here? What does Jesus mean when

He says, "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son"? And then we read in verse 14, "If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." What is Jesus saying here? What does it mean to pray "in the name of Jesus"?

I am convinced that Jesus is not saying that we can use His name like a magical mantra: in the name of Jesus. There is a story in the book of Acts about seven brothers who tried to misuse the name of Jesus. Their story is recorded in Acts 19:13-16. "....."

These seven brothers learned the hard way that you cannot "use" the name of Jesus as a magical mantra. The name of Jesus can only be claimed by those who have a living connection with Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

I am also convinced that Jesus is not saying that we can pray "in His name" to fulfill our selfish desires. Is it appropriate to ask anything in Jesus' name? Could I ask to win the lottery? Or for a better looking spouse? Or for superhuman strength so I can bully my classmates at school? Listen to the counsel of James, the brother of our Lord, recorded in James 4:3. "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures." If you are trying to use the name of Jesus to fulfill your own selfish desires, you do not understand the teaching of Jesus about prayer whatever you ask anything in my name, I will do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

So what does it mean to pray "in the name of Jesus"? I have two suggestions, both of which make sense as I read the rest of the Scriptures. First, to pray "in the name of Jesus" means to pray standing under His authority. Jesus said, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" Matt. 28:18. He has been

given a name that is above all names that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” Phil 2:9.

When Peter and John came to the gate of the Temple, and saw a crippled man begging, Peter was standing under the authority of Jesus when he said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” Acts 3:5. This crippled man was not healed by the power of Peter or John. He was healed by the power of Jesus, claimed by faith. Peter testified to the people who gathered in Solomon’s portico, “And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong” Acts 3:16.

That bold confidence sounds rather startling to us today. Equally startling is a story I read from the early Advent movement. James and Ellen White were working in Rochester, NY, in 1852. You can read their story in Life Sketches, 290-291:

We toiled on in Rochester through much perplexity and discouragement. The cholera visited and while it raged, all night long carriages bearing the dead were heard rumbling through the streets to Mount Hope cemetery....As we passed through the streets of Rochester, at almost every corner we would meet wagons with plain pine coffins in which to put the dead. Our little son Edson was attacked and we carried him to the great Physician....I took him in my arms and in the name of Jesus rebuked the disease. He felt relief at once and as a sister commenced praying for the Lord to heal him, the little fellow of three years looked up in astonishment and said, ‘They need not pray any more, for the Lord has healed me.’ He was very weak, but the disease made no further progress...’ LS 290-291

Ellen White was standing under the authority of Jesus when she cried out in Jesus’ name. Holy boldness to cry out in Jesus name only comes in the context of the living connection with Jesus as our Savior and Lord. There is no guarantee that we will be immune from all of life’s heartaches. James and Ellen White lost their 3 month old

son John Herbert in 1860 and their 16 year old Henry in 1863. But in the situation with young Edison, his mother was granted a holy boldness as she stood under the authority of Jesus. To pray in the name of Jesus means to stand under His authority.

To pray in the name of Jesus also means to pray in harmony with His will. Some early Christians might have been confused by this teaching of Jesus: “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” John 14:13-14. Perhaps some Christians are still confused today. The apostle John clarifies this saying of Jesus in his first epistle. “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” 1 John 5:14-15. Did you notice the qualification there? If we ask anything according to His will. To pray “in the name of Jesus” means to pray in harmony with what He desires, to surrender completely to His will.

And how do we know His will? His will is most clearly revealed in the Scriptures. His Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. And if His will is not clearly revealed on a particular topic, we have this wonderful promise recorded in Romans 8:26. “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

When the apostle Paul appeals to us to pray in the Spirit on all occasions, he is encouraging us to pray guided by the Spirit, to pray enabled by the Spirit, totally surrendered to the will of Jesus.

Do you remember Yasmin, the young Muslim girl from Kolkata, India? She read these words of Jesus and decided to put the Word of God to the test. In India, women often wear open-toed sandals, and many times Yasmin's sandals would break. She decided to pray a simple prayer: "Lord, let my sandal never be broken again." It was so simple, but it was a prayer from her heart, and she prayed in the name of Jesus. Her sandals never broke again—even to this day. God has been faithful to a simple prayer she prayed in the name of Jesus. It still brings tears to her eyes when she tells her story. Jesus met Yasmin right where she was. He revealed Himself to her as more than just a great teacher or prophet. Jesus revealed Himself to her as the true Messiah, the Son of God.

There were other times Yasmin prayed simple prayers in the name of Jesus, and God kept His promise to her. She had diligently prepared for a topic in biology, and she really wanted the teacher to ask her a question in class. Yasmin was timid, and she didn't naturally speak up in class. So she offered a simple prayer: "Lord, when the teacher comes to class today, I would like him to ask me a question no one else can answer. Help him to notice me." She offered that prayer in the name of Jesus. During the biology class, the teacher asked a difficult question on the topic to the class of 80 students. "Can anyone answer the question?" Then he pointed to Yasmin. "OK, you. Do you know the answer?" It was a challenging question about mitosis and meiosis and Yasmin was able to provide the correct answer. Her prayer was answered in exactly the way she had asked in the name of Jesus. These were just small prayers, but the answers were so clear to her. This was compelling evidence that God was leading her.

After attending church for about a year, Yasmin decided it was time to make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as her Messiah, her Savior, and her Lord. When her

parents found out about her baptism, they threw her out of their house. Yasmin didn't know what to do. She didn't have any money. She had been sheltered and protected all her life. So she prayed a simple prayer in the name of Jesus: "Lord, what shall I do?" She felt God's presence.

Yasmin took her suitcase and went to the church. She told the pastor what had happened and he gave her a check for 25,000 rupees and a train ticket to Pune so she could begin her studies in religion at Spicer Memorial College. Yasmin never knew where the money came from. She simply knew God had provided. It is 3,700 kilometers from Kolkata to Spicer Memorial College on the outskirts of Pune. The train was scheduled to arrive in Pune at around 3:00 a.m. Traveling alone and being out late at night is not something a young woman in India should do. She could be picked up, killed, or sold to a brothel. All kinds of harm could come to her, but Yasmin took the ticket, boarded the train, and arrived 36 hours later at the Pune train station. She knew no one.

As she waited there at the train station, she prayed. She didn't know what to do. She didn't even know where Spicer Memorial College was. Then a tall slender man approached her and asked, "Where are you going, my child?"

Yasmin responded, "I want to go to Spicer Memorial College.

He smiled and reached for her suitcase. "Okay, I will take you." Yasmin followed, even though she had never met him before. This was her first time outside of the city of Kolkata, but she had peace in her heart. She knew God was there.

The driver took her in his auto-rickshaw about 20 kilometers from the train station right to the front door of the girls' dormitory on the campus of Spicer Memorial College. If he had dropped her anywhere else on the campus, she would have been lost. "Here you

are,” he said with a smile. As Yasmin recounted this story to me, there were tears in her eyes: “My God is good! My God is very, very good.”

Yasmin studied and worked at Spicer Memorial College for the next seven years and several times she tried to reconnect with that kind driver. She will always remember his face but she was never able to find him. Yasmin is convinced God sent him there in answer to her prayer in the name of Jesus.

Her testimony brought tears to my eyes. Glory to the Father and to the Son. We can have peace when we pray in the name of Jesus. We can have assurance when we pray in the name of Jesus. We are not trying to force God’s hand, or fulfill all of our selfish desires. No. Rather we are choosing to stand under the authority of Jesus, fully surrendered to His will. And when we do that, miracles will happen.