

Prayer: to Whom and Through Whom?

Dub McClish

Prayer is the blessed avenue God has provided his children for talking with Him. He has given us instructions, both plain and plentiful, concerning how to pray in a manner that He will be pleased to hear. Despite this, whether from ignorance or presumption, those praying, whether publicly leading or praying in privacy, often err in this important matter.

To whom should we address ourselves in prayer? More than once recently I have heard prayer leaders address Jesus in their prayers. One I also heard said, "Thank you, dear Holy Spirit for...." While it is true that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all Persons in the Godhead, the consistent teaching of Scripture is that we are to address the Father in prayer. So Jesus taught, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father..." (Mat. 6:9). Jesus commanded the apostles to "ask of the Father" after He had ascended to Heaven (John. 15:16). The Jerusalem saints "lifted up their voices to God" (Acts. 4:24). So far as I know, the only case of a "prayer" addressed to Christ after his ascension is in the case of Stephen, who as he was dying, saw a heavenly vision of Jesus standing on the right hand of God and addressed Him (Acts. 7:55-60). As the late erudite Roy Lanier, Sr., once told a student who addressed Jesus in prayer citing Stephen's example, "If you are ever being stoned, and if you see Jesus standing at the right hand of God, you may do that; but until then I suggest that you pray to the Father **through** Jesus." The New Testament speaks of praying "with the Spirit" and "in the Spirit" (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 6:18). We also read of the Spirit's making intercession for us as we pray (Rom. 8:26-27). Where does the New Testament ever suggest that men are authorized to **address** the Holy Spirit in prayer? I know of nowhere. Addressing prayers to the Christ or to the Spirit is not a Scriptural practice.

Through whom should we pray? To rightly understand the answer to this question will expose the absurdity of addressing Jesus in prayer. The Lord told his apostles that after He ascended, they were to ask nothing further of Him, but "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name" (John. 16:23). Again, He said, "If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do" (John. 14:14). Yet again, He said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John. 15:16). Paul taught the same: "...do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Col. 3:17; cf. Rom. 1:8; Eph. 5:20). Why are we to pray in Jesus' name? Because we are unworthy of ourselves to approach God. Jesus Christ is our mediator, high priest, intercessor, and advocate before God's throne (1 Tim.

2:5; Heb. 6:20; 7:25; 10:21; 1 John 2:1). Only through **Christ** can we approach God (John. 14:6; Eph. 2:18). **It is not by human tradition that we say, in Jesus' name (or the equivalent) somewhere in our prayers; it is by Scriptural precept and example. Scriptural prayers are addressed to God the Father through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son.**

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, May 28, 1981, of which I was editor.]

Attribution: From *thescripturecache.com*; Dub McClish, owner and administrator.