

An Opportunity to Change the World – Part II
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John 14:12-14
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 14, looking at Verses 12-14 in this 14th chapter, continuing a message we began last Sunday. I titled the message ‘An Opportunity to Change the World’, an unusual title. I felt especially out of character myself as I was coming up with that title, but the more I looked at the text, the more I saw that’s precisely what Jesus is offering in the passage. The promise He makes in Verse 12 is truly staggering. I got the title actually from an illustration I shared last week. If you weren’t with us, I’ll briefly share it again.

Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, was trying to recruit somebody in the 80’s to work for him from a soft drink company. He wanted this guy to come in and run his operation, and apparently his best sell to the guy wasn’t going so well. He wasn’t convincing the man to leave the soft drink company, and to come work for Apple Computers at that early date in Apple’s history. So he said, “You know you can go on making sugar water if you want to, but I’m offering you a chance to change the world.” Certainly Apple in some ways has made real impact in the world, and Steve Jobs did in a temporal way. Profound, but temporal. The computer industry, the telephone industry, music industry, all really transformed by that company, but those are temporal things, transient things, they will all pass away.

In this passage, John 14, Jesus is offering us an opportunity to change the world by doing the very works of Christ, even greater works than He did. We are offered the chance to do works of eternal value and significance which will echo down through eternity. Let’s read the text together. I want to read Verses 11-14. We’re focusing on Verses 12-14, and particularly today we’ll be looking at the second half of the passage, but Verse 11 to help us get the context.

John 14:11-14 ~ 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.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for the privilege of prayer that we've just read about. Lord Jesus, we thank You for going to the Father so that we can come now in Your name. And this morning we ask that the entrance of Your word might give light, and in Your light we might see light, and we might be changed for the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

He is making an offer to change the world. We saw last time that there were really three points in the passage, and three questions—*What? Why?* and *How?* What is it that He is saying or offering, why He offers it, and how we apply it? Last time we looked at *What?* and *Why?* and today I want us to look at *How?* How do we really go about doing the works of Christ? Now to really do justice to the message, I need to do a little bit of review. I'm always tempted to rephrase last week's message, so pray for me. We do need to just review *What?* and *Why?* quickly.

When you look at what Jesus says, ***Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also;***... It is so easy to read the Bible and not think about what we are reading, isn't it? When you read that verse, and you really think about that verse, that is nothing less than mind-blowing because He is making a statement. He is not just talking to His disciples. He didn't say, "You guys." We might think, "Well Peter, and John, and James," we would expect that they would do great works, wouldn't we? But He says, ***he who believes in Me,***... "The one who believes in Me..." It is not restricted to the disciples. It is the ordinary Christian. Now the true Christian, the one who truly believes, "Yes," He says, "The ordinary believer though, that truly believes in Me, the works that I am doing he will do also." Now that, as I said, is mind-blowing.

How can that be? I mean, especially in John's Gospel where he's made a great point to highlight, and underscore the spectacular nature of the works of Christ. The seven miracles that he has outlined for us in the book that are extraordinary—changing water to wine in Chapter 2, healing a nobleman's son in Chapter 4, who was near death, from a distance, feeding 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish, walking on water, healing the lame man who had been lame for 38 years, healing a blind man that was born blind, and then raising Lazarus. These are the signs that we've seen, the works that Jesus has done in John's Gospel. So He says we're going to do works like that. It is mind-blowing, and we understand that, wow, what does that mean? I haven't healed anybody like that. Have you? But nevertheless, that is what Jesus says, "The works that I am doing, you will do also."

Now this is where we have to let Scripture interpret Scripture, and wrestle with the meaning. What we saw is that last time we pointed out that when Jesus says, “The works that I am doing, you will do also,” He must be pointing to the real spiritual works, not the physical, spectacular works. We noted that signs, the seven signs that we have in John’s Gospel that I just listed for you, those miracles, John calls them ‘*signs*’. He uses a very special Greek word, ‘*sémeia*’. The sign is something which is separate from, and points to something outside of itself. That is, the significance of the sign is not the sign itself but what it points to. So when Jesus was doing these seven signs, the whole point was, by John using that word, and saying, “This was the first sign Jesus did when He turned the water into wine. This was the second sign He did when He healed the nobleman’s son.” What He was saying is, “Don’t get caught up in just the sign itself, make sure you see what it points to.”

We use the analogy that if you were on your way someplace, if you saw a road sign, and you thought, “Well, there is the road sign,” and you stopped like you’d gotten there, that would be ridiculous, right? The sign is pointing you in the right direction. Well, these miracles of Jesus were not the ultimate point, they were pointing to the spiritual reality behind them, and that’s the reason why John chose the seven that he did. He was pointing to the spiritual realities behind them that were powerful and that he wanted to drive home. That is the real work that Jesus is doing. The ultimate work He is doing is not just healing a lame guy, what’s that profit? The guy might have lived another 30 years. Is that all we want? A better life now? Do you just want your best life now, and then wake up in hell when you die?

In fact, the charismatic movement that is so hung up on signs and wonders, I was thinking about this, you know, I couldn’t really come up with a great analogy, but if you think about a sign, the point of a sign, the point of the signs and miracles that Jesus did, was to point to the reality of who He is. So that when He healed a man born blind, what He was really saying is, “It is not so much that I healed, this guy was just for me to make his physical eyes see, isn’t that amazing?” Yes, it is amazing, but the bigger issue is, He was teaching us that all of us are born blind spiritually, and his physical blindness, whether he had gained sight or not, was not going to matter but just for 70 or 80 years. But yours and my spiritual blindness matters for eternity, and Jesus was saying, “I am the light of the world, and though you all have been born blind spiritually, I’m here to open your spiritual eyes so that you can see the Kingdom of God.” That is the point! So the signs were given to get us to focus on the spiritual reality. He came doing the miracles He did, and then He gave a few of those miracles to His apostles to help people look at the spiritual

realities, and then, the era of those kind of supernatural miracles ended because we don't need any signs anymore.

It is like the church, when you come to Christ, you come to the Kingdom of God, you now are a part of the Kingdom of God where the Spirit is, and the power of God to transform you spiritually. And these folks, like I said, the charismatics that are wanting to be all about signs and wonders, want to see the same miracles that Jesus did, and they pretend that they are happening, but they are not really. They are like people who have arrived at a destination, and keep wanting to go out and camp by the road sign. They don't realize that the blessing is in the place that you are, and it is far greater than being by the road signs. So understanding that, what He says then is that we are going to do the same works that He does spiritually. When He healed the man that was born blind He also healed him spiritually. We're going to do works like that, the spiritual part. We are able to do greater works than He did in His earthly ministry because we stand on this side of the cross and resurrection. Everything that was done before Jesus' death and resurrection was of a lesser order than everything that happens after His resurrection. We pointed that out last time more carefully, if you'd like to listen to that. If you weren't here, listen to last week's message. I've got to move on. I said I couldn't preach last week's message, here I go.

Okay, the second point was *Why?* Let me just wrap that up. What is He offering? He is offering you a chance to change the world by doing the works that He does, by you preaching Jesus. You are going to give sight to blind people spiritually. You are able, by preaching Jesus Christ, to make people who were paralyzed by fear walk in victory. By preaching Jesus Christ you will set captives free spiritually. That is a big deal and you can go on making sugar water, or you can change the world. That is the point of *What?*

Now I said some words about *Why?* last time, and the idea of why does He offer this? I think it is to motivate us, like I was just trying to do. He wants us to basically stop messing around, stop fiddling while Rome burns. You have the resources of Heaven. Jesus has died, rose again, ascended to the right hand of God. Now, humanity, God, the God-man, but humanity is in the presence of God. So now that He's in the presence of God, He sends the Spirit of God into our hearts, and when we go we have the power of the Spirit to minister in. I said a few things about *Why?* last time and I talked about the fact that man was created by God to be a part of something big. That we have this innate wiring, it's hardwiring into us. It is hardwired into the fabric of our being. Just to remind you, Genesis 1:26-28, when God says He made man in His image, and likeness, He made man to be a

replica of God, that's what image means, a representative of God. And He called man to rule over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air. That's what it means to be His representative, His vice regent. He created man with great dignity. All human beings created with this wiring, hardwiring, to rule, to reign.

You know, one of the things that the Lord has worked on me, and sanctifying me through the years, is when things break in the house. I remember our first year of marriage, we had a toilet seat that cracked, and it was a house that had been there for a while, it was an older home, and when you tried to take off, replace the toilet seat, no big deal, go buy a toilet seat at Home Depot. Back then I don't think Home Depot was around, but wherever I got it from, Ace Hardware, something. I take it home, and all I have to do is remove the bolts from underneath the toilet. I'm starting in the toilet, this is really a good idea. Anyway, let me just cut on past that. I tried to take the bolts off, but the nuts had rusted to the bolt, and I didn't have the right tools because I am a newlywed. I remember, I was 22 years old and, "I think I'll just muscle this." I'm sitting in the bathroom, Patti hears me just grunting, and yelling, "What's wrong with it?" I was sinning too. "What's going on? This is ridiculous," this kind of thing. You know? Well that was sin, but it was also part of me reacting as a man created to rule. "You are supposed to submit to me, toilet."

We know that and it is in our hardwiring. We are made to rule and unbelievers have this innate sense that they may deny that God created them, they may think that they are just, they may have convinced themselves that they are just the result of an infinitely long process of evolution, and they are really just nothing, but in their hearts they know they are wired like this, and they can't escape it. God shows that He's created us, it's amazing that He gives us this privilege of ruling over His fish, and over the things of the world. He makes it quite emphatic in Genesis 1:26-28. I mentioned last time that He also gives man the opportunity to name the animals, and when you read that in Genesis 2:16-18, He makes the point. God brings the animals to the man, and whatever the man wanted to name them, that was his name. That is the language, whatever, the idea is He let man have complete authority over that. *Why?* He is showing that He has given man this opportunity. God's glory is manifested in His creature.

Now in sin, we pervert that, and we make it all about us, and the reality is the only way that we can be about what God is doing, and have the dignity He has called us to is when we put Him at the center. But even Psalm 8, the words we read earlier, David is looking at the heavens and he says, "Isn't it amazing how vast the heavens are? What am I? I'm a little, small worm on the side of one rock in this vast universe, and yet you have made man, the son of man, a little lower than God,

and you have crowned him with glory and majesty.” Think about that. This is the heart of God. He created man in a noble position, and this is what happens, the process of salvation, we are justified by faith, then we are sanctified by God’s grace, and His word throughout our lives. And what is the ultimate end? Glorification. The people of God glorified in the presence of God. Now what I’m saying is, John 14:12, the offer to be part of something big. In Genesis 1, what He was doing was He was saying, “Listen, I want mankind to be in My image, and I want him to extend My rule. He is My image, he is My replica, he is My representative to extend the reign of God over creation, in the new creation.” Now Jesus is saying, “The one who believes in Me, now has the opportunity to do the works that I did, and greater works, and the works that I did are driving back the darkness, and extending the Kingdom of God.” So He is saying you and I have the opportunity to be involved now as those who are extending His kingdom, extending His reign. That is the glory of it.

So *What?* and *Why?* and don’t you want to be a part of something that big? No matter if your vocation, whether you are in sales, or management, or you are an engineer, you are in finance, you are a homemaker, you’re a mother, you’re a teacher, no matter what your secular vocation, really understand in the Gospel, and the wonder of what God has done in salvation is this—that your real calling, your ultimate calling is to extend the Kingdom of God by preaching the Gospel to every creature. That is what you are hardwired for, and you can set people free, and it should be a part of the everyday life. I mean, this is what God wants for us, and I know we all fall short of this, because we forget, we forget who we are. He really has given to us this incredible power by His Spirit, in His word, and He is present in us to do it.

One of the great things about the Reformation, we were talking about the Reformation earlier. One of the great things that was recovered in the Reformation, they recovered the word of God, they recovered the Gospel, that man is justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That is how you are made right with God. That is what Luther saw, and he saw it because he knew that the only thing that you can bank your life on is the word of God. As they began to work out, now the word is back in the pulpits, and it is back in the lives of the people. They began seeing the implications of the word. One thing they saw is the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, that every single believer is a priest before God. That we are to stand between the lost, and God, and mediate His grace, every single one of us. There is not just a select few.

This means that, and there was a sign that I heard about in London during the English Reformation, in which they had a picture painted, it's like a billboard I guess, whatever they looked like back then, of a cobbler, and a baker, and a blacksmith, and you could clearly see that they are at their work. The caption said, "These three men preached the Gospel every day in London." Their work was to bake bread, make shoes, forge iron, but their purpose for living was to present Jesus Christ. That is what this is calling us to, to lift up our eyes out of the doldrums of just the earthly existence. We have to be about these things, and these things are important. I mean, we have to do certain things to live, but every moment of every day we ought to be asking God to keep our eyes on Him, and our higher calling.

1) How?

Now that is the *What?* and the *Why?* Now we've come to the *How?* How do you really make a difference? Jesus tells us in the next two verses.

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.

I mean, how do we, living in this world, this world is amazingly dark, isn't it? And getting darker every day it seems. Conversations with people, and it's just hard to even get started, to get things to the Lord because they have no, they are so far out there, aren't they? So often. We see the culture departing, we see people getting caught up in the waves of culture that are driving them away from the things of God, and we can despair, we can lose focus, we can forget that we really have, by God's grace, the message that is able to transform everything. But how do you really do it? When you encounter those people, how do you do it? I think there are two things that I want us to see. One is in Verse 12 and one is in Verses 13-14. How do we make the most of the opportunities that come, and how do we really change the world around us? How do we impact the world around us for the glory of God? We do it first of all by faith, and secondly through prayer. We do it by faith and through prayer.

A) By Faith:

Let's talk about 'By Faith' first. *How?* By faith. "Truly I say to you, everyone who believes in Me..." The only way that you are going to make a difference in the world, first of all, is that you have to come to believe in Jesus Christ. If you don't

believe in Jesus Christ, you are part of the problem. We all were a part of the problem, but when you come to believe in Jesus Christ, when you come to understand the Gospel, that we are sinners, conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity, that we are not seeking God, not worthy of God, hopeless, and helpless, and when we see that God has made provision through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came into the world, the Son of God, to live a perfect life, and He did that. Perfect righteousness. Then that spotless man became the Lamb of God, and God, on the cross, imputed the sins of everyone who would ever believe. They credited the sins of everyone who would ever believe, every single sin, to Jesus Christ, and God treated Him as if He had done our sins, all of them, and God abandoned Him on the cross, and He experienced hell as He hung there in agony at Calvary. That's why He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" That's why the sky went dark. God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all, and the Father in some way Has turned His back on the sin-bearer. But then He says, "It is finished!" He has paid the debt in full. He took our sins, He paid for them fully, dying for us, rising from the dead on the third day, and if you place your faith in Him, His righteousness is credited to your account forever. That's the Gospel.

If you believe that, you become part of the solution. But it's not just by faith, saving faith, he's talking about a growing faith. He says:

John 14:12 ~ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also;

He's telling His disciples, and we noted Verse 11, He's calling for more faith. He says:

John 14:11 ~ Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.

There are two times He uses the command or the imperative *believe*, and in Verse 12 He's giving a reason for it. "If you'll place your faith in Me, if you'll believe in Me, this is what's going to happen. The one who believes in Me is going to do great works for Me." So He's showing that the key to doing great works for God is believing in Jesus, and not just in a saving way, because He's talking right here to people who do believe in Him in a saving way already. The eleven are already clean. They're already born again. They don't have the fullness of the Spirit, but they're saved. He's saying, "What you need is more faith, and if you go on believing in Me..."

The present tense, actually, is the Greek present. *He who believes* in the Greek present doesn't just mean present time. It means ongoing. It means, "He who continues believing in Me, who grows in His faith in me, he will do the works that I'm doing."

It's interesting, too, note that He says—we live by faith, and you see this, and Jesus says the works that He's called us to, He says you and I will do. He says that twice in Verse 12. *...he who believes in Me, the works that I do,...* Look for this phrase: *...he will do...* Do you see that? *...he will do also; and greater works than these he will do;* There it is again. You see? These are works that we do, and yet they're not just works that we do. Look what He says in Verses 13 and 14:

John 14:13 ~ Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do,...

Or you could say, in the Greek it says: ...that I will do,...

John 14:14 ~ If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

What He's showing is that the Christian who is abiding in Christ, when we do something, it's only because Christ is doing it in us. This is what it means to live by faith. Faith is the empty outstretched hand of a beggar, Martin Luther said. Saving faith is that way. Saving faith is when you realize you have nothing, and you reach out to God believing that He can save, and He's willing to save, and you bring nothing to Him. You just ask Him to save you as you are. But faith remains that way throughout the Christian life. As you received Him, so also walk ye in Him, by faith. So on a daily basis, what we're supposed to do is acknowledge on a daily basis, time and time again during the day, "Lord, I'm empty. I have nothing, and I'm reaching out to You who are fullness." That's what it means to live by faith. Galatians 2:20 is a verse that you ought to memorize if you haven't. Paul says:

Galatians 2:20 ~ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me:...

You see, I'm living by faith, that is, Christ is living in me.

Galatians 2:20 ~ ...and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God.

What he's saying is the things that I'm doing are the things that Jesus is doing in me. The only time Jesus does things in you is when you place your trust in Him. So when you meet the person this week that you realize I need to have a conversation with this person, and I don't know where to start, or if they come to you and they have a problem, and you don't know to help them, how do you begin to really make a difference? How do you change the world? What do you do? You start with faith. You cry out to God and say, "Lord, I don't have a clue what to say to this person. I don't know what their real need is. I don't know how to turn the conversation to what needs to happen. I don't know what their problems are, but You do." I'm coming to someone who—remember when He met the woman at the well? You and I wouldn't know her problems. WE just see a woman at the well, but Jesus knew all about her, didn't He? He said, "Go get your husband." She said, "I have no husband." He said, "You've spoken well. You don't have a husband. You've had five husbands, but the man you're living with now is not your husband." She said, "Sir, I perceive You're a prophet." And then her testimony when she got saved, she went to them and she said, "Come and see the Messiah. He told me everything about myself."

So what we do, we don't know what should happen in this conversation, but Jesus does, and that is the real essence of what needs to happen for us to make a difference, is we need to live in dependence. The essence of faith is dependence. I said, I think, live in dependence. It almost sounds like "live independently". No, live dependently, completely trusting in Him. He's the answer. We don't have to have the answers, because we don't have the answers. The only answer that we have is look at Jesus. Go to Jesus. Someone said I'm just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. That's the ministry. That's what we're all called to. We're to do it by faith. The one who believes in Me...

B) By Prayer:

Now, if the essence of faith is dependence, and it is, the expression of faith is prayer. If you really depend upon God, and you're really trusting in Him, and you really realize you're empty and you don't have anything, what are you doing? You're asking God. You've got to go to God. And that's why He goes in Verses 13 and 14 and talks about prayer.

John 14:13 ~ 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.

How do we make a difference in the world? How do we do the works that He did, and greater works? How do we do that? We do them by faith, and we do them through prayer. And He tells us some things, I think, here in the passage, about how we need to pray. We must pray, but there are three ways, three sub-points under this second point on prayer. We must pray three ways. According to this passage, I think we can see at least three things here. We must pray intentionally.

John 14:13 ~ 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.

Each of those verbs (ask) is in the Greek aorist tense. The aorist tense is a tense that is often past tense. Here's it's not, but that's not so much what it is, as it's often not past tense, too. The idea is more the kind of action rather than the time of the action. It's not past, present, future. It's the kind of the action, and the kind of the action in the aorist is punctiliar, that is, it's a point. Remember I mentioned a moment ago that when He said ***...the one who believes in Me...*** that's a present tense. It's ongoing, meaning *...the one who continues to believe in Me...* but here He doesn't use that tense. He uses the aorist tense. He says, "If you ask anything, or whatever you ask at a point in time..." The idea is if you're in a situation, you have a particular need and you bring that need to Me. You don't pray in general, "Lord, just bless me." No, you bring that particular need. "Lord, I need to know what to say to this person right now. Help me." You don't just pray in the morning, "Lord, help me with whoever I run into today to be able to be a witness to You." That's a good thing to pray, but you also pray at the moment when you have the need. You pray intentionally.

Now, we're supposed to pray continually too. That's another teaching of the Scripture. Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Always be in prayer. Always be expressing your dependence upon God. Always be exercising your faith in trusting in Him. But here He's talking about a particular request. Whatever you ask, if you ask anything... It's intentionally.

The second way we should pray is not just intentionally, but boldly. Look at the emphasis in the statements of Jesus. "Whatever you ask..." He leaves the initiative with us. "Whatever you ask in My name..." We're going to get to *in My name* in the last point. Let me just go ahead and say the third sub-point is to pray rightly, because some people focus on the boldly part and forget the last part "rightly". It's intentionally, boldly, and rightly, okay? But let's not miss the boldly.

He says, “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do,…” The idea, though, He’s going to limit it in a moment to saying it’s got to be done according to My name, but what He’s trying to stress is within the parameters, there’s a lot of opportunity for us, and we need to be bold about taking the request to God. In fact, He makes this emphasis again and again on this evening. Remember He’s talking to His disciples the night before His crucifixion. Chapters 13 to 17 are the farewell discourse. Look at John 15:16. Jesus says:

John 15:16 ~ 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.

Look at John 16:23.

John 16:23 ~ 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.

He’s wanting them to know, “I want you to ask boldly.” James tells us you have not because you asked not. How many things have we not prayed about? We want them to happen, we’re hoping that they happen, but we really haven’t prayed intentionally and boldly, have we? It’s like we’re just hoping. We confuse that with praying. He wants us to go boldly to Him. I mean, there are so many wonderful places where God teaches us about prayer, and He does it in ways that often like this, God’s word always tends to puzzle us in areas.

Remember the story in Luke 18 says that this is how you ought to pray, and He tells that story about the widow who has been mistreated financially by somebody. She’s been treated unjustly, and she goes to the judge to get him to intervene for her, and the judge doesn’t have time for her. So she keeps going day, after day, after day, and then Jesus says that though the judge isn’t a righteous man, he doesn’t really care about it, I tell you, just because she keeps wearing him out (I’m paraphrasing a little bit here), eventually he’ll give in. He says that’s how you need to pray. Wait a minute. God’s not an unjust judge. God’s not someone who’s asleep. He doesn’t slumber or sleep. He doesn’t need to be wakened up. He knows our needs before we even ask them, Jesus tells us other places. But He says, “I want you to have an attitude of dependence that you keep coming to me.” The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, not just a flair prayer, an occasional prayer. It’s persisting in prayer.

It's intentionally and boldly. This is where I think we need help. Those of us who trust in the sovereignty and God, and believe as our church does, in the doctrines of Reformed theology, that God is absolutely sovereign, that everything that happens, happens according to His will, we must realize that He has ordained the means of prayer, and He is calling us to bold, persevering prayer. His sovereignty does not lessen our responsibility. In fact, when we understand His sovereignty rightly, it motivates it.

One of the things that can be encouraging to you is when you think to pray, you can understand and you can thank God, "Thank You, Lord, for reminding me to pray, because I wouldn't even have thought of it if You hadn't placed the thought in my heart." Do you ever have trouble when you're reading the Bible, and you find that you've been reading and you don't know what you're reading? Like you're mind is making a grocery list, or you're thinking through your day, and, "When did I lose track? What?" One of the things that I've learned to do through the years is, when I realize that, go back to where I last was, but thank God for calling me back. Rather than get down on myself, I just say, "Yes Lord, look at me. I'm a wayward sheep. Thank You for just giving me the thought. *What am I doing?* You're calling me back. You're so kind," and then I just get back to reading again, and ask Him to help me, "Help me, Lord." So pray intentionally, pray boldly, and then finally pray rightly. We can't miss this. "In Jesus' Name," He says it twice as well in Chapter 14:

John 14:13 ~ Whatever you ask in My name,...

John 14:14 ~ If you ask Me anything in My name,...

You've heard it also when we looked over at Chapters 15 and 16.

John 15:16 ~ ...so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name...

John 16:23 we saw also:

John 16:23 ~ ...if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.

He goes on down the next few verses to say, "Listen, before this I haven't told you to pray in My Name, but now I'm telling you if you ask anything in My Name, He'll give it to you." In My Name is very important.

Now, in My Name is not some kind of magical incantation, that whatever you want, if you just say, “In Jesus’ Name,” at the end of it, it makes it okay. Scripture tells us that’s not true. In fact, understanding just the basics of what the Name means, the Name of God, the Name of God is not just a label, but it’s an expression of His character. So when He says, “When you pray in My name,” He’s saying, “When you pray consistently with My character, My person, and my work...” D. A. Carson writes in his commentary on this passage, “In My Name means in thorough accord with all Jesus’ Name stands for.” That’s what it means, in My Name.

There are a couple of things that we could say about that. The first thing that it means to be praying in Jesus’ Name is it means that we are acknowledging what He’s been teaching us right here, that to pray in Jesus’ Name is to acknowledge that my only right of access is through Jesus Christ. The only reason I can offer this request to my Heavenly Father is because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. Apart from Him, I have no business opening my mouth to God, or have any assurance that He would hear me. Hebrews says that we’re to come boldly before the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16), to receive grace and mercy in our time of need. One of the Puritans wrote about that, saying, “We come boldly along the blood-sprinkled path that Jesus has blazed for us.” You come boldly in His Name. “The reason I can come to You, Father, and bring this burden, is because Jesus Christ has preceded me, and He’s made a way, and I come in His Name. I come in light of all that He has done, in thorough accord with all He stands for and all He is.”

It’s not only that we acknowledge our only access, but it’s also to pray in His Name, to talk about what He stands for, it means that we come with the right purpose. It’s not just about access. Jesus is also our purpose. And what is Jesus’ purpose? It’s the glory of God. To pray in Jesus’ Name means that our ultimate purpose is the glory of God. He says, “When you come in My Name, when you come acknowledging that I am the one who has made it right for you to come, and when you come in My Spirit, that is, in the same way that I came in the same purpose that I’m living for, then you will have whatever you ask.” This is the limiting factor that really focuses our prayers. This is why we’re to start with God.

Remember when Jesus taught us pray? The Lord’s Prayer even teaches you this. Remember they ask Him how to pray, and He taught them? What did He say? “Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Your Name.” I want Your Name to be revered and glorified. Prayer that accomplishes great things for God is prayer that is in His Name. If you can take your situation and think about it, “Lord, I want this so that You will be glorified,” and we ask boldly for our requests. We’re

supposed to bring our requests, “I want You to heal this person, to extend their life.” There’s nothing wrong with asking that, but ask in His Name means this, that, “I’m wanting that miracle to happen ultimately for Your glory, not for our pleasure. And since I’m wanting Your glory above everything else, if it is not most glorifying to You, I surrender that. Whatever exalts Jesus Christ, whatever exalts the glory of God, that’s what I want.” God is at the center, and this is the kind of believing prayer that makes a radical difference. That’s what Jesus is saying, “I want you to pray. I want you to pray more. I want you to pray intentionally. I want you to pray boldly, but always pray rightly.”

So when we meet someone and we don’t know what to do, we don’t know what to say, we have someone in our life that we need to go talk with about some problems that they’re having, and we feel like we have no answers, we’ve got to trust in Jesus. You’ve got to exercise your faith. “Lord, You know what they need. Give me the words to say. Help me be a blessing to this person. Help me exalt You in their life.” And you put faith to action too by, how do you grow in faith? You grow in faith through the word. You don’t just grow in faith and trust. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. So if you want to make a difference, you keep growing in your knowledge of God by growing in your knowledge of the word and praying. And when we live like that, when we make ourselves available to God like that, He’s saying that we will do greater works than He did. We will make a radical impact, and we know as it happens, and it won’t happen unless we have this in our hearts, and then we can say, “It’s all from Him. It’s from Him, through Him, and to Him. It is truly all of Jesus.”

I love the lines in the first stanza of the song *Rise Up, O Men of God*. It encapsulates what we’ve been called to from this passage.

*Rise up, O men of God
Have done with lesser things.
Give heart and soul and mind and strength
To serve the King of kings*

Have done with lesser things. Give everything that you are, every moment of your life, to something of lasting eternal value, and watch God work, give Him the praise, and see the echo of that impact all the way down through the eons of eternity. May God help us live lives truly worthy of the calling to which we’ve been called.

Let’s pray together...

Our Father, we marvel at the majesty and the glory of Your holy Name, You who dwell in the high and lofty places, whose Name is holy, and we marvel not just at Your majesty, but at Your meekness, that You involve us in Your eternal plans. We know we're completely unnecessary. We are of yesterday. We know nothing. We are truly in sin. We're less than nothing, Lord. We don't deserve Your love. We don't deserve Your affection. We certainly don't deserve to be a part of Your plan in extending Your Kingdom, and yet we marvel that You have such lovingkindness, such compassion that You delight and manifest in Your glory in the weakest of the weak, and that somehow You share that joy and that honor with us. Lord, may that love captivate us to truly have done with the things that don't matter. May we be about Your business. May our meat and our drink be to do Your will. And Father, for those that are here that are still lost, separate from You, bring them home today. Grant them repentance to turn from sin, to turn from living their lives for their own purposes, for their own ends, and surrender everything to Jesus Christ in confidence of His ability to save, and be glorified in their changed lives. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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