

Lord Teach us to Pray

I have been watching the movement toward praying directly to Jesus for most of my Christian life. I can't remember where I first came into contact with it, but every once in awhile, while visiting other churches, I have heard someone directly addressing Jesus in a prayer.

This led me to open up the Scriptures and to examine this practice. This lesson is the result of that study. I have examined it in the following way.

1. What did Jesus teach us?
2. What did the apostles command us?
3. What examples do we have in the Scriptures?
4. What are the reasons why those who pray to Jesus offer?
5. What is the safest conclusion we can draw?

1. What did Jesus teach us?

As we ponder all commands in the Bible, we can say without any fear of contradiction that prior to Jesus entrance into the world, all prayers were directed toward God the Father. When we enter into the New Testament, what do the commands say? When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray:

"In this manner, therefore, pray: our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Mt. 6:9; Lk. 11:1-2

"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Mt. 6:6

2. What did the apostles command us?

When the apostles and prophets instructed the brethren how to pray, they said exactly the same thing.

giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. 5:20

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Col. 3:17

Always for all things seems pretty simple to me. We are to thank God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ always (from the day of baptism until the day of death, in worship, and in our inner chamber) and for all things (everything there is to thank God for, including all that Jesus did for us). The idea throughout the Scriptures is that God the Father is the one God.

Paul's instructions to Timothy concerning how men ought to conduct themselves in the house of God also makes it very clear that these prayers are offered to God with Jesus being the mediator.

*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 **For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,** 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 **For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,** 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, 1Tim. 2:1-7*

3. What examples do we have in the Scriptures?

Nothing in the New Testament changes this concept.

*yet **for us there is one God, the Father,** of whom are all things, and we for Him; **and one Lord Jesus Christ,** through whom are all things, and through whom we live. 1Cor. 8:6*

*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 **one Lord,** one faith, one baptism; 6 **one God and Father of all,** who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Eph. 4:4-6*

Oh, the depth of the riches both of **the wisdom and knowledge of God!** How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" 35 "Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?" 36 **For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.** Amen. Rom. 11:33-36

For "**He has put all things under His feet.**" But when He says "all things are put under Him," **it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.** 1Cor. 15:27

For **there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,** 1Tim. 2:5

When we pray to the Father we are accepting His authority and in submission to the commands of Jesus and the apostles.

The examples are somewhat tedious, but clearly set forth that they lived the above commands.

And they prayed and said, "**You, O Lord,** who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen Acts 1:24

So when they heard that, **they raised their voice to God** with one accord and said: "**Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,** 25 "who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: "Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together **against the Lord and against His Christ.**" 27 "For truly **against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed,** both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 "**Now, Lord, look on their threats,** and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." Acts 4:24-30

"Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and **pray God** if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. Acts 8:22

Then Simon answered and said, "**Pray to the Lord for me,** that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me." Acts 8:24

a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and **prayed to God always.** Acts 10:2

Peter was therefore kept in prison, but **constant prayer was offered to God** for him by the church. Acts 12:5

But at midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns to God,** and the prisoners were listening to them. Acts 16:25

Brethren, **my heart's desire and prayer to God** for Israel is that they may be saved. Romans 10:1

Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you **strive together with me in prayers to God for me,** Romans 15:30

Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to **pray to God** with her head uncovered? 1 Cor 11:13

Now I **pray to God** that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. 2 Cor 13:7

that **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,** may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, Eph 1:17

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, Phil 1:3-4

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, **let your requests be made known to God;** Phil 4:6

We **give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,** praying always for you, Col 1:3

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 1 Thes 1:2

Therefore **we also pray always for you that our God** would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, 2 Thes 1:11

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For **this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,** 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 **For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,** 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all,

to be testified in due time, 1 Tim 2:1-6

I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, Philem 1:4

And when he had said these things, he took bread and **gave thanks to God** in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat. Acts 27:35

And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, **he thanked God** and took courage. Acts 28:15

First, **I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all**, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. Romans 1:8

But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. Romans 6:17

I thank God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. Romans 7:25

He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, **for he gives God thanks**; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and **gives God thanks**. Romans 14:6

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, 1 Cor 1:4

I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; 1 Cor 14:18

But **thanks be to God**, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 15:57

Now **thanks be to God** who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 2 Cor 2:14

But **thanks be to God** who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. 2 Cor 8:16

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! 2 Cor 9:15

do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory**, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, Eph 1:16-17

giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph 5:20

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Phil 1:3

We **give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, praying always for you, Col 1:3

giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. Col 1:12

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks to God the Father through Him**. Col 3:17

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 1 Th 1:2

For this reason **we also thank God without ceasing**, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. 1 Th 2:13

For **what thanks can we render to God for you**, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, 1 Th 3:9

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, 2 Th 1:3

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 2 Th 2:13

I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, Philm 1:4

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, **giving thanks to His name**. Heb 13:15

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of **our Lord and of His Christ**, and He shall reign forever and ever!" 16 And the twenty-four elders who **sat before God** on their thrones fell on their faces and **worshiped God**, 17 saying: "**We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and**

who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. Rev 11:15-17

4. What are the reasons why those who pray to Jesus offer?

As we ponder these Scriptures it is clear to see that one is definitely on solid ground when they pray to God the Father and give thanks to God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. What then are the proofs put forth to justify any other thing? As an example, Stephen is put forth. But I ask you if someone looking into heaven and seeing Jesus standing by the right hand of the Father is a close enough example to us today to really use?

*But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56 and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" 57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; 58 and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen as he was **calling on God** and saying, "**Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.**" 60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "**Lord, do not charge them with this sin.**" And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Acts 7:55-60*

This may give one the authority to pray in such a manner when one is on a death bed, but it would not be strong enough to undo Paul's command that all thanksgiving be directed to the Father through Jesus Christ.

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. Jn 14:13-14

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. John 15:16

In all fairness the NASB and NIV offer a different translation of Jn 14:13-14:

"And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14" If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do {it.} (NAS) John 14:13-14

But the scholars are by no means assured that this is the correct translation. It is given a "B" in Aland which he states: "the letter "A" signifies that the text is virtually certain, while "B" indicates that there is some degree of doubt. The letter "C" means that there is considerable degree of doubt while D shows a very high degree of doubt."

5. What is the safest conclusion we can draw?

Personally I am not ready to change my practice based on a verse with "some degree of doubt." Especially when no one but Stephen ever did it and under the most extreme circumstances.

"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 you. 24 "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. 25 "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. 26 "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; 27 "for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. John 16:23-27

This passage has been rendered "ask me no question" in the NAS which is a legitimate translation and not as strong as the others, but what of the rest? It too indicates that the Father will be asked in the name of Jesus. The only other example is that of Paul:

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, 1 Tim 1:12

But here again, how far do we wish to press a situation that Jesus was personally involved in? Jesus appeared to Paul. The subject is left for you to ponder. For myself I feel very comfortable praying to the Father in the name of Jesus and much less comfortable with anything different from that pattern and tradition.