

### Disciples Can Approach the Father Directly in Prayer

#### John 16:23-33

John 16:23-33 - *“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. <sup>24</sup> Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. <sup>25</sup> “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. <sup>26</sup> In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; <sup>27</sup> for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. <sup>28</sup> I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.”*

<sup>29</sup> *His disciples said to Him, “See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! <sup>30</sup> Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.”*

<sup>31</sup> *Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? <sup>32</sup> Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. <sup>33</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”*

#### Background Notes

This last section of John 16 brings us to the end of our Lord's Upper Room Discourses, which began in John 13. Remember that these farewell discourses were only given to the disciples, not to the general public. There were essentially two farewell discourses, and John 16 is the last part of the second discourse. It was given either in the upper room, or as they walked to the Garden of Gethsemane where our Lord was arrested. This is also true of John 17, which contains our Lord's high priestly prayer.

In verse 25 the Lord said, *“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.”* Perhaps the Lord was referring to the figurative language about the Vine and branches that He used in the second discourse, at the beginning of John 15: *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”* That is figurative language. However, the Lord was probably referring to all His teachings, not just this farewell discourse. The Lord used many parables and proverbs when He taught the general public and His disciples. Parables are certainly figurative language.

Now notice: *"The time is coming when... I will tell you plainly about the Father."* That time came after the Lord's resurrection. In the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, the Lord taught the disciples more directly - without parables, and without a lot of figurative language. This is the way our Lord teaches the Church today, by means of the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts and the New Testament epistles are not characterized by parables and a lot of figurative language.

Verses 29-30: *"His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God."* At this point the disciples believed that they understood what the Lord was saying - at least His last few statements. Once again they confessed His deity, because they recognized His omniscience.

In verse 32 the Lord informed the disciples that they would soon forsake Him and be scattered: *"Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."* This of course came true, as Mark 14:50 says, *"Then they all forsook Him and fled."* This was a fulfillment of Zechariah's Messianic prophecy *"Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered..."* (Zechariah 13:7).

The Lord indicated that even though the disciples would forsake Him, He would not be alone because the Father was with Him (v32). At this point the disciples probably still didn't understand the union between God the Father and God the Son - that truth that God is One, and yet distinct in three Persons.

## Doctrinal/Teaching Points

### 1. Believers have the assurance of direct access to the Father.

*"In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father"* (v26-28). The *"in that day"* is now, from the time of the Lord's ascension, when He returned to Heaven. *"I leave the world and go to the Father"* (v28).

Now what did the Lord mean in verse 26 when He said, *"I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you..."*? Is this a contradiction of Romans 8:34, which says that Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God making intercession for us. And is this a contradiction of Hebrews 7:25, which says that Jesus Christ, as our High Priest, lives to make intercession for us. No!

In verse 26 the Lord was teaching that we can go directly to the Father, praying in the name of the Lord Jesus. We don't have to ask the Lord Jesus to urge the Father to answer our prayers - we can go straight to God the Father in our prayers, *"for the Father Himself loves you"* (v27). Why? Because *"the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God."* In other words, Jesus is saying to us today, "The Father loves you because

you love Me, and have accepted me as the Christ, so there's no need for any "arm-twisting" of God the Father in your prayers!"

Now if the Lord Jesus Himself has told us plainly that we have direct access to the Father, why would anyone think that praying to saints or other intermediaries is advantageous? There is no idea anywhere in the Bible of praying to Mary, the mother of our Lord, or the apostles, or saints, or anyone else. Such a concept is not even remotely suggested in Scripture! The Lord Himself has told us that we have direct access to the Father in His name.

*"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body... Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart, in full assurance of faith..." (Hebrews 10:19-20 & 22).* Believers have direct access to the Father.

## **2. Believers have assurance of definite answers from the Father.**

Not only do we have direct access to the Father in prayer, but we can also be sure of His definite answers to our prayers. Verses 23-24: *"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. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."*

When the Lord Jesus said *"until now you have asked nothing,"* He didn't mean that from the ascension on, believers should only pray to God the Father. He didn't mean that believers couldn't come directly to Him, the Lord Jesus, with their requests. That would be a contradiction of other Scriptures. The Lord meant that things would be different for the disciples once He ascended to the Father. Until that time they had never gone to the Father with requests. They had walked and talked with the Lord Himself, and they had asked Him questions directly. But the Lord Jesus was leaving them and going back to Heaven, so things would be different. He would not be with them on this earth to answer their questions, but He wanted to assure them that they could go directly to the Father, in name of the Lord Jesus, and get definite answers to their prayers.

And we have that assurance as well! But remember - this is not a "blank check"! Don't get the idea that we can get whatever we want if we ask for it in the name of Jesus. No! *"In the name of Jesus"* means that the requests we make will be in line with what Jesus would want and what He would approve. Asking the Lord to give you your neighbor's house or a car that's better than your neighbor's car can't be done in the name of Christ! But if you ask in the name of Jesus for an opportunity to witness to your neighbor - that prayer will be answered!

Believers have the assurance of definite answers from the Father.

## Practical Applications

### 1. Do you have the joy of answered prayer?

The Lord said, "*Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full*"(v24). There is a real joy that comes when you realize your prayers are answered!

Do you know the joy of answered prayer? Here's an example from our lives. Most of you know that we give "birth-to-adoption" foster care for newborn babies. (Margie does all the work; I just enjoy the babies!) Well, we always pray that a good home and family will be found for these babies. What a joy it is when these prayers are answered – many times with Christian families, where we know the baby will grow up to learn about the Lord.

This is just one small example of the joy of answered prayer. Do you know the joy of answered prayer?

### 2. Do you know the peace of reading Scripture?

Verse 33: "*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.*" What "*things*" had He spoken to them? He meant His teachings given in the Upper Room Discourses, and also everything else He had taught them.

All these teachings are contained in the Scriptures today. Now note the purpose: "*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.*" There is peace that comes from reading the words that Jesus spoke. Where do you read His words? In the Bible, of course! Do you know the peace of reading Scripture?

Our Lord's teaching was not always pleasant. He taught that the believer will not have an easy time of it in this world: "*In the world you will have tribulation...*" (v33). That's not pleasant news! How can we have peace of mind and heart when we read that?! We can have peace because of what follows: "*but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" Just the knowledge that our Lord knows all about our times of trouble and difficulty and tribulation, and knowing that all the events of our lives are under His control - this certainly brings peace to our hearts and souls.

The next time you're restless and anxious, the next time you're uptight and worried about your future or your security, the next time you're facing persecution, or facing any kind of problem that you don't understand - take out your Bible and read the words of our Lord Jesus. You will find a **peace that only He can give!** "*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.*"

The words of Jesus are recorded in Scripture so that we can have peace. Do you know the peace of reading Scripture?