



Christian Maturity Series

4th of Five Lessons

4. CLAIMING THE POWER THAT IS IN CHRIST

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As Jesus spent his last hours with his disciples, he said to them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you” (John 16:23). Then he told them, “Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (16:24).

What an incredible statement. As this scene took place, Christ was warning his followers that he was going away, and he wouldn’t see them for a short time. Yet, in the very same breath, he assured them they had access to every blessing of heaven. All they had to do was ask in his name.

Now, most Bible commentators say this promise didn’t apply to the disciples as yet. They claim that the disciples couldn’t ask anything in Christ’s name until he’d left the earth and was in the Father’s presence.

But Scripture suggests otherwise. The clearest example is the unknown man who did mighty works in Jesus’ name. The disciples tried to stop this man because he wasn’t one of their circle. John reported to Jesus, “Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us” (Mark 9:38).

How did Jesus respond to this? “Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part” (9:39-40). Christ acknowledged the man as being “with me, on our side.”

This man wasn’t in Jesus’ inner circle, yet he still was able to perform miracles in the Lord’s name. And as he did, he stated that all the power was in the name of Christ. What an amazing thing. This man didn’t enjoy personal intimacy with Jesus, as the twelve did. Nor did he have the great revelations the disciples had. He was probably just one of the multitudes that Jesus taught from the hillsides and shores.

But this man obviously was a lover of Jesus. Why? He laid hold of Christ’s promises, and he acted on them. And miracles happened. He also had to be a praying, fasting man. After all, Jesus pointed out that demons are cast out only by prayer and fasting.

In this respect, the unknown man stands in stark contrast to Jesus’ disciples. The twelve had been personally taught by Jesus to knock, seek, ask for the things of God. They were taught firsthand that all the blessings of the Father — all grace, power and strength — were found in Christ. And they’d heard Jesus declare to the multitudes: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:12-14).

Here was at least one man who took Jesus at his Word. He had claimed Jesus’ promise, and his faith was honored by God. He expected the Lord to perform miracles through him, all in the name of Jesus Christ. That’s why Jesus now told John and the others, “Up to now, you haven’t asked anything in my name. So, ask, and you’ll receive. Then your joy will be full” (see 16:24). He was saying, “Ask now. Don’t wait for some other time. And don’t try to figure it all out theologically. I’m telling you, my name has power over the devil. And you have that power, because you are in me. Ask, and the Father will do it.”

Considering all the power and resources we have in Christ, most believers have asked almost nothing in his name.

Christ's words to his disciples convict me: "Ye have asked nothing in my name" (John 16:24). As I read this, I hear the Lord whispering to me, "David, you haven't claimed the power I've made available to you. You simply need to ask in my name."

Here is what I believe grieves God's heart more than all the sins of the flesh combined. Our Lord is grieved by the ever-growing lack of faith in his promises - by ever-increasing doubts that he answers prayer - and by a people who claim less and less of the power that's in Christ.

The world has never known a needier time. Yet there is less petition than ever in the name of Jesus. As the days pass, Christians are asking less and less of the Lord. They're afraid to step out, often because of unbelief. So they ask little or nothing in his name.

I have to make my own confession. Like the disciples, I pray, I fast, I enjoy intimacy with Christ. I love devouring God's Word and being shut in with him in prayer. But I wonder: what do these things mean, if they don't produce faith in my wondrous Lord? I marvel at God's majesty, glory and power. But do I act on it? I have intimate communion with the Lord. But does my time with him empower me with divine authority, with an eagerness to claim all power in his name?

It's amazing how faithfully the church refers to Christ's name. We praise it, we bless it, we sing about the "power, power, wonder-working power in the blessed name of the Lord." We fear his name, we glory in it, we love to hear it spoken. But we don't appropriate the power that's in his name. We don't claim it or act on it.

And why not? Why doesn't every believer lay hands on the sick and claim the healing power that's in Christ's name? Why don't we intercede in his name, for the spiritual awakening of our children, our families, our friends? Why does Satan get so little opposition from us? Was it ever God's will to allow the enemy to destroy our homes and marriages?

The Bible says that in these last days, the devil will come down on humankind "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12:12). My question is, will this mad devil meet a passive, lame church? Will he find a faithless people who extol the name of Christ, but don't resist their enemy by the power that's in that name? Will he encounter a people of God who give in easily, saying, "I've done the best I can. I just have to make it through till the Lord comes back."

No, never! We don't have to take what the devil has been giving. We don't have to yield to his attacks, be afraid of him, or fear the future. In recent weeks, I have seethed inside with a holy anger against Satan and his powers. As I've read Jesus' words, they've fired my soul to rise up and say, "Enough, devil. I come against you with all power in the name of Jesus. I'm putting you on notice. You can call off your hordes from hell, because I'm going to resist your every attack. And God's Word says you'll flee."

Satan may try to bring a flood of affliction into my life. He may attack my family and loved ones. But every demonic flood will be met with a release of Christ's power. The enemy may send demon after demon. But each and every one will run smack into the immovable wall that is the almighty name of Jesus Christ.

We are to remove all the limits we have put on God.

This is illustrated vividly in Acts 3. In verse 1, Peter and John were on their way to the temple to pray. This was their daily practice. And each day, they passed a man who sat at the temple gate begging. The man had been lame from birth.

But this day was going to be different from all others. This time, when the apostles saw the beggar, a holy anger rose up in them. They saw that Satan had gone unchallenged in the man's life for too long. Now it was time for Spirit-filled men of God to appropriate the power in Christ's name.

"Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.... Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee" (Acts 3:4, 6). Peter was saying, "We possess something better than all the gold and silver in the world. What we have is far greater than all the doctors and medicine on the earth. I'm talking about the power that's in the name of Jesus Christ. We have it, and we give it to you."

With that, Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up...and he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (3:6-

8).

The crowds who saw this happen were amazed. They asked the apostles what was going on. Peter explained, "His name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all" (3:16). Peter was saying, in essence: "For years you've known this man as crippled from birth. And now you want to know how he is able to leap and dance. It's because of the name of Jesus Christ. It is by the power in Christ's name that this man has been healed, and not by any other name."

Note the phrase that Peter uses to describe the man's new condition: "perfect soundness." It doesn't matter how difficult or hopeless our trial may appear. God has provided for us to have "perfect soundness" in the midst of it. And this perfect soundness — supplied through the name of Jesus Christ — will repel every dart of the enemy.

When the temple officials heard what had happened, they jailed Peter and John. And the next day, they put the disciples on trial. The high priest demanded of them, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" (4:7). Again Peter declared, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole" (4:10).

I ask you, how were these simple, humble men able to speak so boldly, with such confidence? It was because Peter and John had removed all limits on God. They were saying, in essence, "We're not going to limit the Holy One of Israel in any situation."

They had spoken surpassing faith into the crippled man's life. And they never could have done that unless they truly believed Jesus' words: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you" (John 16:23). These disciples knew that when Jesus said "whatsoever," he was making the promise unlimited. Christ was saying, "All things that you ask the Father in my name, he will give them to you."

We are to follow Peter and John's example. We too are to believe all things are possible. And we're to remove every limit we have placed on God to work in our lives.

Claiming the power in Christ's name is not some complicated, hidden theological truth.

In my library are books written solely on the subject of Jesus' name. The authors wrote them to help believers understand the deep implications hidden in Christ's name. Yet most of these books are so "deep," they go right over readers' heads.

I believe that the truth we're meant to know about Jesus' name is so simple, a child could understand it. It's simply this: when we make our requests in Jesus' name, we're to be fully persuaded that it's the same as if Jesus himself were asking the Father. How could this be true, you ask? Let me explain.

We know that God loved his Son. He spoke with Jesus and taught him during his time on earth. And God not only heard but answered every request his Son made. Jesus testified to this, saying, "He heareth me always." In short, the Father never denied his Son any request.

Today, all who believe in Jesus are clothed in his Sonship. And the heavenly Father receives us as intimately as he receives his own Son. Why? It's because of our spiritual union with Christ. Through his Crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus has made us one with the Father. "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us...I in them, and thou in me" (John 17:21, 23).

Simply put, we are now family — one with the Father, and one with the Son. We've been adopted, with the full rights of inheritance possessed by any child. This means all the power and resources of heaven are made available to us, through Christ.

And, because we are clothed in Christ's Sonship — joint heirs with him, partakers in his inheritance — we know our requests are also heard by the Father. And he answers our requests, just as he answered his Son's.

What incredible authority we have been given in prayer. How, exactly, do we use this authority? Through Christ's own name. You see, when we placed our faith in Jesus, he gave us his name. His sacrifice enables us to say, "I am Christ's, I'm in him, I'm one with him." Then, amazingly, Jesus took on our name. As our high priest, he wrote it on the palm of his hand. And so our name is registered in heaven, under his glorious name.

You can see why the phrase "in Christ's name" isn't just some impersonal formula. Rather, it's a literal position we have with Jesus. And that position is recognized by the Father. Jesus tells us, "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God" (16:26-27).

Here is why Jesus commands us to pray in his name. He's saying, "Whenever you ask in my name, your request has the same power and effect with the Father as if it were me asking him." In other words, it's as if our prayer is being uttered by Jesus himself before the Father's throne.

Likewise, when we lay hands on the sick and pray, God sees us as if Jesus is laying hands on the sick to bring healing.

This is also why we're to come boldly to the throne of grace: to receive. We are to pray with confidence, "Father, I stand before you, chosen in Christ to go forth and bear fruit. Now I make my request largely, that my joy may be full."

I hear many Christians say, "I asked in Jesus' name, but my prayers weren't answered."

These believers state, "I tried to claim the power in Jesus' name. But it just didn't work for me." There are many reasons why we don't receive answers to our prayers. We may have allowed some sin in our lives, something that defiles our union with Christ. These become roadblocks that dam up the flow of blessing from him. And he won't answer our prayers until we've forsaken our sin.

Or, perhaps the blockage is due to lukewarmness, or halfheartedness toward the things of God. Perhaps we're being stifled by doubt, which cuts us off from the power in Christ. James warns, "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:6-7).

I received a letter recently from a widow whose teenage daughter is deep in sin. This mother said her daughter was once a faithful believer, but is now heavily into drugs and living with her boyfriend. Why the terrible fall? The girl's father had cancer, and she had prayed, "God, don't let my Daddy die." When her father passed away, the girl ran as far as she could from the Lord. She told her mother, "I gave God a chance. I prayed in faith, in the name of Jesus. But he let Daddy die."

I once sat next to a woman on an airplane who was in tears. I told her I was a minister and asked if I could help. She answered, "I just buried my father. He was such a good man, the most loving person I'd ever known. I prayed for God to let him live. Tell me, how could a loving God let a good man like my father die? I don't want to talk about God at all."

Our ministry receives dozens of letters containing stories just like these. Over and over, we read words to this effect: "I prayed in faith, believing God. But he didn't hear me. I waited and waited, but he never answered. You can't tell me that prayer works. How can I surrender my life to God if he doesn't answer my prayers?"

Maybe you can relate to these feelings. You may look back to a situation where you prayed earnestly, faithfully — perhaps for a loved one's healing, or for a personal problem. But no answer came. You concluded, "God doesn't answer prayer. If he ever heard my pleas, I never knew about it, because he didn't do what I asked."

Maybe you're not angry with God. But you've lost confidence. Something keeps you from committing your heart to him fully. And so you've stopped praying. You don't enjoy the fullness of his blessings anymore.

James makes it clear: "He who wavers won't receive anything of God." The word James uses for "waver" means to be undecided. The truth is, when these people made their requests, they put

God on trial. In their hearts, they said, “Lord, if you answer me, I’ll serve you. I’ll give you everything, if you’ll just answer this prayer. But if you don’t, I’ll live my life my way.”

Yet God won’t be bribed. He knows our hearts, and he knows when we’re undecided in our commitment to his Son. He reserves the power that’s in Christ for those who’ve surrendered to him wholly.

John 14 contains two magnificent promises. In the first, Jesus states, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:12-14). Jesus makes it plain and simple in the last verse: “Ask anything in my name, and I’ll do it for you.”

Two verses later, Jesus promises, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you” (14:16-18). Here Christ is saying, “I’m going to give you the Spirit of Truth. And his power will abide in you.”

These are two incredible promises from Jesus. Yet notice the one verse that’s sandwiched between them: “If you love me, keep my commandments” (14:15). Why does this statement appear here? Christ is telling us, “There is a matter of obedience connected to these promises.” In short, both promises have to do with keeping and obeying God’s Word. They were given to be fulfilled, so that nothing would hinder us from claiming the power that is in Christ.

I’m convinced that asking little or nothing in Jesus’ name is a reproach to him.

Year after year, many Christians settle for less and less. Finally, they settle for the salvation of Christ only. They have no expectations other than making it to heaven someday.

I ask you: have you come to the end of your Christ? Do you expect nothing more than to be saved by his power and grace? Does your Christ end at just enough strength to make it through another day? Does he end for you at a place of occasional peace and joy, in a life lived mostly under Satan’s harassment?

All of these passages in God’s Word persuade me that “my” Jesus is no bigger than my requests. Yet, sadly, many believers make Christ to look insignificant and powerless by their unbelief. Beloved, I don’t want my Christ to be limited. Instead, I want every devil in hell to know how big my God is by how big my requests are. I want more out of my Christ. I want him to be bigger than ever in my life.

Here is true faith: it considers all the problems and pain of God’s people worldwide, all hopeless situations, all hurting widows, orphans and elderly believers who struggle to survive. Faith puts all of these sorrowful things on a scale, and watches as the scale sinks. Yet, faith then puts Christ on the other side of the scale. And it rejoices as it sees how he overwhelms all the sins and afflictions of this world.

God never intended for us to let the devil overtake our hearts and homes. Rather, he intends for us to make a declaration that's loud and clear. We're to take our position in Christ, and cry, "In the name of Jesus Christ!" It's time for every believer to stand up and declare, "I've lived with fear long enough. In the name of Jesus Christ, I will no longer fear death, man or the devil. I want the world to see the unsurpassable greatness of my Christ, by the greatness of my requests. My God says to ask largely, and I will. How can anything be too hard for him?"

I urge you, get hold of God's Word, and believe Jesus has made these promises to you. They are the weapons of your warfare, weapons that are mighty through him. And they'll become mighty in your hands when you lay hold of them and claim them.

(Please continue to next page for workbook questions)

CLAIMING THE POWER THAT IS IN CHRIST

Follow-up Questions

1. [Complete]: Considering all the power and resources we have in Christ,

2. What grieves God's heart more than all the sins of the flesh?

3. What can we rise up to say when Satan attacks?

4. How were Peter and John able to be so bold as to say to a lame man, "Rise up and walk"?

5. How we can operate with the same boldness?

6. How is it we are able to ask the Father in Jesus' Name and He promises to respond?

7. Use a verse of Scripture to back this up!

8. [Complete]: The phrase “In Christ’s Name” isn’t just some _____.

Rather, it’s a _____ we have with _____.

9. What can be reasons we don’t receive answers to our prayers? List a few.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

10. What can happen when we sincerely pray in faith for something and we don’t receive it?

11. The word James uses for “waver” means what?

12. How can we put God on trial when we pray?

13. Write out John 14:12-14

14. Write out John 14:16-18

15. What important verse of Scripture is sandwiched between the above verses?

16. What do the verses from John 14:14-18 have to do with?

17. God is no bigger than what? _____

18. David Wilkerson states that we should put our hopeless situations and sorrowful things on one side of the scale, and then “Faith puts Christ on the other side of the scale.” List some things you need to put on the scale so you can see how Christ’s power outweighs whatever is your problem.
