

ANSWERING ARGUMENTS Pertaining to Prayer



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Since the book Should We Pray to Jesus? was published in 2010, more material has been published by brethren who believe Christians have Scriptural authority to pray to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Some new arguments have been presented in an attempt to support their doctrine. What this author considers to be their main arguments will now be taken into consideration, along with some further discussion of subjects previously addressed.

Part 1 - Daring Dismissal of Definitive Divine Doctrine

Recently some have tried to “explain away” some of the clearest language in the Bible. They claim that since sometimes there can be an exception to a word like “always,” then “always” does not mean “always” in Ephesians 5:20; that “for all things” does not mean “for all things” in Ephesians 5:20; “every thing” does not mean “everything” in Philippians 4:6; “nothing” does not really mean “nothing” in John 16:23, and apparently they think “all saints” does not really mean “all saints” in Revelation 8:3-4. Many more passages could be cited here. If there were just one case of this kind of terminology regarding prayer, such might be easy to explain away, but there are too many passages consistently using clear, comprehensive words that absolutely rule out praying to Jesus and instruct Christians to pray to the Father “always.” All these passages cannot simply be “swept under the rug.”

Making God's Message Meaningless

When men take such an approach to God's commands, they basically imply that Christians just have to ignore the clear import of verses like those above. Such words basically become meaningless to those subscribing to the doctrine of those men. They also end up ripping the Bible apart to the point that one will likely question whether or not he can really understand the Bible at all! Can men understand what God is trying to tell them? After all, using their reasoning, does “always” (*pantote* in Greek; same as in Eph. 5:20) really mean “always” in other passages, such as John 8:29? “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” Did Jesus “always” please His Father? Does *pantote* mean “always” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17? “...and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Will the faithful “always” be with the Lord after His return? Does the Greek word *pas* (“all things” in Eph. 5:20) truly mean “all” in Matthew 11:28? “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Was the Lord's invitation really open for anyone? Calvinists would say that “all” does not really mean “all” in Matthew 11:28, dismissing the clear, comprehensive language there.

Also, what about other all-inclusive words such as “whosoever” or “except”? Calvinists also teach that “whosoever” does not really mean “whosoever” in Revelation 22:17. False teachers on marriage, divorce, and remarriage have taught that “whosoever” in Matthew 19:9 does not apply to alien sinners. Perhaps some would argue that “except” does not really mean “except” in John 3:5. Taking this approach with the Scriptures is a dangerous and slippery slope. This is especially true when there is not just one case of this type of language on a particular subject, but many instances in different books with different speakers and writers. Such is the case with our instructions for prayer. Such finagling with God's clear Scriptures can actually undermine the very Truth that God expects men to understand and obey.

Accusations Against the Almighty

Has God spoken clearly enough for Christians to know how to worship properly? Does our loving,

omniscient God give us ambiguous, unclear instructions for worship, for which He will send men to eternal Hell for disobeying? Knowing that God has punished and even killed men for worshipping Him incorrectly (Lev. 10:1-2), and knowing that failure to worship correctly today will cause souls to go to Hell (John 4:24; Col. 3:17), would not our holy, loving God give us very clear instructions for each act of worship? The doctrine that some brethren are teaching attempts to muddy the waters of God's very clear, precise instructions for prayer, as if God has not spoken clearly.

Please consider this—if God the Father did want to impress upon men that they are to pray to Him always, how would He do that? Perhaps He would use words like “always” (Ephesians 5:20). Perhaps He would use words like “for all things,” “in every thing,” “the prayers of all saints,” and “nothing.” One wonders what words God could have used which would have been clearer than these! There is absolutely no excuse for misunderstanding such clarity present in so many passages. Our God has spoken “plainly” enough (John 16:29) for Christians to understand exactly how to perform each act of worship precisely the way that is pleasing to Him, and to deny that He has done such is blasphemous. To take the position that one may pray to Jesus is to accuse God of not speaking clearly to men regarding how they should worship, and the ramifications of such are terrible indeed, almost as if God were trying to deceive His children with such language as “nothing,” “always,” “for all things,” “in every thing,” and “all saints.” One shudders at the thought of such. A study of the entirety of the New Testament reveals that God clearly and consistently teaches Christians to pray to Him in the name of Jesus Christ, our Mediator, by the inspired instructions of the Holy Spirit. This author believes God said what He meant and meant what He said regarding prayer.

Christ in the Context

Here is the clincher regarding all of this—in all these passages Jesus is mentioned in the same context with praying to the Father! Even though Jesus is present in the immediate context of all those passages mentioned regarding prayer and many more like them, He is not once mentioned as the One to Whom Christians' prayers ascend! Instead, even though Jesus is mentioned right there in the same verse many times, comprehensive language was used both to teach that men should pray to the Father “always,” and they should pray to Christ in “nothing”!

Ephesians 5:19-20 is a great example of this. Notice how the Lord Jesus is mentioned more than once in this immediate context: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19-20). The command of prayer to the Father “always...for all things” is **completely surrounded** by references to Jesus! Not only that, but as mentioned earlier, the Greek words *pantote* and *pas* (“always,” “all things”) must be completely ignored by the advocate of praying to Jesus!

Was the Holy Spirit aware that He had included Jesus in the same verse in which He had instructed Christians to give thanks “always...for all things” to the Father? Did the Holy Spirit realize that Jesus was going to be mentioned immediately after the instructions for Christians to let their “requests be made known unto God” in “every thing”? (Phil. 4:6-7). Was the Holy Spirit ignoring, dishonoring, or forgetting about Jesus in these passages, **or did He know exactly what He was doing?**

Appendix A of Should We Pray to Jesus? contains a multitude of examples of this same thing—Jesus was mentioned in the same immediate context as was prayer to God, but there was not the slightest indication of praying to Jesus. For example, even though Jesus is mentioned in the following greeting, notice that Paul mentioned praying to God always: “...Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers” (1 Thess. 1:1-2). For more instructions to pray to the Father with Jesus mentioned in the immediate context, see Luke 11:1-2; John 16:23-29; Acts 4:24-31;

Philippians 1:2-4, 4:6-7; Romans 1:7-10, 7:25, 14:6, 15:30; 1 Corinthians 1:3-4, 1:13-14, 15:57; 2 Corinthians 2:14, 4:14-15, 9:8-15, 13:5-7; Ephesians 1:2, 1:16-17, 3:12-21, 5:19-20; Colossians 1:2-3, 1:12-13, 3:16-17, 4:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 2:13-14, 3:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:2-3, 1:11-12, 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:2-3; Philemon 3-4; Hebrews 4:14-16, 7:25; 1 John 1:9-2:1; and Revelation 7:17-8:4.

In Romans 15:30 it is not as if Jesus and the Holy Spirit were not even being considered in this context—they were actually mentioned in the same sentence! Yet Paul said both he and the Christians at Rome prayed to God the Father. Paul's words also imply that the Christians in Rome already knew to whom they should have been praying. "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me" (Romans 15:30). May Christians today be like Paul and the Christians at Rome, praying to God—not Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Unless this author is mistaken, neither brother Wayne Jackson nor brother Andrew Hallenbeck have addressed Romans 15:30 or Revelation 8:3-4 in their materials written on this subject. Perhaps they know these would be more clear Scriptures they would have to try to explain away!

For one to maintain that praying to Jesus is Scripturally authorized, he must:

1. Ignore the Greek word *pantote* in Ephesians 5:20 (translated as "always").
2. Ignore *pantote* in many other passages regarding praying always to the Father, such as Romans 1:8-10; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Philippians 1:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2; 2 Thessalonians 1:2-3; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; and Philemon 1:3-4.
3. Ignore the Greek word *pas* in Ephesians 5:20, Philippians 4:6-7, and Revelation 8:3-4 ("all things;" "in every thing;" "all saints").
4. Implicitly call into question other passages in which the same clear Greek words were used to teach undeniable truths (*pantote*—"always" in John 8:29, and "ever" in 1 Thess. 4:17; *pas*—"all" in Matt. 11:28, etc.).
5. Ignore the fact that Jesus is mentioned in the same context of all the verses mentioned thus far regarding praying to the Father!
6. Charge God with consistently using misleading language regarding His instructions for worship.
7. Explain what words could have been used to communicate more clearly that men are to pray always to the Father than the following: "always," "for all things," "in every thing," "the prayers of all saints," and "nothing."

Part 2 - Stephen's Stoning

Here is the supposedly "unanswerable" argument, as stated by brother Jackson in the foreword of brother Hallenbeck's book (Praying to Jesus: An Examination, 2011, p. 12). The designation of "unanswerable" seems to be based upon the supposition that brother Hallenbeck has proven that there was a separation between Stephen's vision and Stephen's stoning. Stephen has already been discussed in Should We Pray to Jesus?, but this new argument will be examined, and new arguments will be brought forth against praying to Jesus.

Presumptuous "Proof"

Brother Hallenbeck expends quite a bit of time and ink attempting to prove that Stephen's vision had ended by the time Stephen was stoned to death, but ultimately his conclusion is nothing but pure speculation. This author has one simple request—please cite the book, chapter, and verse which reveals when the vision ended. Does anyone alive today know how long John's visions lasted on the isle of Patmos? Hopefully the reader can see through the smoke of his alleged proof.

Erroneous Use of "Example"

Stephen experienced something that no person today will ever experience. No preacher of God's

Word today has ever had his face appear “as it had been the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15). No person alive today is “full of the Holy Ghost” in the same sense that inspired men like Stephen were (Acts 7:55). No person alive today has ever “...looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55). Hopefully no faithful Christians today will be stoned to death, either. However, even if they were, it would not be while they were seeing a vision of Jesus (or even immediately after they had seen a vision of Jesus, as some claim the events of Acts 7 happened). Not only were those events of Acts 7 different from anything that could happen today, there were also some things which were totally unique about Stephen’s situation—for example, he was the first martyr of the kingdom, and he saw a vision in which Jesus was actually standing (not sitting) on the right hand of God. Knowing that men today will never experience anything remotely like this, why would one take this account and say it is a pattern for people to follow today? Gary Workman wrote,

But let us remember that Stephen was a man who, after receiving the laying-on of the apostles’ hands, was “full of faith and power” and “did great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8). Not only that, but he spoke by the Holy Spirit (v. 10). This means that he was an inspired man. In Acts 7 Stephen delivered a message that surely was through that gift of inspiration, since his audience “saw his face as the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15). At the end of the speech, Stephen, “being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55). There is not a shred of evidence to indicate that the Spirit left him or that the vision of Jesus faded as they rushed upon him, stoned him, and the dying Stephen entreated, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” No one has ever doubted that this inspired man had every right to make this appeal to Jesus who appeared to him in this heavenly vision. But many have doubted that we have the right in uninspired and ordinary circumstances to do the same thing. To conclude otherwise is bold presumption without any divine authority in back of it. Whenever the time comes that Jesus makes a personal appearance to us, that will be the time for us to do as Stephen did. Meanwhile, we are told to rely on the written word as our guide (“What About Praying to Jesus?,” in *The Restorer*, November/December, 2000, p. 9).

According to the logic of those who uphold Stephen as an example of prayer to Jesus, since John made a request of an angel (Rev. 10:9), then perhaps men can make requests of angels today (Heb. 1:14); and since Stephen, by inspiration (Acts 7:55), saw Jesus and spoke to Him, then men can speak to Jesus today. This type of reasoning disregards the context, which involves people experiencing things that men do not experience today. Since the thief on the cross made a request of Jesus, does that mean that men can pray to Jesus today? Since Ananias had a conversation with Jesus, does that give Christians authority to speak to Jesus today? Brother Jackson seems to think so, because he quoted W. E. Vine’s use of Acts 9:13 as evidence for praying to Jesus in the August 2010 *Christian Courier* (p. 5). For brethren to use such passages as evidence to support praying to Jesus is comparable to a denominational preacher using the same passages to teach men to be saved by praying to Jesus; both require the teacher to disregard the context and the clear passages which teach otherwise. Even though Paul spoke to Jesus on the road to Damascus, he very clearly taught men to pray to the Father always (Eph. 5:20; Col. 3:17; Phil. 4:6; Rom. 15:30, etc.). As a matter of fact, Jesus Himself taught men to do that! (Luke 11:1-2; John 15:16; 16:23-29).

Just because Stephen was kneeling and “calling upon” does not mean that this was a prayer in the way one would think of a prayer today. While Jesus was on earth, there were those who kneeled before Him and/or made requests to Him (Mark 10:17; John 4:31), but this is not authorization to pray to Him today. Brother Hallenbeck even states in his book that “calling upon” does not necessarily mean prayer (p. 177). Stephen very well could have been crying out to the Lord as he

was seeing Him standing on the right hand of God, and this would not authorize men to pray to Jesus today. Brother Taylor brought up an interesting question when he asked, "In whose name was this uttered? Would we send a prayer to the heavenly throne of grace and attach NO name?" (p. 18, emphasis his). This is another indication that this is not a pattern intended for Christians to follow today, and also that Stephen could have been looking at Christ when he uttered these words.

If one could see an angel today, he would probably speak to the angel, but that does not mean that one should be making requests of angels today. If one saw Jesus, he would probably speak to Jesus also, but such does not authorize people to pray to Jesus today. These aforementioned passages do not authorize men to pray to Jesus any more than they authorize men to pray to angels.

Some argue that because Stephen was an inspired man, then "...this shows that it is right to worship the Lord Jesus, and pray to him. For if Stephen was *inspired*, it settles the question. The example of an inspired man in such circumstances is a safe and correct example..." (Albert Barnes, emphasis his). Even if someone could somehow prove that Stephen was "praying" to Jesus (in the sense that one would think of prayer today), something to take into consideration is that "...inspiration did not govern the CONDUCT of the man. Peter was inspired, but Paul rebuked him to the face...Inspired men were only infallible when they spoke for the Lord" (H. E. Phillips, *Searching the Scriptures*, Vol. XXII, No. 8, August, 1981, p. 471, emphasis his). With all that being said, this author maintains that comparing Stephen's actions with a prayer one might offer today is not an "apples to apples" comparison.

Exceptions, Not Examples

All students of the Bible need to be aware that there are exceptions recorded in the Bible that were not meant to be used as examples for God's people to follow. First Samuel 21:3-6 contains a record of David eating of the tabernacle showbread. This was a unique situation that is recorded in the Scriptures. However, did God's people from this time onward conclude that they should all be allowed to eat of the showbread? Perhaps if some brethren today had lived during the time of the tabernacle or temple after this event, they may have claimed that they had a right to eat of the bread of the tabernacle because of what David did. However, there is no indication that God's people came to such a conclusion. They knew they were to follow the rule, not the exception.

Second Chronicles 30:1ff records King Hezekiah commanding that the Passover be observed during the second month, instead of the first month, because of special circumstances. Should God's people have concluded from this account that future observances of the Passover should have been observed in the second month instead of the month God had commanded? If some brethren had lived under the Old Testament after Hezekiah's time, would they have argued for observance of the Passover in the second month because of this account in Second Chronicles, or would they simply follow what God had initially commanded?

There are also other exceptional situations found in the New Testament, such as the Holy Spirit baptism only upon the apostles (Acts 2:1-4); the Holy Spirit baptism upon the Gentiles before water baptism (Acts 10:44ff); two-way communication between the ascended Christ and men (Acts 9—these events took place shortly after the stoning of Stephen); Saul being chosen "as one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:1-18); angels communicating with men (Luke 1; Acts 5:19; 8:26; 10:7; 12:8); the Holy Spirit speaking audibly to men (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 13:2; 16:6); and other examples which could be cited. As brother Warren wrote, some actions recorded in the Scriptures were "optional and temporary" ([When Is An "Example" Binding?](#), p. 134). The Bible does not teach men to take exceptional situations and make rules out them. The Bible teaches men to take God's rules and follow them, rather than following actions which took place in exceptional situations.

Obedience is in Order

It really all boils down to this—Will men submit to what God has commanded? The words of Samuel ring forth from ages past just as powerfully today as when they were first uttered to Saul: “...Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry...” (1 Sam. 15:22-23). Should Christians desire to worship Christ? Yes, but first and foremost they should desire to obey.

For one to maintain that praying to Jesus is Scripturally authorized based on the account of Stephen in Acts 7, he must:

1. Prove that the vision had ended before Stephen called out to Jesus (no person on earth can do this).
2. Explain why Stephen’s prayer was not offered “in the name of” anyone, and explain why that is a pattern for Christians to follow today.
3. Explain why men should ignore God’s clear commands for prayer in the New Testament because of a unique event unlike anything which could be experienced today.
4. Explain why men should ignore God’s clear commands for prayer in the New Testament because of more ambiguous passages like this one.
5. Explain why God’s faithful followers in Bible times did not presume to follow “exceptions” rather than “rules.”
6. Explain why “sacrifice” is better than “obedience” when it comes to prayer (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

Part 3 - Listening to the Lord

Those who teach that men have authority to pray to Jesus surely would have ceased their efforts after carefully studying one verse in its context—John 16:23. They claim that in the first part of verse 23 Jesus is not referring to prayer, but asking questions for information. Although the phrase “no question” is found in the ASV 1901 version, this Greek word “*ouden*” is never translated as “no question” in any other passage in the ASV. Out of the 346 times it occurs, *ouden* is never translated as “no question” in the King James Version. In the NKJV and ESV translations of John 16:23 it is translated as “nothing.” It seems strange that the ASV translators translated it in this way when other translators did not see fit to do this, and that word is not translated in that way in any other passage, as far as this author can determine. Thayer says this word (from the root *oudeis*) means “no one, nothing.”

The key to understanding what Jesus is saying in the first part of verse 23 is to notice what Jesus goes on to say. Please notice the contrast He makes in verse 23, and the several similarities between verses 23 and 26. Also notice the use of the words used from the Greek roots *erotao* and *aiteo*:

John 16:23-29

- (23) And **in that day ye shall ask [erotao] me nothing**. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall **ask [aiteo] the Father in my name**, he will give [it] you.
- (24) Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.
- (25) These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.
- (26) **At that day ye shall ask [aiteo] in my name**: and I say not unto you, that I will **pray [erotao] the Father** for you:
- (27) For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.
- (28) I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to

the Father.

(29) His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

The similarities between verses 23 and 26 are undeniable:

- 1) The phrase “In that day” is used in both verses (same words in Greek).
- 2) The words “ask in my name” are found in both verses.
- 3) The words *aiteo* and *erotao* are used in both verses.

Please notice that in verse 26 *aiteo* and *erotao* are clearly used interchangeably to mean the same thing! (make request in prayer). The word *erotao* is actually translated as “pray” in verse 26. If one is honest, he will concede that the two words (*erotao*, *aiteo*) must have the same meaning in verse 23 as well. The similarities between these two verses are extremely compelling, and this comparison is much more plausible than trying to pair verse 23 with earlier verses in the chapter that are dissimilar.

Jesus is saying, “You will not *erotao* me at all (v23a), because you will *erotao* the Father!” (v26b). Whatever it is that Jesus is saying they would be doing to the Father, Jesus is also saying they would not be doing that to Jesus. Obviously they would not be asking the Father for information, but making requests of Him in prayer (*erotao*, v26b). This means that they would not be going to Jesus in prayer! (*erotao*, v23a).

Let the reader note that Jesus went on to “pray” (from the Greek root *erotao*) to the Father several times, praying in the very next chapter (John 17:9, 15, 20). This was after He told His disciples not to *erotao* (pray to) Him “in that day” after His ascension! (John 16:23, 26). See also the use of *erotao* in John 4:31, 40, 47 and 14:16, in which it is not used to mean “asking a question for information.”

When determining the meaning of this passage, one should also pay close attention to the contrast Jesus is making. Even those who believe men can pray to Jesus would have to admit that the last half of John 16:23 is referring to prayer. To say that the first part of John 16:23 is not referring to prayer is to ignore the contrast Jesus is making. If one ignores the contrast Jesus is making in verse 23, then he ignores what Jesus was really teaching.

This passage destroys the doctrine of praying to Jesus! Dear reader, if you have any respect for the authority of the Lord, please listen to what He said and obey Him! (Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Tim. 6:15; 1 Sam. 15:22-23). By the way, this also is another reason to rule out the possibility of inserting a “me” into John 14:14.

For one to maintain that praying to Jesus is Scripturally authorized, he must:

1. Ignore the contrast Jesus made in John 16:23 regarding prayer, thus ignoring what Jesus was really teaching.
2. Ignore the similarities between John 16:23 and 16:26.
3. Ignore the fact that *erotao* and *aiteo* are used interchangeably in John 16:26.
4. Ignore the way Jesus used the Greek word *erotao* in the immediate context to mean “pray” (John 16:26b).
5. Ignore the fact that Jesus went on to “pray” (from the Greek word *erotao*) to the Father in the very next chapter (John 17:9, 15, 20), after He told His disciples not to *erotao* (pray to) Him “in that day” after His ascension! (John 16:23, 26; cf. 4:31, 40, 47; 14:16).
6. Maintain that in His instructions for prayer in John 16:23ff, Jesus did not speak “plainly.” “His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb” (John 16:29).
7. Explain why Jesus repeatedly said, “ask the Father in my name” if He were not establishing a pattern for prayer.

Part 4 - The Pattern of Prayer in the Lord's Supper

In the first section of Andrew Hallenbeck's book, he begins with what seems to be the most common appeal of those holding his doctrine—praying to Jesus during the Lord's Supper. Such was the emotional argument of Wendell Winkler at Polishing the Pulpit, that he believed one should be able to pray to Jesus during the Lord's Supper ("Lord Teach Us to Pray," September 27, 2004). By the way, is it not ironic that the title of that lecture came from Luke 11:1? Praying to Jesus during the Lord's Supper is also the example given by brother Jackson in his article "May a Christian Address Christ in Praise or Prayer?" and the August 2010 edition of *Christian Courier*. This author has had brethren tell him personally that they pray directly to Jesus during the Lord's Supper, and they seem to get upset when anyone questions the authority for such. However, when asked to provide Scriptural authority for their practice, they can provide none. It is no surprise that praying to Jesus during Communion was brought up again by brother Hallenbeck.

Do the Scriptures teach Christians to pray to Jesus during observance of the Lord's Supper? Notice the divine instructions that have been revealed. Jesus prayed to the Father when He instituted the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-27; Mark 14:22-23; Luke 22:19-20). Did Paul tell the Corinthians to follow the pattern received from the Lord, or did Paul say, "Now there is a new pattern to follow?"

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

Notice that Paul said the Lord had delivered to him that which Paul had delivered to the Corinthians. In other words, there was a pattern that the Lord had set forth which was to be followed. Based on what one reads in the Gospel accounts and the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians, there is a divine pattern set forth by Christ that Christians are to follow:

- 1) Give thanks in prayer to the Father
- 2) Discern (or meditate upon) the Lord's body while partaking of the bread
- 3) Give thanks in prayer to the Father
- 4) Meditate upon the blood Christ shed for us while partaking of the fruit of the vine

Although there seems to be much misunderstanding about what is supposed to be done during the Lord's Supper, it is actually quite simple. Christians must simply follow the pattern Christ left for them. This means that prayers during this part of the worship are directed to God the Father! This is what the Christians at Corinth were instructed to do by divine authority, and Paul taught the same thing in all the churches (1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17). This also perfectly harmonizes with other Scriptures regarding prayer, such as Ephesians 5:20: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This text in First Corinthians chapter eleven is the lengthiest, most detailed revelation regarding the Lord's Supper in the Scriptures. Surely this would have been the ideal place for the Holy Spirit to instruct Christians to pray to Jesus. Surely He could have commanded the Corinthians to pray to Jesus—the one who was mocked, tortured, and slain for them! However, He did not, and the fact that He did not is a death knell for the doctrine of praying to Jesus.

Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, simply instructed them to follow the pattern set by Jesus. Remember what Paul told the Corinthian brethren: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the

Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to write the commandments of the Lord regarding the Lord's Supper, and they are very clear. Brethren, does the Bible give sufficient information to know how to partake of the Lord's Supper properly? Can Christians be satisfied with the Lord's clear instructions regarding the Lord's Supper, or must they go beyond what has been revealed? (2 John 9-11; 1 Cor. 4:6). The apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit, and the Lord teach Christians plainly to pray to the Father during the Lord's Supper.

Please consider this—surely if there were ever a time to pray to Jesus, it would be during the Lord's Supper. In fact, this may very well be the only time many pray to Jesus at all. However, the fact that Christians are taught to pray to the Father, even during the Lord's (Jesus') Supper is powerful evidence that **there is never an appropriate time to pray to Jesus!** Is it not ironic that the practical example most of these brethren believe helps defend their doctrine is actually one of its greatest downfalls?

For one to maintain that praying to Jesus during the Lord's Supper is Scripturally authorized, he must:

1. Ignore the fact that Jesus prayed to the Father during the institution of the Lord's Supper.
2. Ignore the fact the Paul taught Christians to follow the pattern set by the Lord in observing the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-25).
3. Explain why the Holy Spirit, in His lengthiest, most detailed revelation on this subject (1 Cor. 11:17-34), did not instruct Christians to pray to Jesus during the Lord's Supper.
4. Explain why these divine instructions in the Gospel accounts and in First Corinthians are not thorough enough to teach Christians how to carry out this act of worship properly.
5. Explain why "sacrifice" is better than "obedience" when it comes to this act of worship (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

Part 5 - Dishonoring Deity

At the very heart of the doctrine of praying to Jesus and the Holy Spirit seems to be a misunderstanding of the roles existing within the Godhead. Brethren who believe that one has authority to pray to Jesus seem to think that those who teach against such are dishonoring Christ, when it is actually the case that to honor Christ is to obey what He has commanded (1 Tim. 6:14-16). Brother Hallenbeck wrote, "Jesus' deity was questioned in the first century, so I am concerned whether we are doing so now" (p. 14). Other statements like this in his and brother Jackson's writings imply that if one teaches that people should not pray to Christ, that teacher is casting doubt upon Jesus' deity, when actually, nothing could be further from the truth! By obeying Him, Christians honor Him and respect His divine authority. Because Christ is "Lord" and "God" (John 20:28) with all authority over us (Matt. 28:18), everyone must submit to Him and obey His commands (John 14:15).

If one teaches that men should not pray to the Holy Spirit, has he somehow cast doubt upon the deity of the Holy Spirit? If one does not focus on the Holy Spirit instead of Christ while He is partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine, is he casting doubt upon the Holy Spirit's deity? Is he somehow dishonoring the Holy Spirit? No, he is simply obeying what he has been taught to do in worship! If the Spirit has revealed that Christians should not focus on Him during the Lord's Supper, then they should not focus on Him. That is not questioning His deity; that is respecting His deity and His divine commands! The same principles apply with prayer. Just because one does not directly address the Holy Spirit or Jesus in a prayer, that has absolutely nothing to do with casting doubt upon Their deity. That is called obedience. As brother Taylor wrote, prayer should be "TO the Father, IN the name of Christ, and BY the Spirit's instructions in Sacred Scripture" (Shall We Pray to Jesus?, p. 46, emphasis his). It cannot be wrong to pray in this way, and it cannot be wrong to teach that men should pray in this way. Praying in such a way does not

dishonor Christ or the Holy Spirit, but rather shows true respect for them.

Deity's Distinctions

Brother Hallenbeck seems to believe that no distinctions can be made among the Persons of the Godhead. As a matter of fact, in his efforts to prove his doctrine, he knows that he must argue that there are no significant distinctions between Them. He wrote, "How can Christ be **equal** with the Father, yet not worthy of invocation in praise and prayer?" (p. 127, emphasis his). On page 135 he wrote, "If Christ has 'all authority,' does it not seem strange that we may not approach Him in address?...Jesus has the same 'authority' as the Father." On page 136 he quoted Dave Miller, who wrote, "The Father and Son are **one in action**, since the Son does not act independently of the Father..." ("Jesus' Claims to Deity," in *Reason and Revelation*, 2010, emphasis his). On page 136 brother Hallenbeck wrote, "The Bible teaches with clarity that the nature of God is used interchangeably; that although deity is one, there are three distinct persons. And as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are three, they act in perfect unison, never abating from each other. They are equal in all aspects." On page 170 he wrote, "To refuse to address one of God's **equal** natures undermines the core of Christianity" (emphasis his).

This author does not want to misrepresent anything quoted above, but it seems as if some important distinctions were overlooked or avoided in these statements, and these distinctions are directly related to prayer. First of all, the first Person of the Godhead is "Our Father which art in Heaven" (Matt. 6:9). He is also still the Father of Jesus, even though Jesus has ascended to Heaven (John 20:17; Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3, 11:31; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3). Secondly, "...the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3; cf. 15:27-28), so They are not "equal in all aspects," because Jesus does not have "the same authority" as the Father. These verses were not mentioned in brother Hallenbeck's book at all, as far as this author could determine. A father and mother are both equally parents, but the father is the head of his wife, having God-given authority over her (1 Cor. 11:3). God the Father and God the Son are also not "one in action" in all aspects, at least not in the sense of this discussion, because while Christ intercedes for Christians (Rom. 8:34), the Father does not. While Christ is the Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5-6), the Father is not, and the Spirit is not. While the Holy Spirit was said to be an Intercessor (Rom. 8:26-27), the Father is not. As stated, these differences are directly related to Their different roles in prayer, and brethren who teach that Christians may pray to Jesus and the Holy Spirit seem to be overlooking or misunderstanding this vital information!

There are other distinctions which could be noted, such as the fact that the Father sent the Son, not the Spirit. The Spirit did not send the Son, and neither the Father nor the Spirit were crucified and raised from the dead. When the mother of James and John made a request of Jesus, He said, "...to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father" (Matt. 20:23; cf. James 1:17).

Misunderstanding Mediation

In the process of arguing that one may communicate directly with his Mediator today, brother Hallenbeck quoted Barclay, who wrote, "a mediator is one who stands between two parties and acts as a go-between" (p. 114). This definition seems to imply that Christians are to deliver their words directly to Jesus, who will then deliver those words to the Father for them, as if He were some kind of divine Messenger. If that were how Christ functioned as Mediator, then Christians would always address Christ and never address the Father in prayer! Some brethren also say that a "me" should be included in John 14:14, as if we are to pray to Jesus in the name of Jesus. Is Christ the Mediator between Christians and Himself? (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). He is the Mediator by means of His death (Heb. 9:15; 1 Tim. 2:5-6). Now Christians can enter the Holy of Holies and approach the throne of God by Christ's authority (Heb. 10:19; 4:14-16). His mediatory role has nothing to do with Him supposedly taking words from Christians to the Father!

Hebrews 7:25 encompasses Christ's role as both Mediator and Intercessor, and yet it says **we come unto God by Him**. It does not say we go to Christ, and then He goes to God for us. Christians approach God's throne by the authority of Christ, and Christ also intercedes for us when we come to God: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25; cf. 4:14-16; Rev. 8:3-4). There is a consistent pattern for prayer revealed in the New Testament that Christians are to follow. Surely such fundamental misunderstandings as those mentioned above are at the very core of these brethren's doctrine.

The impression this author has gotten from some brethren is that they think if Christians cannot pray to Jesus, then they do not really have a relationship with Him. However, just the opposite is true! For one thing, it is because of a Christian's relationship with Jesus as Savior and Mediator between God and men that one can pray to God in Christ's name (1 Tim. 2:1-6). Christ also intercedes for Christians to the Father (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34). Christians can go to Heaven to be with Him eternally because of their relationship with Him (Heb. 7:25; Acts 4:12). Christians are members of His body, with His blood cleansing our sins (Eph. 5:23; 1 John 1:7). In worship Christians remember His sacrifice when they observe the Lord's Supper. Christians preach His Gospel at every opportunity, giving of their means, remembering "the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive," and singing songs of praise to Him (Eph. 5:19). The Bible absolutely teaches that Christ should be worshiped, and remember that prayer is only one of the acts of worship—there are other ways to worship Christ which are actually authorized by the Scriptures. One should not conclude that he must pray to Christ to worship Him and honor Him, any more than he should conclude that refusing to focus on the Holy Spirit during the Lord's Supper dishonors the Holy Spirit.

Although Christians pray to the Father to give Him thanks for the bread and fruit of the vine during Communion, our minds then focus on the Lord Jesus' body and blood. Does that mean that by not focusing on the Father during this specific part of the Lord's Supper that Christians are dishonoring the Father or questioning His deity? Of course not, and the fact that Jesus should be worshiped in some ways does not inherently mean that He should be worshiped in all ways! When it comes to the act of worship called prayer, it must be directed to the Father in the name of Jesus. This does not detract from the deity of Christ or the Holy Spirit at all. It should go without saying that worship must be according to God's instructions (John 4:24; Col. 2:23, 3:17). Failure to do what has been instructed in prayer or any other act of worship, exactly the way it has been instructed, is a failure to honor and obey God (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

All Christians need to realize that when a Christian addresses his prayer to the Father in the name of Jesus, no Person of the Godhead is excluded; both the Holy Spirit and Jesus are actively fulfilling Their roles in that prayer. The Christian should not presume to address Jesus or the Spirit directly to prompt Them to be active during his prayer to the Father. If such were necessary, Christians would be required to address all three Persons in every single prayer! This is obviously not how the Scriptures teach men to pray. Christians should not assume that praying only to the Father dishonors Jesus or the Holy Spirit, because They All have Their own active, individual roles when it comes to prayer.

Even without praying to Christ, His relationship to Christians is just as intact and meaningful, with Him being described as our Brother, our Bridegroom, High Priest, Mediator, Advocate, Savior, our Good Shepherd, the Head of the Body of which we are members, the Captain of our salvation, the Author of our salvation, our Creator, our Counselor, our Rock, Deliverer, Judge, King, Lawgiver, Lord, an Intercessor, etc. Every title for Christ in the Scriptures remains intact and meaningful without Christians directly addressing Him in prayer. As a matter of fact, the teaching that Christians may pray directly to Christ is actually what detracts from some of His titles (such as the Mediator between God and man, and Intercessor when we "come unto God by Him," 1 Tim. 2:5;

Heb. 7:25). Just because one does not directly address Christ in prayer, this does not hinder his relationship to Christ in any way! Instead, he is actually doing what both the Lord and the Holy Spirit have commanded Christians to do.

Supplications to the Spirit

When discussing the subject of praying to Jesus, one inevitably will have to address the matter of whether or not one may pray directly to the Holy Spirit. This is a natural result of such a discussion, and a matter which needs to be addressed. In online articles, the *Christian Courier* publication, and his book *A New Testament Commentary*, brother Wayne Jackson openly teaches that Christians may pray to the Holy Spirit. Brother Hallenbeck also teaches that Christians have authority to pray to the Holy Spirit (pp. 14, 40, 99, 100, 170). One wonders, "How does one pray to the Holy Spirit, anyway? Does one approach Him in the name of Christ? Is Christ the Mediator between the Holy Spirit and men?" One also wonders if these brethren would approve of a brother leading a public worship assembly in a prayer directed to the Holy Spirit. This is one of the inevitable results of this doctrine, and surely congregations will split over such. Actually, congregations had already been having problems as a result of the teaching that one may pray to Jesus, before *Should We Pray to Jesus?* was printed. That was one of the main reasons why that material was published. In the future, will congregations of the Lord's church all over the world be praying to the Holy Spirit in the worship assemblies? Should brethren not be concerned about this?

Perhaps there are some who believe that one may pray to Jesus, but not to the Holy Spirit. Brethren need to realize that arguments being used to support praying to Jesus also imply with clarity that one may pray directly to the Holy Spirit. These brethren's arguments lead one to a second false teaching of praying to the Holy Spirit, which is even more difficult to believe and defend than praying to Jesus! **Any doctrine which implies a false doctrine is itself false.**

Paul said, "...I pray to God..." (2 Cor. 13:7), and he knew that both he and the Romans prayed to God the Father—not Jesus or the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:30). The fact that Jesus did not pray to the Holy Spirit teaches Christians not to pray to the Holy Spirit, and it does away with the argument that one may pray to any Member of the Godhead simply because He is Deity. Of course, Christians have also been taught by the Spirit Himself to pray to the Father always in the name of Jesus Christ.

For one to maintain that praying to Jesus and the Holy Spirit is Scripturally authorized, he must:

1. Ignore the clear distinctions which exist between the Persons of the Godhead.
2. Concede that if Christians are taught to speak directly to their Mediator/Intercessor, Who then delivers those words to the Father, then they must address Christ in every prayer. This also means they would never address the Father in prayer (Heb. 7:25; cf. 4:14-16; Rev. 8:3-4).
3. Maintain that one can truly honor Deity without obeying Deity.
4. Explain why not focusing on the Holy Spirit while partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine does not dishonor Him or call His deity into question.
5. Explain why Jesus never prayed to the Holy Spirit.
6. Explain why there is no record of anyone in the Scriptures directing a prayer to the Holy Spirit.
7. Explain why Jesus never taught His disciples to pray to the Holy Spirit, but to the Father.
8. Explain why Paul mentioned all three Persons of the Godhead in Romans 15:30, yet he said that both he and the Romans prayed "to God."
9. Ignore all the clear, comprehensive language in the Scriptures which commands Christians to pray "always" to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
10. Charge God with consistently using misleading language regarding His instructions for worship.
11. Explain why "sacrifice" is better than "obedience" when it comes to prayer (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

Part 6 - Scholars, or Scriptures?

Sometimes other uninspired men can express an idea more eloquently than a writer believes he could express it in his own words. There is absolutely nothing inherently wrong with quoting from uninspired men; however, one should not quote them as “authorities,” as if to say, “All men should believe this because brother (*insert well-known preacher name here*) believed this before he died, and (*insert famous scholar name*) believed this also.” Brother Hallenbeck informs his readers, “I found that the bulk of conservative scholarship concluded in the affirmative that addressing Christ in praise and prayer was authorized” (p. 13). Just five pages subsequent to this, he writes, “It will be observed that there is almost perfect unison in the bulk of conservative scholarship that our Lord may be addressed in praise and prayer. The author has found that there are only a select few who disagree...” (p. 18). One wonders, “Is it really true that most conservative scholarship believes that we may pray to Jesus? What methods were used to come to this conclusion? At the same time, what difference does it make?” “In logic, an **argumentum ad populum** (Latin for ‘**appeal to the people**’) is a fallacious argument that concludes a proposition to be true because many or most people believe it” (wikipedia.org, emphasis theirs). Notice how Hallenbeck tries to make his opposition sound like they are in the “misguided” minority: “...in recent years a few misguided Christians have raised voices of protest against any who dare to speak directly to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior” (p. 11). Hallenbeck went on to write the following:

We have documented numerous well respected and conservative men in this section who all espoused prayer to Christ. After many hours of examining the works of those in prior years, I’m convinced that these men understood the relationship between Christ and man. In addition, many scholars of various denominational backgrounds, as this work will reveal, are of the consensus that Jesus, being deity, is worthy of praise and prayer (pp. 39-40).

Although brother Hallenbeck does mention that the Bible is the final authority, notice his conclusion: “Yet, there are numerous individuals who are of the studied conviction that Jesus Christ is worthy of prayer, hence, the practice of such is not sin” (pp. 175-176). What if one reasoned this way with other Scriptural matters? For example—“There are numerous individuals who are of the studied conviction” that one may worship God with mechanical instruments of music. Should one conclude that “hence, the practice of such is not sin”? Is it not disturbing how many times brother Hallenbeck appeals to what the supposed majority of “scholars” believe? Numbers mean nothing; Truth means everything. Faithful Christians should expect to be in the minority (Matt. 7:13-14; 1 Pet. 3:20).

One should remember that those men have no authority—the Lord is the One in authority (Matt. 28:18), and what does the True Authority say? (John 16:23-29; Matt. 6:6ff; Luke 11:1-2; John 15:16, etc.). Jesus also gave words to the apostles that men must obey (Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 3:17, etc.). Hopefully brethren will determine to place their emphasis on solid Scriptures, not a superfluous saturation of so-called scholarship. “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man” (Psa. 118:8; cf. 1 Cor. 2:5).

Brother Hallenbeck presented his material in a kind manner overall. However, his kindness does not change the fact that what he has taught presents a danger to the precious body of Christ, in the forms of divisions and the corruption of Scriptural worship.

Conclusion

Faithful brethren in the Lord’s church have always defended God’s clear instructions regarding other acts of worship, such as singing without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments. Why should Christians not take a stand to defend God’s clear instructions regarding prayer? Is it more

important to defend God's clear instructions on one act of worship than another? Is it more important to defend singing than it is to defend prayer? Have those who defended the Truth on singing ever been accused of being divisive? (cf. 1 Kings 18:17-18).

Should Christians take a subjective approach toward this particular act of worship and just agree to disagree, thereby seeking "unity in diversity"? If so, would not this imply that God has not spoken clearly enough for Christians to come to a unified consensus on this subject? Such a position would further imply that Christians really cannot be sure that they are worshiping God properly. Therefore, they cannot have confidence regarding the second coming of the Lord and the Judgment, because they cannot be sure whether or not they have been faithful regarding worship! Will Christ judge men by something that has not been revealed "plainly"? (John 12:48; 16:29). Will Christians cease to have the peace that God desires them to have in this life because they are unsure of their faithfulness? (Phil. 4:7). Such a subjective position brings charges against God, His Holy Word, and His ability to communicate effectively to the souls He wants saved through a clear understanding of the truth: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4; Eph. 3:4, 5:17).

God does not want Christians to doubt whether or not they will receive the crown of life. He wants Christians to have confidence that they are serving Him faithfully (Rev. 2:10). The only way men can be sure that they are in a right relationship with God is by obeying His commandments (1 John 2:3-6). Therefore men must obey what God has clearly revealed, and let more difficult passages be interpreted in a way which does not contradict very clear passages. Paul had confidence in his faithfulness and salvation (2 Tim. 4:6-8), and he prayed to the Father "always" (Eph. 5:20; Phil. 1:3-4, 4:6-7; Rom. 15:30, etc.). If Christians today will have such confidence, then let them also pray to the Father "always"!

Unity is not destroyed by teaching what the Spirit has clearly revealed, but rather by teaching doctrines that contradict very clear passages. Is it wrong to teach Christians to "pray to thy Father"? (Matt. 6:6-9; Luke 11:1-2). Christ commanded Christians to teach what He taught, did He not? (Matt. 28:18-20). Is it wrong to teach Christians to ask "nothing" of Christ in prayer, but rather ask of the Father? (John 16:23-29). Is it wrong to teach that "in every thing" Christians let their requests be made known "unto God" (Phil. 4:6), or that the "prayers of all saints" ascend to God the Father? (Rev. 8:3-4). If it is not sinful to pray exclusively to the Father, is it worth causing divisions among brethren to promote the doctrine of praying to Jesus and the Holy Spirit? "...Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Phil. 3:16). Christians should all speak the same thing regarding prayer. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

Brethren, "...God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33). God is the author of peace, and that peace can be present throughout the whole household of God, but it will only come from what the Spirit has clearly revealed: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3; John 17:17, 21-23). In the interest of worshiping God properly and keeping the unity of the Spirit, faithful brethren should teach and uphold the simple Truth regarding this sacred act of worship (2 Cor. 11:3), and brethren who are teaching otherwise should stop.

I love all of my brothers and sisters in Christ, and I truly want us all to be united in the Truth. There are now over seven billion people in the world, and Christians need to be united in love and in the Truth to make a proper impact in this world for the cause of Christ (John 13:34-35; 17:17, 21-23). As our Lord prayed to the Father for unity in His body, this is also my heart's desire and prayer.

Jason Hilburn

