

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Best Is Yet To Come

John 14:13-15

Part 2

Our church at this present time is seeking to position ourselves for an expanded ministry role in the Antelope Valley and around the world.

This present effort can be seen in a number of different ways but I would like to highlight just three.

First of all, I would like to mention our building program. The Lord has blessed us with wonderful facilities. But a few years ago it became apparent that we had maxed out our facilities. In other words, the choices that we were being forced to make in order to deal with our growing numbers had begun to take a toll on our ability to effectively minister to the whole of our church family.

Therefore we decided it was time to expand our facility. This of course in the life of a church is always a very challenging endeavor but it was an endeavor that we as a church joyously took on.

What is the present status of this effort? We are approximately five months away from actually occupying our new worship center. Praise God! And what do we believe this new worship center will provide us? We believe that this new worship center will provide us the opportunity to have an expanded ministry role both here and abroad.

So, what else are we seeking to do in order to position ourselves for an expanded ministry role in the Antelope Valley and around the world?

We have introduced an intern program. Why is this so important? It is important because it is through our intern program that we hope that the Lord will supply many of our future church leaders and the vast majority of our future church staff.

It is a wonderful thing to have a larger facility, but if we are unable to raise up the leaders and staff to support the ministry potential of a larger facility we will be severely challenged to take advantage of it.

So, what is the present status of our intern program? First of all, over the past two years we have financially supported five summer interns. And presently we are supporting two full-time interns. Kyle Jenison who is ministering in our high school and college ministry and Nathan Fogde who is just beginning to work in our music ministry.

I would hope that these efforts to expand our ministry potential through the building and intern programs is exciting to you, but there is an even more important factor that we need to aggressively pursue if we are going to reach the full potential of all that we can accomplish in this valley and around the world for Christ. And this brings us back to our study of the Gospel of John and Christ's farewell discourse.

Jesus in **John 14** had shared with His disciples that He was leaving them and though they would seek Him they would not be able to find nor come to Him.

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And of course we know that when Jesus spoke about their inability to come to Him He was speaking about their inability to come to Him after His ascension. This of course raises a question.

What would the lives of Christ's disciples be like after He left them? What would the lives of Christ's disciples be like after He returned back to His Father?

Jesus answered this question in **John 14:12-15**. Let me read these verses for you. **"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. (13) And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (14) If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (15) If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."** So, what had Christ told them about their future earthly lives?

Jesus in **John 14:12-15** in essence told His disciples that in spite of the fact that He was leaving them, the best days of their earthly lives were still ahead of them. In order to better appreciate this thought, I have broken these verses into three different parts. So, what was the first part?

The first part was the promise of better days (verse 12). Let me read this verse for you **verse 12**. **"He who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father."** The disciples of Christ could look forward to better days because Christ promised them that those who believed in Him would not only perform the works that He had performed but they would perform even greater works.

Did this actually happen? Yes! It actually happened. His disciples and others who had believed in Him did in fact perform the works that He had performed, or in other words miraculous works, as well as the greater works that He had spoken of. And what were the greater works?

When Jesus told His disciples that those who believed in Him would perform even greater works He meant that they would be performing works associated with the bountiful harvest of souls in the church age. This is what He meant.

Though the church should no longer expect to be characterized by miraculous activity for the reason I shared with you over two weeks ago, the church should still expect to be characterized by those greater works associated with the harvest of souls since Christ still is building His church. In light of this we, who believe in Christ, still have the opportunity to be a part of these greater works.

If you are a true follower of Christ this is certainly something you would want to be a part of. And this is something of course that we as a church would certainly want to be a part of. If we weren't then we would not be going to all the effort and expense to expand our facilities and to train interns as well as doing all the other things that we are doing.

But there is a catch. If we individually or corporately are going to enjoy being a part of these greater works on any significant level, there is something that we need to know about this promise of better days. And what is that?

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We need to know that the promise of better days is linked to Christ's promise to answer the prayers of those who pray in His name (John 14:13-14). Let me now read for you **John 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."** Clearly, by virtue of the "and" at the beginning of this verse, Christ is now linking the promise of **verse 12** with the promise of **verse 13**.

So, let us go on to the second word in the verse. And what is the second word in the verse? The second word in the verse is the word "whatever." The word "whatever" comprises a lot of territory and certainly includes the works that were mentioned in the previous verse. In other words, the word "whatever" includes both the miraculous works and the greater works that Christ referred to in John 14:12.

So, let me ask you this question. Do we actually see this link between works mentioned in **John 14:12** and prayer in His name in the Book of Acts? And the answer is yes! We do see this link.

Hopefully you remember the story of how Peter raised Tabitha from the dead in **Acts 9**. How was he able to do this? According to **Acts 9:40** he prayed. This is how he did it. He prayed and then after he prayed he turned to the body of Tabitha and said, "Tabitha, rise" and of course what happened? She did.

Is there a link between the miraculous works performed in the early church and prayer? Yes! But now we need to go on to the next question. Do we see the same link between prayer and the greater works, or in other words the works associated with the harvest of souls, in the book of Acts? And again the answer is yes!

Hopefully you remember the response of Peter and John after they were threatened and released by Jewish authorities in **Acts 4**. And what was their response? They responded by going back to their companions and reporting to them the threats that were made against them. And what was the response of Peter, John and their fellow disciples after this report was made? They all prayed! And what did they pray? This is what they prayed, **"And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, 'O Lord, it is Thou who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, (25) who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Thy servant, didst say, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile 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 in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, (28) to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. (29) And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, (30) while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take through the name of Thy Holy Servant Jesus.' (31) And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness."** In other words, as a result of their prayer they went out and became active participants in the harvest of souls, or in other words the greater works.

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Does the book of Acts demonstrate the direct link between the ability of the early church to perform miraculous works and even the greater works associated with the harvest of souls and prayers prayed in the name of Christ? And the answer is yes! But someone here this weekend might say but how do we know that the prayers that we have just considered from the book of Acts were prayed "in Jesus' name"?

In order to answer this question we need to understand how Christ's disciples would have understood what He meant when He promised them that prayers prayed in His name would be answered. So, how would they have understood this?

To a westerner, a name is usually a convenient device for identifying one individual from another. However, to the Easterner in the first century, a name signified far more. Indeed, one of the purposes of a name was to express some outstanding quality possessed by the individual. Sometimes the name described the nature of the person. At other times it pointed to circumstances surrounding his birth. It could even refer to the person's appearance.

The name given to God represented the Jewish peoples' idea of the character of God, or the relation God had with them. The name of God was synonymous with the person of God. So when those Jewish disciples heard Jesus command them to ask in His name, neither Peter, nor Thomas, nor any of them were puzzled in the least bit. Why? Because they were already familiar with the basic connotation of the word "name."

Thus, in using the expression "name," Christ undoubtedly was signifying the idea of being, personality, and character. The name of Christ stands for Christ Himself (John 3:18).

For instance, what does the Bible mean when it tells us to believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God as it does in **John 3:18**? What does it mean? This is what it means when it calls us to believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God. It is calling us to believe in the person of Christ; to believe in all that He is, in all that He has done, in all that He is doing, and in all that He will do. This is what it means. If this is what it means to believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, then what does it mean to pray in His name?

To pray in the name of Christ means that our prayers must be based on all that Christ is, has done, is doing, and will do. In other words, our prayers must not be about us but rather our prayers must rather be about Him.

Let me ask you this question. Are you praying in your name? Or are you praying in Jesus' name? If you are seeking to pray in Jesus' name you will be making a conscious effort to pray prayers that you believe that Christ Himself would be praying if He were in your circumstances.

And how can we come to know how Christ Himself might pray if He were in the very same circumstances as ourselves? We can come to know how Christ Himself might pray by becoming more familiar with God's Word. The better we understand the Word of God, the better we will come to understand the mind of God.

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This is why I strongly encourage people in whatever circumstances that they find themselves to focus on praying according to the principles and precepts of the revealed will of God, or in other words according to biblical truths rather than simply seeking to pray like someone in the world might pray. And all too often the prayers of so many so-called professing believers are no different than their unsaved neighbor.

And what can we expect if we do this? What can we expect if we actually pray in the name of Jesus and not like our unsaved neighbor? Let me read for you **I John 5:14**. "**And this is the confidence we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**" If we are seeking to pray in the name of Christ, we will be seeking to pray according to the will of Christ; and if we are praying according to the will of Christ, our prayers will be answered.

Christ told His disciples that after His departure that they would not only be performing miraculous works but even greater works, or in other words works associated with the great harvest of souls that was about to be reaped in the church age. This was His promise to them.

But this promise was not given to them in a vacuum. This promise was linked to a second promise, which was the promise to answer prayers prayed in His name.

And this is exactly what these disciples did. Knowing that it was the will of Christ for them to perform the works that He had done and to be involved in the greater works associated with the harvest of souls, they prayed accordingly. And what happened? Their prayers were answered just as Christ had promised.

So, how does all of what I shared with you relate to how I started this message? We as a church are presently seeking to position ourselves for an expanded ministry role in the Antelope Valley and around the world. We are doing this in a number of different ways.

Certainly one of the ways we are doing this is through our building program. Certainly another way we are doing this is through our intern program. But the most important way that we can position ourselves for this expanded ministry role in the Antelope Valley and around the world is through strongly encouraging the whole of our church to pray in the name of Jesus, asking God to help us to see how each one of us through the gifts and abilities He has given us, through the resources He has entrusted to us, through the opportunities He has provided to be as fully in the greater works Jesus spoke of in **John 14:12**, or in other words the works associated with the harvest of souls.

And will He answer this prayer? Absolutely! He has too! This is what He promised in **John 14:13** and this is what He re-emphasized in **John 14:14**.

So, what have we seen so far? We have seen Christ promising His disciples better earthly days in **John 14:12**. And we have seen Christ linking His promise of better earthly days in **John 14:12** with the promise of answering the prayers of those who pray in His name in **John 14:13-14**. In other words, don't expect better days if you do not pray in My name.

But now we are faced with a question.

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What would have happened if Christ's disciples had failed to pray in His name and as a result failed to realize the better days that Christ had promised in **John 14:12**? Would this have meant that Christ failed to keep His promise to them? Yes, this is exactly what it would have meant. But this is all hypothetical, isn't it? Why would I say this?

This brings us to the third thing that we need to see in this section of verses associated with these better days that Jesus spoke of in **John 14:12-15**. So, what is this third thing?

The promise of better days was directed at individuals who truly loved Him and who would seek to be obedient to Him in the way they prayed (John 14:15).

Let me read for you **John 14:15**. "**If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.**" And this is the truth.

If you are here this weekend and if you truly love Christ, you will not simply seek to pray but you will seek to pray in Jesus' name. Why? You will seek to pray in His name because you love Him and you know this is one of the things that He wants you to do. And if you as an expression of your love, as a way of life seek to pray in His name, where will this invariably lead you? It will lead you to the better days that He promised His disciples. It will lead you to the place where you are fully engaged in the greater works, or in other words fully in engaged in those works associated with the harvesting of souls.

Our church at this present time is seeking to position ourselves for an expanded ministry role in the Antelope Valley and around the world. We are seeking to do this in many different ways. One of the ways we are seeking to do this is through our building program. Another way is through our intern program, but the most important way for us by far to position ourselves for an expanded ministry role is by every one of us devoting our lives to praying in Jesus' name.

And what will happen if we do this? The best days of our earthly lives are still ahead of us, not only individually, but also corporately.

May God give us the grace to pray in the name of Jesus in each and every circumstance of our earthly lives.