

# Who Do We Pray To?

By Karl Kemp; July 2011

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This paper can stand by itself, but it was written to supplement, and to help confirm, two of my papers that have already been written, “Who Do We Worship? (Oneness/Jesus-only Worship Songs)” and “The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son: The Name Yahweh and Listing of Some of the Large Number of Passages in the Hebrew Old Testament Where We Can See God the Son Along with God the Father.” (Both of those articles will be updated when I finish this paper.) The information contained in those papers also supplements and confirms what is written in this paper. Also, after working on this paper, I decided that I need to write another companion paper, “More on the Trinity: Some Key Passages from the New Testament Where We See the Full Deity and Preexistence of God the Son with God the Father and Some Key Bible Passages Used to Teach a Oneness View of God.”

An understanding of God the Father and God the Son (and the Trinity) is extremely important. We are dealing with a topic at the very heart of Christianity. This topic is also controversial.<sup>1</sup> It seems to me that the Bible, though it doesn't answer every question, clearly teaches the Trinity. And this has been the orthodox view of Christianity from the beginning. (This is not to say that the early orthodox Christian writers agreed on every detail.) The Trinity was not clearly revealed in the Old Testament, but when we read the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, we can see God the Son many places throughout the Old Testament. See the second paper I listed in the first paragraph. That paper and this present paper are for the most part limited to the Persons of God the Father and God the Son, but I fully agree that the Bible (especially the New Testament) teaches on the full deity of the Person of the Holy Spirit.

We must have a *biblical* understanding of the Trinity. We cannot define the Trinity to fit our ideas, as it often happens in our day. I'm often amazed when Christians tell me what they think the Trinity means. We must avoid the idea of three Gods, for one thing, but we must also understand that the Bible (especially the New Testament) clearly teaches three distinct Persons who speak to one another, and about one another, and interact with one another in various ways. All three Persons always existed (before our world and time were created), and they always will exist. God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are fully deity with God the Father, not having been created. Each of the three Persons has different roles, and God the Father is very clearly preeminent in His role, as

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<sup>1</sup> For one thing, the devil does everything he can do to confuse our understanding of Christianity, very much including what it teaches about the triune God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit). We must humble our hearts and seek God for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on this super-important topic. We have to be very careful who we listen to.

this paper will demonstrate. For one thing, the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit both intercede for us before God the Father. What a blessing!<sup>2</sup>

When I speak of God the Father being preeminent in His role, I mean the same thing as when I speak of God the Son being subordinate to God the Father in His role. For the Lord Jesus to be subordinate in His role does not mean that He is inferior. The fact that God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are subordinate to God the Father in their roles helps explain why Christians don't think in terms of three Gods. Three Persons, Yes! Three Gods, No! The preeminent role of God the Father is strongly emphasized in some verses. See, for example, John 14:28; 17:1-5; Rom. 16:26, 27; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 11:3; 15:27, 28; Eph. 4:4-6; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2:5; 6:13-16; and Jude 1:24, 25. These passages (and there are quite a few more similar passages) are all quoted in this paper. In 1 Tim. 1:17, for example, God the Father is called "the only God." The apostle Paul is not denying the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ (or the Holy Spirit) in 1 Tim. 1:17, but he is emphasizing the preeminent role of God the Father, as he (and other writers of the New Testament) does on occasion. We don't have to deny the preeminent role of God the Father to believe in the full deity of God the Son (and the Holy Spirit). We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches.

It is important for the reader to understand (to believe) that I am not writing this paper to attack anyone. Quite the opposite! I very much want this paper to be a blessing to all the people of God. I'm praying that many (as many as possible) will be blessed by this paper and (anywhere it is required) will come to a more balanced view of what the Bible teaches on this super-important topic. It is a great blessing to come to a more balanced view of what the Bible teaches on every topic. For one thing, it is far better for God to correct us now than when we stand before Him at the end of this age. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on every topic, and the topic of this paper is very important. For some this paper will serve to confirm what they believe already. First and foremost I want this paper to please God and to accomplish His purposes, by His grace, and for His glory. In Jesus' name! Thanks be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit! Anywhere I am missing the balanced truth I want to be corrected.

The New Testament teaches, as I will demonstrate in this paper, that Christians should typically pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus. The primary reason we should typically pray to God the Father is because of His preeminent role in the Trinity. We are exhorted to look to God the Father for everything we need, including our asking for things in prayer, through our saving union with God the Son, in and by the indwelling Spirit of God. Even when we don't say the words "in the name of Jesus," and that is very common in the New Testament, it must be understood that our relationship with God the Father and our access to Him as His born-again children has come to us, and is maintained for us, through the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death. Of course, there could not have been an atoning death if not for the salvation plan of God the Father and

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<sup>2</sup> See under John 1:1-5, 9-18 and under Col. 1:15-18, including the footnotes, in my paper titled, "A Verse-by-Verse Study of John 1:1-18 and Colossians 1:15-3:17" on my internet site. (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching.) In footnote 8 under John 1:1, I quoted part of what Wayne Grudem says under the subheading, "The Persons of the Trinity Eternally Existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" in his *Systematic Theology*. That quotation includes a discussion on the eternal subordination of God the Son and God the Spirit to God the Father in their roles. I quote part of that discussion in an Appendix at the end of this paper.

the incarnation of God the Son through the virgin Mary and by the Holy Spirit. Our salvation also required His resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of God the Father, His receiving from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and His pouring forth the Spirit, starting on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:33, for example).

We desperately need unity in the body of Christ (which embraces all true Christians), but it must be unity in the truth. We cannot unite to any significant or satisfactory extent unless we unite in the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on the basic doctrines of Christianity. I am not saying, however, that we should remain aloof from other Christians until we fully agree regarding the Trinity, for example. But the Trinity is a very important topic because our God is a very important topic. Many (or most) of us Christians need to humble ourselves and seek God for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. I have observed over the years that many (or most) Christians have the mistaken idea that they already are holding the balanced truth on all the basic Christian doctrines, and they have closed their minds. We should not assume we have it right because we have a few verses that seem to back up what we believe on a topic. We could be misinterpreting those verses (that often happens with true Christians), and we desperately need the BALANCED truth of ALL that the Bible teaches on each topic. Furthermore, we should not assume that we have everything right just because God has blessed us and used us. He is merciful, for one thing.

One reason I decided to write this paper is that I see more and more Christians praying to Jesus most of the time, if not all of the time. And I'm speaking in large part about Christians who would say they believe in the Trinity. Does it make any difference who we pray to? (Does it make any difference who we direct our worship to?) Does it really make any difference what the New Testament has to say on this topic? Based on what the New Testament teaches, I have to believe it makes a very significant difference. We should typically pray to God the Father because this is the pattern established in the New Testament, as I demonstrate in this paper. And, significantly, this pattern is based (at least to some significant extent) on the fact that (even though the full deity of God the Son and God the Spirit is clearly taught in the Bible), God the Father has a very obvious preeminent role in the Trinity, according to the Bible (very much including the New Testament).

This paper strongly confirms what I said in my paper, "Who Do We Worship? (Oneness/Jesus-only Worship Songs)." This present paper, by itself, should suffice to demonstrate that God the Father and God the Son (and the Holy Spirit) are distinct Persons in the Trinity and that God the Father has the preeminent role. (For one thing, in most of the passages that are quoted in this study, God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are mentioned as distinct Persons.) It seems clear to me that the Bible shows that, even as we should typically pray to God the Father, we should worship God the Father first and foremost, including in our worship songs. The more we are in divine order, the more God (and His Son and the Holy Spirit) will be glorified and His will will be accomplished in us and through us.

I am not suggesting that if we don't make it a top priority to deal with this problem that everything is going to fall apart, but I believe this is a serious problem that we need to HUMBLY and PRAYERFULLY deal with. For one thing, this problem seems to be getting worse all the time. We have to start somewhere. I am not the judge, and I didn't

write this paper (or any of my papers) to attack any Christians, including Christians who deny the Trinity (and who say, for example, that Jesus [one Person] is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). I wrote this paper to exhort every true Christian, and especially ministers, to seriously consider the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on these super-important things.

Clearly this topic is controversial, but we cannot afford to ignore such important topics. We aren't competent to fully understand the Trinity, and especially not during this present age before we are glorified, but there is no excuse for the large amounts of error, confusion, and controversy that exist in our day among true Christians. All of us, and especially ministers, need to humble ourselves and seek God for the balanced truth of what His Word teaches on this topic, and on every topic.

I'm going to limit this article, for the most part to, what the New Testament teaches regarding "Who Do We Pray To?" My procedure was to read through the New Testament (most of it twice) and list the passages that seemed relevant to the topic. I didn't list every passage that mentions prayer addressed to God the Father, but I listed most of them, except for in the Gospels and the book of Revelation. I don't believe I missed any passages where prayer was addressed to the Lord Jesus. (If I missed any it was not on purpose.) For this study, I'm using the word prayer in a full sense that includes addressing thanks or praise or glory directly to God the Father or God the Son. I am not including the passages that are typically found near the beginning or end of epistles with words like, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:3) or "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you" (1 Cor. 16:23).

I skipped over many of the prayers in the Gospels for this study. Many of those prayers are prayers of Jesus to God the Father, and apart from the glorious words of the apostle Thomas to the resurrected Christ in John 20:28, "My Lord and my God," there aren't any prayers addressed to Jesus in the Gospels. Also, I didn't include any passages from the book of Revelation. I didn't notice any passages that are especially relevant to this study. For one thing, so much of the worship in the book of Revelation addressed to God the Father, and sometimes to God the Son, comes from the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders (who are high-level angelic beings), multitudes of angels, etc.

In this paper I'll typically quote the passages I list, often with some discussion, always aiming for the balanced truth of what the New Testament teaches. You might argue about my interpretation for a few of the passages I listed, but most of the passages are so clear that I don't think there is much room to argue. The New Testament is quite clear on this topic, for which I am thankful.

This study confirms that it is biblical to pray to Jesus (which serves as a very strong confirmation of His deity), but that most of our prayers should be addressed to God the Father. I found five prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus in the New Testament, and two prayers that were addressed to both God the Father and the Lord Jesus, for a total of seven prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus. (Actually, as I'll explain below, I found eight prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus, but since two of those prayers are different because of the context I'll just count them as one prayer for the purposes of this study.) Seven prayers is ten percent of the total number of prayers I listed (sixty eight). Sixty one of the prayers, ninety percent of the total number of prayers, are addressed to God the Father. It

really isn't very important for this study whether eighty-seven percent, or ninety percent, or ninety-three percent of the prayers are addressed to God the Father. I am not looking for scientific precision in this study. (If I counted eight prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus that would yield twelve percent of the prayers being addressed to Him.)

Five of the prayers that are addressed to Jesus are found in Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians, and significantly, both of those epistles confirm the preeminent role of God the Father. Another prayer addressed to Jesus is found in a brief, but important, doxology in 2 Tim. 4:18. I also included the prayer that Stephen prayed to the glorified Lord Jesus, who appeared to him in a vision while he was being stoned to death (in Acts 7:54-60). And I included the glorious words that Thomas spoke to the resurrected Lord Jesus in John 20:28, which can be considered a type of prayer, using the word prayer in a broad sense. Because Jesus appeared to Stephen and to Thomas it was very natural that they would pray to Him, rather than to God the Father, I thought it would be reasonable to count those two prayers as one prayer for the purposes of this study.

The results of this study are about what we should expect since the Bible makes it clear that the Lord Jesus Christ is subordinate to God the Father in His role as Son; in His role as the One through whom God the Father created all matter, beings, and things; in His role as our great high priest at the right hand of God the Father, etc. As I mentioned, this paper also confirms that God the Father and God the Son (and God the Holy Spirit) are distinct Persons in the Trinity. And we can learn a lot about prayer from the passages that are quoted in this paper.

I'll always quote from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 edition, unless otherwise noted. I frequently make comments in the middle of quotations using brackets [ ] or [ ] to make the brackets more obvious.

A comment on the use of the words "God" and "Jesus" in the New Testament. The name Jesus is used 911 times in the New Testament. The name is always used of God the Son. (The name Jesus is used for another man in Col. 4:11.) It is never used for God the Father, or the Holy Spirit, or the Trinity. The Greek noun *theos* is translated God or God's 1,294 times in the New Testament. Out of all those uses there are some five to ten uses (depending on how a few verses are interpreted) where the word is used of the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man. We are very thankful for those few verses that powerfully demonstrate the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should also be thankful for the fact that those verses typically make it clear that He is a Person distinct from God the Father. (Maybe there is a better word to use than Person, but I don't know of any better word to use.)

I'll give an important example: In John 1:1 "the Word," referring to God the Son (who existed with God the Father before any person, or physical matter, or thing [including the time system of our universe] was ever created [see John 1:1-4]) is called "God." He is deity. But it is significant that John 1:1 also teaches us that "the Word" (who took on flesh and became a man, the God-man, through the virgin birth [see John 1:14]) was also "with God," with God the Father, the One who is typically called God in the Bible. This confirms (along with multiplied hundreds of verses in the New Testament) that God the Father and God the Son are distinct Persons. God the Son was a Person with God the Father before creation began; He was not just a thought, word, etc. in the mind of God the

Father, as some believe. God the Father created everything that was ever created through Him. John 1:4 adds that “in Him [God the Son] was life, and the life was the Light of men.” These words confirm the deity of the preexistent Son of God. And John 1:10 repeats that “the world was made through Him.” 1 Corinthians 8:6 says, “yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom [It would be better to translate “through whom”] are all things, and we *exist* through Him.” Colossians 1:16 confirms that God created all things through His Son, “by Him [God the Son] all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities” and he adds that they were “created through Him and for Him [the Person of God the Son].” In Col. 1:17 Paul tells us that “in Him [in God the Son] all things hold together.” Not only were all things created through Him, He has been and now is active in holding all things together since they were created. Hebrews 1:2, says, “...through whom He [God the Father] made the world.”

Let’s start with Matt. 6:5-15 (also see Luke 11:1-13). Jesus is speaking, “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. (6) But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you. (7) And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. (8) So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. (8) Pray then in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. (10) Your kingdom come, Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. (11) Give us this day our daily bread. (12) And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (13) And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil [or, the evil one]. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.<sup>3</sup>]’ (14) For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (15) But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” This passage, like a very large number of passages throughout the New Testament, makes it very clear that God the Father and God the Son (the Lord Jesus Christ) are distinct Persons. Here, for example, the Lord Jesus talked about the Father and taught His disciples to pray to the Father. Jesus Himself (the God-man) frequently prayed to the Father. Most of the passages cited in this study, including Matt. 6:5-15 and Luke 11:1-13, demonstrate the two distinct Persons of God the Father and the Lord Jesus. And even though the New Testament clearly teaches the full deity of the Lord Jesus as a Person distinct from God the Father (see John 1:1-4, 14, for example), it also makes it clear that God the Son has a subordinate role to God the Father. He always did, and He always will.

Matthew 7:7-11. Jesus is speaking, “Ask [of God the Father], and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. (8) For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (9) Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? (10) Or

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<sup>3</sup> The NASB has a marginal note here explaining why they put these words in a bracket, “This clause not found in early manuscripts.”

if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? (11) If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him [very much including the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will enable us, for one thing, to live in the righteousness and holiness of God (see Luke 11:13; Gal. 5:16, for example).]!”

Matthew 18:19, 20. (Also see verse 18.) “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. (20) For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in your midst.”

Mark 11:12-14, 20-26. (Also see Matt. 21:18-22.) I’ll just quote Mark 11:20-25. “As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots *up*. (21) Being reminded, Peter said to Him, ‘Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.’ (22) And Jesus answered saying to them, ‘Have faith in God [God the Father]. [The Lord Jesus is exhorting His disciples (which includes us) to have faith in God so we can be what God wants us to be and to do the things that He wants us to do.] (23) Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be taken up and cast into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart [We must always strongly resist doubting God and His Word in our hearts.], but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be *granted* him. [God is the One who grants it to us and moves the mountains, in answer to our words/prayers of faith, and He must receive all the glory, not us, or our faith. Our faith is in God. And we certainly don’t want to try to move any “mountains” that God doesn’t want moved.] (24) Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask [of God the Father], believe that you have received them [believe you have received them when you pray, before you have seen the answer to the prayer, because you know that God hears and answers your prayers that are prayed in faith and in line with His will and through His Son.], and they shall be *granted* you [by God the Father]. (25) Whenever you stand praying [before God the Father], forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will forgive you your transgressions.’ ”

Luke 11:1-13. I’ll just quote verses 5-8. “Then He said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves; (6) for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him”; (7) and from inside he answers and says, “Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.” (8) I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.’ ” Jesus is teaching us here that we should be persistent (but certainly respectful) when we pray. The verses before and after these verses show that Jesus is speaking of praying to God the Father.

Luke 18:1-8. “Now He [Jesus] was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, (2) saying, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. (3) There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, “Give me legal protection from my opponent.” (4) For a while he was unwilling; but afterwards he said to himself, “even though I do not fear God

nor respect man, (5) yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.” ’ (6) And the Lord [the Lord Jesus] said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge said; (7) now, will not God [God the Father] bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? (8) I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man [the Lord Jesus] comes [at the end of this age; at the time predetermined by God the Father], will He find faith on the earth?’ ” We don’t need to be concerned about God’s being faithful to make everything right for His people, but we do need to make it top priority to remain faithful to Him (by His saving grace in Christ) and to continue to look to Him to make everything right until Christ Jesus comes, or until the end of our lives.

John 15:16. “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that **whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give it to you.**” I have a paper titled “A Verse-by-Verse Study of John Chapters 13-17,” which is available on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching). I recommend you read what I said under this verse in that paper, but for our present purposes, note that Jesus spoke of *asking of the Father in His name*. We pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus. Even when we don’t say the words “in the name of Jesus” or similar words, it must be understood that our access to God the Father comes through Jesus Christ.

John 16:23-28. “In that day [“That day” began when the disciples fully entered into new-covenant salvation when they received the promised Holy Spirit and were born again through the all-important atoning death of the Lamb of God.], you will not question [Greek verb *erotao*] Me about anything. [I rather strongly prefer the translation, “you will not ask Me for anything,” or the equivalent. The *New Living Translation* has, for example, “At that time you won’t need to ask me for anything” and the *New Revised Standard Version* has, “On that day you will ask nothing of me.” The Greek verb *erotao* is sometimes used of asking for things in the New Testament, including in the second half of John 16:26. Asking the Father for things could include asking Him for the answer to a question.] Truly, truly, I say to you, **‘if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.** [At that time, the Lord Jesus will have been crucified, resurrected, glorified, and He will be seated at the right hand of God the Father. But God the Father will still have the preeminent role, as He always will, and our prayers will typically be addressed to Him. And at that time, God the Father and the Lord Jesus will still be distinct Persons, as they always will.] (24) **Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you shall receive, so that your joy may be made full.** (25) These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. (26) In that day **you will ask [the Father] in My name**, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; (27) for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. (28) I came forth from the Father and have come into the world [God the Father sent His Son, His Son who was always with Him in glory (see John 1:1-3, 9 [“coming into the world”], 14; 17:4, 5, 18, 21, 23,

25, for example), come into the world through the virgin birth.]; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”

John 14:12-14. “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do; because I go to the Father.”<sup>4</sup> (13) **Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do** [“I” here refers to the resurrected, glorified Son of God, who will at that time be at the right hand of God the Father; we see two Persons], **so that the Father may be glorified in the Son**. [It is to be understood that we will ask the Father in the name of Jesus, as in John 15:26; 16:23, 24, 25, 27, for example, the verses which we just discussed. I believe we can say that the greatest desire on the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ is to always see the Father glorified. I am convinced that the Lord Jesus is concerned when He is the One being prayed to most of the time, or all of the time (or being worshiped most of the time, or all of the time). We make it look like the Father, who is greatly loved by the Lord Jesus and to whom the Lord Jesus is subordinate in His role, is being left outside of what is happening. Some Christians may be leaving Him outside, but I’ll guarantee you that He isn’t really being left outside of what is happening. As this verse shows, it is biblical to think of the Lord Jesus bringing to pass the things we ask the Father for (at least some of the time), but it must be understood that the Father is very directly involved. The Son doesn’t do anything that is not in line with the Father’s will or independent of the Father’s authority or power in any way. The Father must always be glorified!] (14) **If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.**” I agree with the commentators and translators who don’t believe the Greek word translated “Me” was included in the original Greek text written by the apostle John. It is not included in many ancient Greek manuscripts. I’ll quote part of what F. F. Bruce says under verses 13, 14 (*Gospel of John*, Eerdmans, 1983, page 301), “If something is asked for in Jesus’ name, the request is probably viewed as addressed to the Father. The Father denies nothing to the Son, and a request made in the Son’s name is treated as if the Son made it. The textual evidence in verse 14 is fairly evenly divided between the omission and retention of ‘me’; but the logic and the thought here favour its omission, which indeed seems to be demanded by the plain sense of John 16:23a [quoted above].” And I’ll quote part of what F. Godet says here (*Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Zondervan reprint, 1969, page 278), “It seems to me absolutely impossible to keep in the text...me.... It is inadmissible that one should ask anything of a person in his own name, except in the sense: for his own cause, which cannot be that of this phrase.” The KJV, New KJV, the *Amplified Bible*, and the *New Living Translation*, for example, do not include the word “Me.”

John 20:28, 29. I’ll quote verses 24-29 to get the context. (To get the full context start at verse 19.) “But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came [The apostle John is speaking of the resurrected Lord Jesus appearing to the apostles on the evening of the day of His resurrection, Sunday evening. The resurrected Christ may have appeared to more disciples than the ten apostles on that occasion (compare Luke 24:13-49)]. (25) So the other disciples [the ten apostles and perhaps other

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<sup>4</sup> I recommend that you read the comments that I have under John 14:12 in my paper titled, “A Verse-by-Verse Study of John Chapters 13-17,” which is available on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching).

disciples too] were saying to him [to Thomas], ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’ (26) After eight days His disciples [including the apostles and perhaps other disciples] were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ (27) Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it in My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.’ [These words are based on what Thomas had said in verse 25. The fact that Jesus demonstrated that He knew what Thomas had said probably further intensified the effect this experience had on Thomas, but there can be no doubting that the resurrection of Christ was dominant here. And Jesus had told them several times that He would be raised from the dead.] (28) Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ [Thomas was fully satisfied when he saw the Lord Jesus. The words “My Lord and my God” addressed to the Lord Jesus are quite unusual, but they clearly demonstrate that Thomas now understood the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. These words clearly teach the deity of the Lord Jesus, and Jesus did not correct Thomas, because He is deity, God the Son. The apostle John established that super-important fact in the first verse of his Gospel. Even though Thomas and the other disciples may not have fully understood the Trinity yet, it would have been totally clear to them that the resurrected Christ was a Person distinct from God the Father. There wouldn’t have been any confusion on that point whatsoever. See John 20:17, 21, for example. Even though Jesus had told His apostles of His resurrection, they didn’t believe it until after He had been resurrected. And it took a while for them to really understand His full deity as the Son of God. There was no basis whatsoever for Thomas, or any of them, to be tempted to think that actually He was God the Father. Jesus had prayed to the Father and taught them of the Father; He had told them that He had been sent by the Father and was going back to the Father, etc.] (29) Jesus said to him, ‘Because you have seen Me, have you believed? [I prefer the translation, “you have believed” with the NIV, NKJV, for example.] Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed.” With the words of verse 29, Jesus was mildly rebuking Thomas for not accepting the testimony of the other disciples, and, significantly, He was setting the stage for what was to come: Most of us who have become Christians since that time have not seen the resurrected Christ. We must accept the gospel, including His resurrection, by faith.

Acts 4:23-31. “When they [the apostles Peter and John] had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. (24) And when they heard *this*, they lifted up their voices to God [God the Father] with one accord and said, ‘O Lord [referring to God the Father; the Greek noun translated “Lord” here is *despotes*], it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea [He created them through His Son (John 1:3; Col. 1:16). Many verses speak of God the Father as Creator, including Rev. 4:11; 14:7.], and all that is in them, (25) who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David Your servant, said [in Psalm 2], “Why do 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 [Greek noun *kurios*, referring to God the Father, as the next words demonstrate] and Against His Christ.” (27) For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom

You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, (28) to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. (29) And now, Lord [Greek *kurios*; referring to God the Father, as the following words demonstrate], take note of their threats, and grant that Your bondservants may speak Your word with all confidence, (30) while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant [or, Son] 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.” So here again the prayer was addressed to God the Father, and in the same context the Lord Jesus Christ, who clearly is a different Person than God the Father, is mentioned in verses 26, 27, and 30. And the Person of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in verses 25, 31. So we see the Trinity here. Verse 30 requests God to extend His hand to heal and manifest signs and wonders “through the name of...Jesus.” That is comparable with saying that God does these things in answer to prayer for these things in the name of Jesus. I am using the word “prayer” in a broad sense that includes what Peter did in Acts 3:6, 7, for example, even though Peter didn’t technically address a prayer to God for the healing of “the man who had been lame from his mother’s womb” (Acts 3:2). Peter said [before God the Father, who hears what we say in the name of Jesus], “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!” (compare Mark 11:22, 23, for example).

Acts 7:54-60. “Now when they heard this [Stephen was testifying before the Jewish Sanhedrin], they were cut to the quick, and they *began* gnashing their teeth at him. (55) But being full of the Holy Spirit [For one thing, the Holy Spirit strengthened Stephen, enabling him to do what he needed to do. God’s grace always is sufficient. It is even possible that Stephen didn’t feel pain; God could do that. And God let him live long enough to complete his prayers before those who hated him.], he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus [Jesus in His glorified state, after His resurrection and ascension] standing at the right hand of God [Stephen wasn’t permitted to see God the Father Himself (see John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16, for example), but he was able to see something of His glory. This is like Rev. 4:2, 3, where the apostle John was able to see the throne of God the Father and something of His glory, but He didn’t see God the Father Himself. After we are glorified at the end of this age, we will be able “to see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2). So, even though Stephen didn’t see God the Father Himself He saw something of His glory, and He saw the Lord Jesus at His right hand. Again we see two Persons here, God the Father and God the Son. He wasn’t seeing the human nature of Jesus and the divine nature of Jesus, as some would say.], (56) and he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God [God the Father].’ [See Psalm 110:1; Matt. 26:64, for example. Apparently the Lord Jesus was standing to help Stephen and to welcome His faithful witness (see verse 59). Stephen was the first martyr for Christ, at least the first martyr mentioned in the New Testament.] (57) But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. [The Jewish leaders did not have the authority to put anyone to death (see John 18:31), but they didn’t let that stop them.] (58) When they had driven him out of the city [of Jerusalem], they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul [who was to become the apostle Paul]. (59) They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my

spirit!’ [Compare Luke 23:46.] (60) Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’ [Compare Luke 23:34] Having said this, he fell asleep.”

The vision that Stephen saw pretty much dictated who he would speak to (pray to). He was seeing the glorified Son of God, and it was natural for him to pray to Him in verses 59, 60. This is similar to the situation where the resurrected Christ appeared to Thomas in John 20:28. Because of this I’m going to count these two events where prayer was addressed to Jesus as one event.

Acts 12:5. “So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God [God the Father].”

Acts 16:25. “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God [God the Father], and the prisoners were listening to them.”

Romans 1:8-10. Before I quote these verses, I’ll mention that both God the Father and God the Son are mentioned repeatedly in Rom. 1:1-7, and it is clear that they are distinct Persons. God the Father is mentioned in verses 1 and 7, and the Lord Jesus is mentioned in verses 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7. This pattern, where we see the Persons of God the Father and the Lord Jesus permeates the New Testament. “First, I thank my God [God the Father, as the following words demonstrate] through Jesus Christ [with whom the apostle Paul (and all true Christians) was united and through whom he had access to God the Father and His salvation (see John 14:6, for example)] for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. (9) For God [God the Father], whom I serve in my spirit in *the preaching of the gospel of His Son [the Lord Jesus Christ]*, is my witness *as to* how unceasingly I make mention of you [before God the Father], (10) always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God [God the Father] I may succeed in coming to you.”

Romans 8:26, 27. In these verses we see that the Person of the Holy Spirit intercedes for us before the Person of God the Father. One Person doesn’t intercede to Himself. “In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; (27) and He who searches the hearts [God the Father] knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He [the Spirit] intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God.*” The point is that even when the Spirit (in His interceding for us) doesn’t communicate to God the Father with words, the Father knows exactly what the Spirit is asking for because He knows that the Spirit is asking for the Father’s good will to be fully accomplished, and the Father knows what His will is. Talk about God’s helping us; the Holy Spirit effectively intercedes for us, and in the next verse we will look at, the Lord Jesus (in His glorified state at the right hand of God the Father) intercedes for us before God the Father. What a salvation plan!

Romans 8:34. “Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God [God the Father], who also intercedes for us [before God the Father].” I don’t know how we can avoid seeing the two Persons of

God the Father and Christ Jesus [God the Son] here. God the Son is interceding before God the Father (who clearly has the preeminent role) in our behalf.

Romans 10:1-4. I'll just quote verse 1. "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God [God the Father] for them [for the people of Israel] is for their salvation."

Romans 15:5, 6. "Now may the God [God the Father] who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, (6) so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We see God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ here, and the preeminent role of God the Father is rather strongly emphasized.

Romans 15:13."Now may the God of peace [God the Father] fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Romans 15:30-33. "Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God [God the Father. The Trinity is mentioned in this verse.], (31) that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints [referring to the generous offering the apostle Paul was taking to the Jewish Christians in Judea]; (32) so that I may come to you [the Christians in Rome] in joy by the will of God [Paul didn't want to do anything that wasn't fully in line with the will of God] and find *refreshing* rest in your company. (33) Now may the God of peace [God the Father] be with you all. Amen."

Romans 16:25-27. These last verses of this super-important epistle are a doxology, written to glorify God the Father. "Now to Him [God the Father] who is able to establish you according to my gospel [which the apostle Paul received from the Lord Jesus Christ] and the preaching of Jesus Christ [The gospel centers in God's saving us through the incarnation and all-important atoning death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.], according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, (26) but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets [Now that new covenant salvation is available, we can understand God's salvation plan to a significant extent, including being able to understand the relevant Old Testament prophecies (compare Luke 24:27, 44-48).], according to the commandment of the eternal God [referring to God the Father], has been made known to all the nations, *leading* to obedience of faith; (27) to the only wise God [God the Father], through Jesus Christ [As I mentioned, Jesus Christ is the One who brings us to God and gives us access to Him as His born-again children.], be the glory forever. Amen." The New Testament makes it clear that we glorify and worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, but God the Father has the preeminent role, which is strongly emphasized with the words of verses 26, 27. I am totally sure that the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit love the idea that the Father has the preeminent role. They have ZERO jealousy or competition and TOTAL love toward God the Father. Everything is in DIVINE ORDER in the Trinity.

1 Corinthians 1:4-9. I'll just quote the first verse here, "I thank my God [God the Father] always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus...."

1 Corinthians 11:13. "Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God [God the Father] *with her head* uncovered?"

1 Corinthians 15:57. "but thanks be to God [God the Father], who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Corinthians 2:14. "But thanks be to God [God the Father], who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him [the Lord Jesus] in every place."

2 Corinthians 8:16. "But thanks be to God [God the Father] who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus."

2 Corinthians 9:15. "Thanks be to God [God the Father] for His indescribable gift!"

2 Corinthians 13:5-10. I'll just quote verses 7, 8. "Now we pray to God [God the Father] that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved. (8) For we can do nothing against the truth, but *only* for the truth."

Ephesians 1:15-23.<sup>5</sup> "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, (16) do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers [his prayers to God the Father, as the following words demonstrate]; (17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ [These words, and much of the content of this passage, strongly demonstrate the preeminent role of God the Father.], the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him ["of Himself"; in the knowledge of God the Father, including the experiential knowledge relationship we have with Him as His born-again children, filled with His Spirit. In this passage we again see the very familiar mention of the Persons of God the Father and the Lord Jesus.]. (18) *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling [The New Testament often speaks of God's calling us to eternal glory at the end of this age (Col. 1:5, 27, for example).], what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints [We will inherit the fullness of the riches of God's eternal glory at the end of this age.], (19) and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe [As the following verses demonstrate, Paul is speaking of the resurrection power of God that raised Jesus from the dead that is working in us now, and will work in us in a fuller sense in the future. That power has enabled us to be resurrected spiritually (by the Holy Spirit, in union with the Lord Jesus) and enables us to live in victory over all of God's enemies through the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come" (verse 21)]. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength

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<sup>5</sup> Ephesians chapter 1 is discussed verse-by-verse in a paper on my internet site.

of His might (20) which He [God the Father] brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, (21) far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named [with the obvious exception of the Father's name], not only in this age but also in the age to come. And He [God the Father] put all things in subjection under His [Christ's] feet, and gave Him as head over all things to [or, for] the church [The primary idea here is that after God the Father exalted Jesus over all things (excluding only Himself), He gave Him to be the Head of the Christian church, with the result that we Christians benefit from Christ's authority, and we are enabled to be and do what God wills for us to be and to do. There is no authority that has not been put under the feet (under the authority) of the Lord Jesus], (23) which is His body [We, all true Christians, are the body of Christ.], the fullness of Him who fills all in all." We, the Christian church, are filled in a very special sense by Him (the Lord Jesus) who fills the all in all. He fills the all in all in that His authority extends everywhere.

Ephesians 3:14-21.<sup>6</sup> "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, (15) from whom every family [I would translate "the whole family," with the margin of the NASB.] in heaven and earth derives its name [At a minimum the family includes all the believers, all the members of God's true Israel, including the large number in heaven already.] (16) that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit [the Holy Spirit] in the inner man [We are totally dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit. These words and the following words are discussed in some detail in my "Paper on Faith."], so that Christ may dwell [may fully dwell] in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being [having been] rooted and grounded in love, (18) may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, (19) and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God [God the Father]. (20) Now unto Him [God the Father] who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (21) to Him [God the Father] *be* the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen!" Notice that the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit are mentioned in these verses along with God the Father to whom the prayer and praise/glory are directed. This is one of many passages where we can see the Trinity.

Ephesians 5:20. "always giving thanks for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus to God, even the Father." Again we see two Persons, and God the Father has the preeminent role.

Ephesians 6:10-20.<sup>7</sup> I won't quote these verses. In verses 18-20 the apostle Paul exhorts Christians to pray at all times in the Spirit. For one thing this is a major feature of our being victorious in the warfare that Paul was speaking about in this passage. Paul doesn't specify who we are to pray to in these verses, but I'm confident that he was thinking of (at least most of) our prayers being addressed to God the Father (see Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-

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<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 3:14-21 are discussed verse-by-verse in my "Paper on Faith."

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 6:10-20 are discussed verse-by-verse in my "Paper on Faith."

21, for example). The Lord Jesus is mentioned in verse 10 and the Holy Spirit in verses 17, 18, so we see the Trinity here too.

Philippians 1:2-11. I'll just quote verses 3, 4 and 9-11 here, "I thank my God [God the Father] in all my remembrance of you, (4) always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all. ... (9) And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, (10) so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ [when the Father will send Him back to save and to judge]; (11) having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God [God the Father]." We again see that God the Father and God the Son, and that God the Father has the preeminent role. So too for the next verses.

Philippians 4:4-7. I'll just quote verses 6, 7. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God [God the Father]. (7) And the peace of God [God the Father], which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Here again, as with the next passage, the prayer is addressed to God the Father, who has the preeminent role, and we also see the Person of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:19, 20. "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (20) Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Colossians 1:3-14.<sup>8</sup> "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you [to God the Father], (4) since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; (5) because of the hope laid up for you in heaven... (8) and he [Epaphras] also informed us of your love in the Spirit [the Holy Spirit]. (9) For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray [to God the Father] that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will [God the Father's will] in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, (10) so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord [apparently referring to the Lord Jesus] to please *Him* in all respects [more literally "unto all pleasing"; many commentators understand these words to speak of pleasing God the Father], bearing fruit in every work and increasing in the knowledge of God [or, probably better, growing by the knowledge of God]; (11) strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might [the power and might of God the Father, the One the apostle is praying to, as the following verses confirm] (12) giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us [or, probably better, who has made us fit] to share in the inheritance [or, probably better, to share in the portion (see my book for the details)] of the saints in [the] light. (13) For He [God the Father] rescued [or, delivered] us from the domain [or, authority] of [the] darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His [God the Father's] beloved Son, (14) in whom [God the Son] we have [the] redemption [God the Father has bought us with the very high (infinite) price of Jesus' blood and redeemed us from being under the authority of sin, spiritual death, Satan and his hosts, and the darkness.], the forgiveness of sins." As I discuss in my book in

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<sup>8</sup> Colossians 1:9-14 are discussed in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

some detail, “the forgiveness of sins” is not an adequate translation here. The redemption that the apostle is speaking about here includes forgiveness, but a lot more than that. I would translate “the release from our sins with the guilt and the penalties,” or the equivalent. And it must be understood that we have been redeemed from the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin (not to mention hell), so we could begin to live, as born-again Christians, in the righteousness and holiness of God that the apostle spoke about in Col. 1:10-14 and very many other places, not to mention the other writers of the New Testament. (See my book for the important details.) We see the Trinity here, and God the Father clearly has the preeminent role.

Colossians 3:17. “Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” Our salvation, and our relationship with, and access to, God the Father, who has the preeminent role, is centered in the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death.

Colossians 4:2-4. “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude* of thanksgiving; (3) praying [to God the Father, as the following words demonstrate] for us as well, that God [God the Father] will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; (4) that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.” Again we see the prayers are directed to the Person of God the Father, who has the preeminent role in the Trinity, but the Person of Christ Jesus is also mentioned in these verses. So too for the next verses.

1 Thessalonians 1:2, 3. “We give thanks to God [God the Father] always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers [to God the Father]; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of [or, before] our God and Father....”

1 Thessalonians 2:13. “For this reason we also constantly thank God [God the Father] that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not as the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.” Thanksgivings like this are a type of prayer. It is very important for us to understand that the gospel that the apostle Paul proclaimed is the Word of God, and God backs up His Word with power for those who take His Word into their hearts and walk by faith. The apostle Paul went on to mention Christ Jesus in the next verse.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13.<sup>9</sup> “For what thanks can we render to God [God the Father] for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God [God the Father] on your account, (10) as we night and day keep praying [to God the Father] most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith. (11) Now may our God and Father Himself [These words emphasize the preeminent role of God the Father] and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you [[This is the only place in the New Testament that prayer was addressed to God the Father *and* the Lord Jesus (but see 2 Thess. 2:16), which seems reasonable, even if it doesn’t fit the typical pattern. We can certainly see the two Persons of God the Father and the Lord Jesus here. (Paul wasn’t addressing this

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Thessalonians 3:10-13 are discussed in my book, “Holiness and Victory Over Sin.”

prayer to the divine nature of Jesus and to His human nature.) It was clearly understood by the apostle Paul and the recipients of this epistle (letter) that, even though the Lord Jesus Christ was fully deity with God the Father (and the Holy Spirit), He was happily subordinate to God the Father in His role. In the next verse the apostle addresses a request to the Lord Jesus. These verses are quite unusual, but for one super-important thing, they serve to confirm the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.]; (12) and may the Lord [the Lord Jesus, the Head of the Christian church] cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you (13) [This verse is discussed in some detail in my book (pages 183-185).]; so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father [These words (like in verse 11) emphasize the preeminent role of God the Father.] at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all the saints.” It must be understood that the Lord Jesus never does His saving work apart from the will of God the Father, or independent of the authority and power of God the Father (or apart from the Holy Spirit). I believe we can say that the number one desire of God the Son is to always glorify God the Father. For the hearts of the Thessalonian Christians to be established without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ along with all the rest of the saints (including us), will redound to the great glory of God the Father. Of course the Lord Jesus will be glorified too.

1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18. “Pray without ceasing [to God the Father]; for this is God’s will [God the Father’s will] for you in Christ Jesus.” Again we see the Persons of God the Father and God the Son, and the Father has the preeminent role. So too in the next verses.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-25. “Now may the God of peace Himself [God the Father] sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved [or, be kept] complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [[Paul prayed that the newly founded church at Thessalonica that had known much opposition from the beginning would be sanctified entirely and then be kept in that state, always ready for the coming of the Lord Jesus. This verse, which is quite important on the topic of holiness, is discussed on pages 178, 179 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.]] Faithful is He who calls you [God the Father], and He also will bring it to pass. (25) Brethren, pray [pray to God the Father, as in verse 23] for us.”

2 Thessalonians 1:3, 11, 12. “We ought always to give thanks to God [God the Father] for you, brethren [Giving thanks to God is a type of prayer.], as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater. [As Paul continues with verses 4-10, we see the preeminent role of God the Father.] ... (11) To this end also we pray [to God the Father, as the following words show] for you always, that our God [God the Father] will count you worthy [rather, will make you worthy (by His grace)] of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, (12) so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you [The Lord Jesus Christ is glorified when we live as He wants us to live and do what He wants us to do by God’s saving grace in Christ. So too for God the Father (see Eph. 2:10, for example)], and you in Him, according to the grace of our God [God the Father] and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.”

2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5, 16.<sup>10</sup> “But we should always give thanks to God [God the Father] for you, brethren beloved by the Lord [the Lord Jesus], because God [God the Father] has chosen you from the beginning [see Eph. 1:4; Rev. 13:8; 17:8, for example] for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit [or “in holiness by the Spirit”; the apostle has already shown (in 1 Thess. 4:1-8 and 5:23, for example) that Christians are called to live in a state of holiness] and faith in the truth.” Here we see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and the Father has the preeminent role. This is divine order.] (14) It was for this He [God the Father] called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. [See Rom. 8:17, 18, for example. We will gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and even begin to reign with Him at the end of this age if we stay faithful by the sufficient grace of God in Christ, which we are going to do, right?] (15) So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us. (16) Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father [We certainly see two Persons here. Typically in the New Testament these words would have been addressed to God the Father, and if God the Father and God the Son were both to be mentioned, God the Father would be mentioned first,<sup>11</sup> as in 1 Thess. 3:11. However, the apostle Paul (in a way that is unusual) emphasizes the role of the Lord Jesus as he continues with this epistle (but not at all denying His subordinate role to God the Father). For one good thing, these verses serve to confirm the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. As some commentators mention, the emphasis on the Lord Jesus in this verse and the following verses may have resulted from the fact that He plays such a significant role in Paul’s end-time teaching earlier in this epistle (see 2 Thess. 1:7-2:12). Then too the apostle may have known of a need to exalt the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in the eyes of some of the Christians at Thessalonica. (What the apostle Paul [and not just Paul] said in his epistles, as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, was greatly influenced by the need of the Christians to whom the epistles were written.) It may be relevant that the epistles to the Thessalonians were written earlier than the rest of Paul’s epistles, except for his epistle to the Galatians. (1 and 2 Thessalonians were written about AD 50. 2 Timothy, his latest epistle, was written some 15 years later.) It is important to note that the apostle has already affirmed the preeminent role of God in the Father in this epistle in 2 Thess. 1:1, 3, 11, 12 and 2:11, 13, 14; also see 2 Thess. 1:4-7); so too in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians. The words that follow here in verse 16 refer to God the Father. Paul had already mentioned the love of the Lord Jesus for His people in verse 13.], who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, (17) comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. (3:1) Finally, brethren, pray for us [The apostle either means pray to God the Father for us, or (in this context) pray to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also possible (in the light of what Paul goes on to say in the rest of this chapter) that he was thinking of praying to the Lord Jesus Christ. I won’t count this verse of praying to the Father or the Son.] that the word of the Lord [the word that tells about God’s salvation plans in and through the Lord Jesus Christ; the gospel] will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; (2) and that we will be rescued from perverse

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<sup>10</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:13, which is an important verse on the topic of holiness and victory over sin, for one thing, is discussed on pages 181, 182 of my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*..

<sup>11</sup> Intentionally left blank.

and evil men; for not all have faith [faith in God and His Son and His gospel]. (3) But the Lord [the Lord Jesus] is faithful, and He [the Lord Jesus] will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*. [From this point on in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, which is the last chapter of this epistle, the apostle Paul addresses his requests to the Lord Jesus (verses 5, 16) and speaks of things He will do. However, as I mentioned, this epistle (along with the rest of the Bible) confirms the preeminent role of God the Father. As I also mentioned, the New Testament makes it clear that God the Son never acts independently of the will of God the Father or independent of His authority and power. Everything the Son does is done in agreement with the will of God the Father and is designed to bring glory to the Father. Of course, God the Son is glorified too.] (4) We have confidence in the Lord [the Lord Jesus] concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. [Paul had confidence that the strengthening and protecting work of the Lord Jesus would prevent the evil one and his followers, including “perverse and evil men,” from thwarting God’s plans.] (5) May the Lord [the Lord Jesus] direct your hearts into the love of God [probably with the emphasis on our loving God, but we couldn’t love Him if He didn’t love us first and apart from His enabling grace] and into the steadfastness of Christ.” [It is unusual that this prayer was addressed to the Lord Jesus, but these words fit the context well. It is certainly appropriate for the Lord Jesus to direct our hearts into the love of God the Father and to make us steadfast. This is part of the strengthening and protecting work that Paul mentioned in verse 3.] ... (16) Now may the Lord of peace [apparently referring to the Lord Jesus (see John 14:27; 16:33). The “God of peace” is common in the New Testament (1 Thess. 5:23; Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9), referring to God the Father.] Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!”

1 Timothy 1:12-17. I’ll just quote verse 17. After speaking of his thankfulness to Christ<sup>12</sup> for the fact that He had strengthened him and put him into service (as a minister), even though he had formerly been “a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor” (verse 13) against Christ and His people, Paul launches into this glorious doxology to God the Father, who sent His Son into the world to save sinners, very much including Paul, who says he was foremost of sinners (verse 15) because of his former antichristian activities. “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” Verses like this one strongly emphasize the preeminent role of God the Father, but they don’t deny the full deity of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

1 Timothy 2:1-8. “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men [The verses that follow confirm that these entreaties, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings are addressed to God the Father. Our “mediator” (see verses 5, 6) between God the Father and us, the Lord Jesus, has brought us to God the Father (see John 14:6, for example). We pray to the Father in Jesus’ name, even when we don’t use the words “in Jesus name” or similar words.], (2) for kings and

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<sup>12</sup> The BAGD Greek Lexicon (under *charis*) understands the first words of 1 Tim. 1:12 in the sense, “be grateful for something.” The New Revised Standard Version starts verse 12 with the words, “I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord who strengthened me....” and the *New Living Translation* has, “How thankful I am to Christ Jesus our Lord....”

all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. (3) This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior [God the Father], (4) who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (5) For there is one God [referring to God the Father. See Eph. 4:6, for example, which is quoted later in this paper.] *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, (6) who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony [God the Son's giving Himself as a ransom for all in God the Father's plan of salvation certainly *testified* of God's desire to save all men (all who will repent and submit, in faith, to His plan of salvation).] *given* at the proper time. (7) For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. (8) Therefore I want the men in every place to pray [to the One called "God" here, God the Father.] lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension." God the Father is mentioned here in 1 Tim. 2:1-8 along with the Lord Jesus, and the preeminent role of God the Father is strongly emphasized.

1 Timothy 5:5. "Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day." Also see 1 Tim. 4:3-5, which I didn't quote.

2 Timothy 4:16-18. "At my first defense [in Rome] no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. (17) But the Lord [the Lord Jesus] stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. (18) The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him [to the Lord Jesus] *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Philemon 1:4-6. "I thank my God [God the Father] always, making mention of you in my prayers, (5) because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus [We again see the Persons of God the Father and God the Son here, as we do so often throughout the New Testament, and the preeminent role of God the Father is emphasized.] and toward all the saints; (6) *and I pray* [to God the Father] that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake."

Hebrews 13:15, 16, 18-21. "Through Him [Jesus Christ] then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God [God the Father], that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. ... (18) Pray for us [In this context, in which the preeminent role of the Father is emphasized (also see verses 20, 21), the prayers would undoubtedly be addressed to God the Father through Jesus Christ (or we could say, in the name of Jesus Christ).], for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. (19) And I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner. (20) Now the God of peace [The words that follow confirm that God the Father is being addressed here.], who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord, (21) equip you in every good thing to do His will [God the Father's will], working in us

that which is pleasing in His sight [God the Father's sight], through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." Most commentators believe the words "to whom be the glory forever and ever" refer to God the Father here. I agree, but this doesn't mean that the same words could not be applied to the Lord Jesus in a different context (see 2 Tim. 4:18).

James 1:5-8. "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God [God the Father], who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given him. (6) But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. (7) For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord [Many commentators think "the Lord" here refers to God the Father. They are probably right. Sometimes "the Lord" [Greek *kurios*] refers to God the Father in the book of James (see James 5:10, 11 for some obvious examples)], (8) *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

James 5:13-18. "Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray [The verses that follow confirm, along with James 1:5, that James is thinking of prayer addressed to God the Father.]. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. (14) Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord [Anointing with oil for healing is only mentioned one other place in the New Testament (Mark 6:13), so this is not the only way to pray for the sick. As is typical, we pray to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus. Like I have mentioned, even when we don't say the words "in the name of Jesus" (or similar words), we understand that our new-covenant relationship with God the Father has come to us in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.]; (15) and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord [the Lord Jesus (see John 14:13, 14; 16:23, 24, for example)] will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. [Sometimes sin is the cause of the sickness (see John 5:14; 1 Cor. 11:27-32,<sup>13</sup> for example). It is assumed, of course, that if the person has sinned, they will confess their sins and repent. See the next verse.] (16) Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. (17) Elijah was a righteous man with a nature like ours [Elijah wasn't born again, so we must qualify what James says here. The new birth wasn't available until after Jesus has dethroned sin, spiritual death, and Satan and his hosts through His atoning death.], and he prayed earnestly [to Yahweh; the glorious name Yahweh, which was used more than 6,800 times in the Old Testament, centered in God the Father] that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit."

1 Peter 3:8-12. I'll just quote verse 12. "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL." The NASB put these words in capital letters because verses 10-12 were quoted from the Old Testament, Psalm 34:12-15. The word "LORD," which is used twice here in verse 12 was Yahweh in the Hebrew, which, as I mentioned, typically refers to God the Father in the Old

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<sup>13</sup> These verses are discussed verse-by-verse in my paper that includes 1 Corinthians chapter 10-14.

Testament, even as the word God typically refers to God the Father in the New Testament.

1 John 3:20-24. I'll just quote verses 21, 22 here. "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us [In context the apostle John is speaking of our heart's not condemning us because we are walking in love and living as God requires us to live.], we have confidence before God [God the Father]; (22) and whatever we ask we receive from Him [from God the Father], because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight." We cannot earn God's blessings, but our sin can block the flow of His blessings. The next verse (23) goes on to mention "His [God the Father's] Son Jesus Christ" and verse 24 goes on to mention the Holy Spirit, so we see the three Persons of the Trinity here. 1 John 3:16-23 are discussed in some detail in my "Paper on Faith."

1 John 5:14-17. "This is the confidence which we have before Him [There is very widespread agreement that "Him" refers to God the Father, who plays a dominant role in this chapter. The NIV, for example, translates, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God. I agree with this viewpoint.], that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. [Of course we must pray in accordance with the will of God. The New Testament also shows the need for us to pray in faith, and it shows that we can block the flow of God's answers to our prayers by not living in accordance with His will (see 1 John 3:21, 22, verses quoted above).] (15) And if we know that He hears us *in* whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (16) [In this verse the apostle John gives an example of a prayer that God will answer and an example of one He probably won't (or, won't) answer.] If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* [I would skip the word "leading," which the NASB inserted in italics here and three more times as we continue.] to death [not unto *spiritual* death], he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death [not unto *spiritual* death]. There is a sin *leading* to death [a sin unto *spiritual* death]; I do not say that he should make request for this. (17) All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not *leading* to death [not unto *spiritual* death]." In the context of this epistle, a prime example of a sin unto *spiritual* death would be for true Christians to willfully turn from Christ and join the Gnostic heretics (who are dealt with throughout this epistle), who denied that sin is the problem and that the blood of Jesus is the answer.

3 John 1:2. "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in health, just as your soul prospers." Based on the precedent established in the Gospel of John and in the First Epistle of John (not to mention the rest of the New Testament), I believe we can rather safely assume that John addressed this prayer to God the Father. There is nothing in the context of this epistle to indicate otherwise. This is one of the few verses throughout this study where it isn't confirmed that the prayer is addressed to God the Father.

Jude 1:24, 25. "Now to Him [God the Father] who is able to keep you from stumbling [and to keep you, therefore, fully ready to stand before Him at the end of this age] and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, (25) to the only wise God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and

authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” Again we see the distinct Persons of God the Father and God the Son, which is so common throughout the New Testament, and the preeminent role of God the Father is strongly emphasized.

As I mentioned, I won’t list any passages from the book of Revelation. The full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is emphasized in the book of Revelation (as I have documented in my papers that deal with the book of Revelation; see under Rev. 21:6 in my paper that discusses Revelation chapters 20-22 verse-by-verse), but God the Father clearly has the preeminent role in the book of Revelation. See, for example, Rev. 1:1, 4-6 (In Rev. 1:6, for example, it speaks of God the Father being “His [Jesus’] God and Father.”); 4:2-5:10 (God the Father is the One on the throne in Revelation chapter 4, as Rev. 5:5-8 confirm.).

#### SUMMARY OF WHAT WE FIND IN THESE PASSAGES:

I’ll List the Passages Here Where Prayer Is Addressed to God the Father (and where the Persons of God the Father and God the Son are both mentioned<sup>14</sup>):

- Matthew 6:5-15 (Also see Luke 11:1-13, where we also see the Holy Spirit mentioned, so we see the Trinity.)
- Matthew 7:7-11
- Matthew 18:19, 20
- Mark 11:12-14, 20-26
- Luke 11:5-8
- Luke 18:1-8
- John 15:16 (Jesus mentioned praying to God the Father in His [Jesus’] name.)
- John 16:23-28 (Jesus mentioned praying to God the Father in His name.)
- John 14:12-14 (Jesus mentioned praying to God the Father in His name.)
- Acts 4:23-31<sup>15</sup> (Verse 30 requested God the Father to extend His hand to heal and that signs and wonders take place though the name of Jesus, which is comparable

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<sup>14</sup> I have found that many Christians, even Christians who say they believe in the Trinity, don’t understand that the Son existed as a Person with God the Father before He became a man (the God-man), but the Bible is clear on this very important point. See, for example, John 1:1-3, 14; 3:17, 31; 6:38; 8:42, 58; 17:5; Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:1-3, 10-12; 1 John 1:1; Rev. 22:13. Many of these verses show that the Son was there with the Father in the beginning, before any creation took place. He wasn’t created, rather all things were created through Him. If He had been created, He wouldn’t be deity. The Son was there with the Father before time was created (time as we know it in our created universe) along with our world. Many more verses that teach the preexistence of the Son are listed and/or discussed in my paper titled, “The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son.” Micah 5:2 says of Him, “His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.”

The New Testament is full of verses which show that God the Father and God the Son were distinct Persons when Jesus lived on the earth in His physical body. So too, the New Testament is full of verses which demonstrate that after the Lord Jesus was resurrected and glorified He continued being a Person distinct from God the Father and that He will continue forever as a Person distinct from God the Father. Revelation 22:1-3, for example, show that in the eternal state that will follow the millennial kingdom, God the Father and God the Son will both be reigning on the throne. There too God the Father will have the preeminent role, as He always has (see 1 Cor. 15:27, 28, for example).

with praying in Jesus' name. The Holy Spirit is also mentioned in these verses, so we see the Trinity here, as we often do in the New Testament.)

- Acts 16:25
- Romans 1:8-10
- Romans 8:34 (The Lord Jesus, who is at the right hand of God the Father, intercedes before Him in our behalf. Again we see the preeminent role of God the Father, and we clearly see two Persons.)
- Romans 10:1-4
- Romans 15:5, 6 (The preeminent role of God the Father is quite clear here, as it so often is.)
- Romans 15:30-33 (We also see the Holy Spirit in these verses, so this is another passage where we see the Trinity.)
- Romans 16:25-27 (This is a doxology, which is a hymn designed to praise and glorify God, is addressed to God the Father, which strongly confirms the preeminent role of God the Father.)
- 1 Corinthians 1:4-9 (Thanksgiving is directed to God the Father for His saving grace in Christ Jesus.)
- 1 Corinthians 15:57
- 2 Corinthians 2:14
- 2 Corinthians 13:5-10
- Ephesians 1:15-23
- Ephesians 3:14-21 (The Holy Spirit is also mentioned in these verses, so we see the Trinity here.)
- Ephesians 5:20
- Ephesians 6:10-20 (We also see the Holy Spirit in these verses, so this is another passage where we see the Trinity.)
- Philippians 1:2-11
- Philippians 4:4-7
- Philippians 4:19, 20
- Colossians 1:3-14 (The Holy Spirit is also mentioned in these verses, so we see the Trinity here.)
- Colossians 3:17
- Colossians 4:2-4
- 1 Thessalonians 1:2, 3
- 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23-25
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3, 11, 12
- 1 Timothy 1:12-17 (The preeminent role of God the Father is strongly emphasized in verse 17.)

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<sup>15</sup> I believe Acts 1:14, 24 could be listed here, but I won't list these verses. On God as the One who knows the hearts of all men, see Acts 15:8. Acts 3:19; 4:24, 25, 29; 17:24 (with 17:31), for example, show that "[the] Lord" sometimes refers to God the Father in the book of Acts.

- 1 Timothy 2:1-8 (The preeminent role of God the Father is strongly emphasized in verse 5.)
- 1 Timothy 5:5
- Philemon 1:4-6
- Hebrews 13:15, 16, 20, 21
- James 5:13-18
- 1 John 3:20-24 (The Holy Spirit is mentioned in these verses, so we see the Trinity here.)
- Jude 1:24, 25 (The preeminent role of God the Father is strongly emphasized in these verses.)

In the next passages listed, prayer is addressed to God the Father, but the Lord Jesus Christ isn't mentioned. It is amazing how often God the Father and the Lord Jesus are mentioned together throughout the New Testament in ways that confirm that they are distinct Persons.

- Acts 12:5
- Acts 16:25
- Romans 8:26, 27 (Prayer is addressed to God the Father by the Holy Spirit, our infinitely competent Helper, who [while dwelling within us] intercedes for us. These verses strongly confirm that God the Father has the preeminent role and that He and the Holy Spirit are distinct Persons.)
- Romans 15:13 (We see God the Father and the Holy Spirit here.)
- 1 Corinthians 11:13
- 2 Corinthians 8:16
- 2 Corinthians 9:15
- 1 Timothy 5:5
- James 1:5-8
- 1 Peter 3:8-12
- 1 John 5:14-17
- 3 John 1:2

The following five passages are the only passages in the New Testament (that I am aware of) that include prayers directly addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ:

John 20:28, 29. When the resurrected Christ first appeared to the apostle Thomas, Thomas said to Him, "My Lord and my God."

Acts 7:54-60. Stephen saw, in a vision, the glorified Lord Jesus at the right hand of God the Father. He prayed to Him in verses 59, 60, asking Him to receive his spirit and to not hold this sin against those who killed him.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13. Here the apostle Paul starts out praying to God the Father; then he addresses a request to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; and then he addresses

a request to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is clear in these verses that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are distinct Persons and that God the Father has the preeminent role.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5, 16.<sup>16</sup> Here the apostle Paul starts out thanking God the Father for His plan of salvation (thanking God is a type of prayer), which includes His choosing us, calling us and sanctifying us by His Spirit through faith. Next he addresses a prayer to “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God the Father” at the end of chapter 2 (2:16, 17). Then at the beginning of chapter 3, he requests prayer for himself and his fellow workers, but he doesn’t specify to whom the prayer is to be addressed. As we have seen, typically it would be addressed to God the Father, but in this context it could also be addressed to God the Father and the Lord Jesus, or just to the Lord Jesus. In 3:5 Paul addresses a prayer to the Lord Jesus. Actually Paul just said “the Lord,” but there is widespread agreement that he meant the Lord Jesus. And in 3:16 Paul requested that the Lord of peace continually grant them peace in every circumstance, and there is widespread agreement that Paul meant the Lord Jesus.

2 Timothy 4:16-18. A short, but important, doxology addressed to the Lord Jesus is included in verse 18, “to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

That’s all the prayers that I listed while reading through the New Testament, but I’ll quote several more passages that will help demonstrate the preeminent role of God the Father before I make some concluding comments and summarize the results of this study.

John 14:28; 17:1-5. “You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.” These last words, “for the Father is greater than I,” confirm the familiar theme that the Father is preeminent in His role to God the Son. The Father had sent Him, and now He was going back to the Father, which would mean great glory for the Son (see John 17:1-5, for example). His going back to the Father would also work for the great good of Jesus’ disciples. Now, through His atoning death and the outpoured Spirit, new-covenant salvation would become available.

I’ll quote John 17:3-5, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God [These words strongly confirm the preeminent role of God the Father.], and Jesus Christ whom You have sent [The fact that the Father sent the Son confirms His preeminent role, as do the words of verse 4.] (4) I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. (5) Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” The words of verse 5 confirm the deity of God the Son, very much including the fact that He existed with God the Father before any creating took place (compare John 1:1-4; 10, 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:1-3, for example).

Romans 15:6 “so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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<sup>16</sup> These verses should be considered in conjunction with 2 Thess. 2:3, 11, 12, verses that are quoted and discussed above.

1 Corinthians 8:4-6. “Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world [The apostle Paul made it clear though that those worshiping idols were worshiping demons that did exist (see 1 Cor. 10:14-22).], and that there is no God but one [referring to God the Father, but the Bible makes it clear that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are fully deity with God the Father]. (5) For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, (6) yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things [God the Father created all beings and things through His Son (John 1:3).], and we *exist* through Him [the Lord Jesus, the God-man].”

1 Corinthians 11:3. “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God [God the Father] is the head of Christ.”

1 Corinthians 15:24-27. “then *comes* the end, when He [the Lord Jesus, after He has subdued all enemies in His end-time reign, which will start when the Father sends Him back to the earth (that coming was mentioned in verse 23)] hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power [in accordance with the authority, power, and plan of God the Father]. (25) For He [the Lord Jesus] must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death [see Rev. 20:13, 14]. (27) For He [God the Father] has put all things in subjection under His [Christ’s] feet. But when He [or, probably better, “it” (referring to Psalm 8:6)] says, ‘all things are put in subjection,’ it is evident that He [God the Father] is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him [the Lord Jesus]. (28) When all things are subjected to Him [to the Lord Jesus], then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God [God the Father] may be all in all.” The preeminent role of God the Father is strongly emphasized here, but the Bible makes it clear that God the Son will reign with God the Father forever (see Rev. 22:1, for example).

Ephesians 4:4-6. “*There is* one body [the church, the body of Christ] and one Spirit [the Holy Spirit], just as you were called in one hope of your calling; (5) one Lord [the Lord Jesus], one faith, one baptism [water baptism], (6) one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” We see the Trinity here, and the preeminent role of God the Father is strongly emphasized.

Philippians 2:5-11. “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who although He existed in the form of God [God the Son always existed with God the Father (and the Holy Spirit); He was fully deity, the uncreated Son of God.], did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped [He was totally in agreement with and totally satisfied with His being subordinate to God the Father in some ways. He has always totally loved His role in the Trinity. He has never “grasped” for more. Quite the opposite! He greatly humbled Himself and temporarily set aside His glory to do the Father’s will (but He still was deity; God the Son became the God-man), which included His super-important incarnation and all that was involved with His super-important

atonement death. Total love, and divine order, reigns in the Trinity at the highest possible level.], but emptied Himself [as a perfect example of humility], taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient [to God the Father] to the point of death, even death on a cross. (9) For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name [with the very important exception of the name of God the Father Himself], (10) so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” This doesn’t mean, of course, that all will repent, but those who never will repent (including the devil, the evil angels, and the demons, and large numbers of people) will be forced to bow the knee and confess that they have been defeated and that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

1 Timothy 6:11-16. I’ll just quote verses 13-16. Paul is exhorting Timothy, “I charge you in the presence of God [God the Father], who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, (14) that you keep the commandment [To keep the commandment includes doing everything God requires of us (by His grace).] without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) which He [God the Father] will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, (16) who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be* honor and eternal dominions! Amen.” I’ll also quote 1 Tim. 1:17 again, which contains another glorious doxology addressed to God the Father, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen!” These passages strongly confirm the preeminent role of God the Father.

#### Some Concluding Summarizing Comments:

This study shows that the New Testament typically speaks of prayer being addressed to God the Father. It also consistently speaks of the subordinate role of the Lord Jesus with respect to God the Father, very much including after the Lord Jesus was glorified, and forever. The fact that God the Father has the preeminent role is at least a significant part of the reason why we should typically pray to the Father (and why we should worship Him first and foremost). You might disagree with my understanding of a few of the passages we discuss in this paper, but most of the passages seem very clear to me.

I wasn’t aiming for scientific accuracy, but I counted sixty-one prayers addressed to God the Father and seven prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ. (That includes the prayer addressed to God the Father and the Lord Jesus and the prayer addressed to the Lord Jesus and God the Father.) So, ninety percent of the prayers were addressed to God the Father and ten percent of the prayers were addressed to the Lord Jesus. Sixty-one is ninety percent of the total number of prayers, which was sixty-eight.

Five of the prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus are found in 1 Thess. 3:9-13 and 2 Thess. 2:13-3:5, 16, and it is significant that both of these passages started out speaking

of praying to God the Father, who has the preeminent role in the Trinity. 1 Thess 3:9-13 go on to address God the Father and the Lord Jesus together, and then the Lord Jesus by Himself. 2 Thess. 2:13-3:5, 16 go on to address prayer to the Lord Jesus and God our Father together (in 2:16) and to address prayer to the Lord (apparently the Lord Jesus) two times in chapter 3. (I didn't count the prayer request of 2 Thess. 3:1, 2, since it isn't clear to whom the prayer was to be addressed.) It may be significant that five of the seven prayers that were addressed to the Lord Jesus were limited to the epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians.

As I mentioned, the fact that the Lord Jesus plays such a prominent role in 2 Thessalonians, and to some extent also in 1 Thessalonians, because of the emphasis on His second coming in these epistles, may help explain Paul's addressing some prayers to the Lord Jesus in those epistles. I also mentioned that 1 and 2 Thessalonians (along with Galatians) were the earliest epistles of Paul that we have in the New Testament. And, as I mentioned, the apostle Paul may have known of a need to exalt the Person of the Lord Jesus in the eyes of some of the Christians at Thessalonica. The only other prayers addressed to the Lord Jesus were the glorious words of Thomas in John 20:28, the prayers of Stephen just before he died, and the brief, but important, doxology of 2 Tim. 4:18. These seven prayers (or you could say eight) suffice to demonstrate that it is biblical to pray to Jesus. He is God the Son, and He is very active in our salvation from the beginning to the end. We are saved through union with Him. But this study clearly demonstrates that our prayers should typically be addressed to God the Father through Jesus, in the name of Jesus. As I mentioned, even when the words "in the name of Jesus" or equivalent words, aren't used, it must be understood that our access to God the Father has come to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't believe we would have any problem if ten percent of the prayers in our day were being addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ, or probably not even if it were twenty percent. We do have a problem, however, when most of the prayers, if not all of the prayers, in many circles are being addressed to the Lord Jesus. We can't do better than follow the pattern established by the Word of God, which is based (at least to some significant extent) on the rather strongly emphasized preeminent role of God the Father taught in the Bible. I should also mention that if we should pray to God the Father first and foremost, which we should, we should also worship Him first and foremost too. God the Father has an eternal preeminent role in the Trinity, and I am totally convinced that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit say Amen! to that.

I suspect that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Person most concerned about His being in the spotlight that God the Father should be in. And although God the Father is certainly concerned for the glory of His unique Son, I am sure that He cannot be satisfied when things are out of divine order.

I am very thankful for the verses that demonstrate that it is biblical for us to pray to Jesus. For one thing, as I mentioned, those verses serve to further confirm the super-important deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is so often challenged by the devil and those who listen to him in our day, and throughout the history of Christianity.

I'm going to quote two passages where glory is ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ in a way that demonstrates His all-important deity. These passages also demonstrate the preeminent role of God the Father.

1 Peter 4:11. “Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God [God the Father]; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God [God the Father] supplies; so that in all things God [God the Father] may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” I agree with the commentators who say that the words “to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” refer to the Lord Jesus. (The words “to Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen” of 1 Pet. 5:11 refer to God the Father.) But it is also clear (like in Phil. 2:9-11, for example) that all the glory and dominion of the Lord Jesus redounds to the glory of God the Father, who gave the Lord Jesus “the name which is above every name” (Phil. 2:9), with the obvious exception of His own name. Note that in the first part of 1 Peter 4:11, Peter spoke of Christians speaking the utterances of God the Father and serving by the strength which He supplies. Like I have mentioned, the Bible makes very clear the full deity of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, but it also consistently demonstrates the preeminent role of God the Father.

Revelation 1:4-7.<sup>17</sup> “John to the seven churches that are in Asia. Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come [The context here confirms that these words refer to God the Father. These words build on the name *Yahweh*. We see the Trinity here as we continue.], and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne [These words are a symbolic way to refer to the Holy Spirit.(see Rev. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6 and Zech. 4:10).], (5) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead [He was the first man (though He was, and is, a whole lot more than just a man; He became the God-man when He, God the Son, “became flesh” (John 1:14) through His incarnation) to leave death behind and to be born into the fullness of God’s new creation life.], and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood [In His atoning death, He released us from our sins with the guilt and the penalties, including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin, so we could be born again and walk with the victory over sin in the very imparted righteousness and holiness of God.]—(6) and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father [These words, “to His God and Father,” by themselves, suffice to show the preeminent role of God the Father.]—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. [I agree with the widespread viewpoint that these last words refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is fully deity with God the Father (and the Holy Spirit).] (7) Behold, He [the Lord Jesus] is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen”

May God’s good will be fully accomplished through this paper! In Jesus’ name!

#### BRIEF APPENDIX ON THE SUBORDINATE ROLE OF GOD THE SON

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<sup>17</sup> I am going to keep my comments to a bare minimum here. These verses are discussed in my paper titled, “A Verse-by-Verse Study of Revelation Chapters 1-10,” which is located on my internet site.

In footnote 2 of this paper I referred to my paper titled “A Verse-by-Verse Study of John 1:1-18 and Colossians 1:15-3:17,” which was published in November, 2004. The deity of Christ and the Trinity are discussed under John 1:1-5, 9-19 and Col. 1:15-18, including the footnotes. I’ll reproduce part of footnote 8 that I have under John 1:1,

I’ll quote part of what Wayne Grudem says under the subheading “The Persons of the Trinity Eternally Existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (*Systematic Theology* [Zondervan, 1994], pages 251, 252). “...it may be said that there are no differences in deity, attributes, or essential nature between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God and has all the attributes of God. *The only distinctions between the members of the Trinity are in the ways they relate to each other and to creation.* In those relationships they carry out the roles that are appropriate to each person.

This truth about the Trinity has sometimes been summarized in the phrase ‘ontological equality but economic subordination,’ where the word *ontological* means ‘being’ [Grudem has a footnote, “See section D. I. above, where *economy* was explained to refer to different activities or roles.”] Another way of expressing this more simply would be to say ‘equal in being but subordinate in role [speaking of God the Son and God the Spirit].’ Both parts of the phrase are necessary to a true doctrine of the Trinity: If we do not have ontological equality, not all the persons are fully God. But if we do not have economic subordination [Grudem has a footnote, “Economic subordination should be carefully distinguished from the error of ‘subordinationism,’ which holds that the Son or Holy Spirit are inferior in being to the Father (see section C. 2, above, p. 245).”], then there is no inherent difference in the way the three persons relate to one another, and consequently we do not have the three distinct persons existing as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for all eternity. ...

This is why the idea of eternal equality in being but subordination in role has been essential to the church’s doctrine of the Trinity since it was first affirmed in the Nicene Creed.... Surprisingly, some recent evangelical writings have denied an eternal subordination in role among the members of the Trinity [[Grudem has a footnote here, giving examples. I’ll quote one of the three paragraphs he has here, “...Millard Erickson, in his *Christian Theology* (...Baker, 1983-85), pp. 338 and 698, is willing only to affirm that Christ had a temporary subordination in function for the period of ministry on earth, but nowhere affirms an eternal subordination in role of the Son to the Father.... ....” The viewpoint that Erickson expresses is in line with what I (K. Kemp) was taught at seminary, but I have always thought that that viewpoint didn’t go far enough in acknowledging the eternal subordinate roles (I didn’t say *inferiority*) of the Son and the Spirit.]], but it has clearly been part of the church’s doctrine of the Trinity (in Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox expressions), at least since Nicea (A.D. 325). ....”

I have found quite a few helpful articles on the internet dealing with the Trinity, the subordinate role of the Son of God, etc., not that I can endorse everything said in those articles. I’ll mention a few articles: “The Historic Case for the Trinity, by K. Dayton Hartman; “Oneness Theology” by Let Us Reason Ministries; “The Ontological Trinity and Apologetics” by Doug Powell, and “The Nicene Creed” in The New World Encyclopedia.

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