

## “Receiving Confidence in Prayer”

1 John 5:14-17

*Prayer is essential for God's people to know  
they belong to Him and are forgiven.*

*God Hears Prayers*

*Praying for Those in Christ*

*Praying for the Lost*

### *God Hears Prayers*

1 John 5:14-15, NKJV

*Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.*

Confidence of the believer is something that is assumed to be had, but all too often confidence is as limited as joy in the Lord. There are a variety of reasons for this. Lack of faith and trust in the Lord are usually viewed as the two main causes which is not always true. Boldness of the believer in response to being assured in their hearts and minds of their salvation in Christ is in no way arrogance, but the foundation of joy in the Lord and freedom through the Spirit of God that indwells them.

John identifies the confidence of believers as being connected with prayer, “...if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us...” John is restating something that he heard from Jesus repeatedly in the upper room before Christ’s arrest that would happen later that evening in the Garden of Gethsemane. Three different times during their time with Jesus in the upper room He stated that the Father would give them anything they asked for according to His will.

The first time was in connection with bringing the Father glory through the Son when He said, “*And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*” (John 14:13, NKJV). The second time Jesus proclaimed this was in connection with the disciples bearing fruit of the Spirit that would last forever when He said, “*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you* (John 15:16, NKJV). The last time Jesus mentions this is in explanation about exactly how praying in His name would work that their joy would be fulfilled through prayer when He said,

*“And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*

*“These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the*

*Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. (John 16:23-27,NKJV)*

A person who knows that someone is listening to them can be the greatest source of encouragement to them. The realization or assumption that no one is listening or paying any attention to them will cause much grief, anger, and even depression for a person. This is true spiritually speaking of God. Believing that God hears when we speak to Him in prayer is a great comfort and brings confidence when answers to prayer are recognized.

What is asked of God is just as important as the act of praying. Jesus was repeating what others in the Old Testament texts were inspired to write. David was inspired to write, “*Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart*” (Psalm 37:4-7, NKJV). Receiving answers in prayer and recognizing the presence of God in this life is all connected with submission to His will and setting God as the greatest priority and love in life. This confidence in speaking to God and hearing His voice can only be accomplished in submission to Him and right fellowship in Him.

There are things that will hinder this open communication with God. It is corrupted if a husband does not treat his wife with proper respect (1 Peter 3:7). Hearing and speaking freely with God is also hindered due to pride, idolatry, and disobedience (2 Chronicles 7:13-14; Isaiah 1:15). When prayer is unsatisfying or there is nothing that is being heard from God, the problem is not with God but with the person. If prayer is seen as a waste of time or something that does not give peace, the person is the one who is out of fellowship or resistant to the leading of the Spirit of God in their lives. This has nothing to do with the salvation of the person, but in their walking in obedience to God’s Spirit in their lives.

The contrast between Jacob’s son Joseph and King David is striking. Joseph prospered and flourished regardless of his circumstances. Joseph ran from sin continually in his life even though he faced many times when there seemed to be no hope and that God had abandoned him (Genesis 37, 39-41). Joseph was consistent in his walk with God even though he was not perfect and prayer sustained him in all circumstances. King David was certainly not consistent in his walk with the Lord even though he was known by God as a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). In those times of David’s failures, he followed what he thought was best rather than turning to God in prayer with each decision that was placed before him. This led David to commit acts of covetousness, adultery, conspiracy, and murder (2 Samuel 11:1-27).

When praying to God and seeking to listen to Him is absent from the life of a person, they will begin walking according to the flesh rather than according to the Spirit of God as those who have no relationship with the Father through faith in Christ by the power of the Spirit of God. The lack of prayer and the lack of its priority in the life of God’s child is the first indication that there is a spiritual problem that is present in their life. The only resolve when this is recognized is to ask God to examine the heart and reveal how they have been entertaining sin, or resisting His leading, or refraining from doing what they know they ought to be doing (Psalm 26:2, 139:23-24).

When prayer is a priority and listening to God through His Word and Spirit within is known, then confidence in Christ will be found along with the joy only the Lord can provide in all circumstances. Receiving confidence in prayer is to know that God hears and cares about what is being encountered in His child's life which frees them to focus on the needs and spiritual condition of those around them. This confidence of the one in Christ is for the benefit of others since the child of God knows He is with them and caring for their personal needs so they are free to encourage their brothers and sisters in Christ and minister to those who are far from the Lord and dead in their sins.

### *Praying for Those in Christ*

1 John 5:16, NKJV

*If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.*

Sin cannot be escaped in this world. Even those who have been redeemed by Christ will suffer from their fallen nature and sin. Failure to live up to God's standard of a sinless life brought the death of the Son of God for the forgiveness of the sins of world. God has made it abundantly clear that, "...*the wages of sin is death...*" (Romans 6:23). Yet, here in this passage John makes this claim that there is sin which does not lead to death.

Scripture is consistent and unified in all its teachings from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22:21. No contradictions can exist or changes from one book to another since there is no division in the Lord. Therefore, this claim of John in 1 John 5:16 must agree with what Apostle Paul proclaimed to the Roman believers about the wages of sin is death. Praise the Lord that He has provided the understanding needed through the Holy Spirit indwelling within those who belong to Christ by His grace through faith in Him.

All sin carries a death sentence with it (Romans 5:12-14). It was impossible for mankind to live a sinless life and live up to the law of God which was proven by the behavior of people in their inability to keep the law (Hebrews 8:7-13). God the Father sent His Son, Jesus, into the world who was fully God and fully human in order that He would be the perfect sacrifice that would bring forgiveness of sins to the world and provide the opportunity to be reconciled to God the Father through faith in the Son by the power of the Spirit of God (Romans 5:1-2; Colossians 1:19-23; Hebrews 4:14-16).

The claim of there being sin that does not lead to death can only be justified with the whole of Scripture by taking into consideration that God's people, even though they are redeemed by the blood of Christ still commit sin and are justified by God through Christ's righteousness. Apostle Paul acknowledged his struggle with sin after coming to faith in Christ to the Roman believers (Romans 7:14-25). The sin Paul is talking about is after his conversion since there is no way a person can, "...*delight in the law of God according to the inward man*" unless the Spirit of God resides within them (Romans 7:22, NKJV).

This means that the sin Paul and believers commit after their redemption in Christ does not lead to death since there is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1-4). Walking in the Spirit is far from being sinless or perfect as Christ was sinless, but became sin so that mankind could become the righteousness of

God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Sin that does not lead to death therefore has to be sin which Christ has already made atonement for by His death on the cross in the lives of His people.

There are those who would argue that John is talking about sin that leads to physical death rather than spiritual death. This disregards the context of the passage here that comes before and after which is speaking about those who are in Christ. This means the confidence that we have through prayer allows us to confidently pray for those in Christ who have fallen into sin regardless if the consequences of that sin is great or small. It is for their conviction in the Holy Spirit that they will come to acknowledge their sin by confessing it before God and following through in true repentance by taking steps so they do not fall into the same sin again (1 John 1:8-2:2).

A person must consider and deal with the sin in their life first before they can hope to see the sin of a brother or sister in Christ clearly. Jesus explained this by warning those who followed Him to first remove the plank from their eye before attempting to remove the speck of dust from the eye of someone else (Matthew 7:3-5). There must always be grace given to fellow believers when dealing with sin for it is understood that no one is void of sin. Therefore, the believer is in the continual state of repentance in the sanctification process they are undergoing by the renewing of their minds by the presence of the Holy Spirit within them (Romans 12:1-2).

It is acknowledged by Paul that He is confident in Christ's ability to forgive him of sin so that as a living sacrifice he along with all God's children place themselves upon the altar of God as a living sacrifice that the Spirit is conforming to the image of Christ on a daily basis. This means conviction is quickly felt upon unrighteousness in the life of the believer followed immediately by confession and repentance. That is why fellow believers do not pray for salvation for themselves or one another repeatedly, but pray they and all God's children would feel the weight of their sin quickly that they will run into the Savior's arms to receive the forgiveness His sacrifice offers for all sin.

In this sense, our future sins which have not been committed yet were sins that Christ took upon Himself and are cleansed by His blood as soon as they are acknowledged and repented of by the believer. Apostle Paul explains how God left the sins of the past go unpunished in the expectation of the coming Messiah when he wrote, "*...in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*" (Romans 3:25-26, NKJV). This is why Nathan could say to King David that the Lord had put away his sin even though the sacrifice of animals did not bring forgiveness before God but merely reminded people of the cost of sin and God's righteousness (2 Samuel 12:13; Hebrews 10:1-4). God anticipated the Messiah's work on the cross and the forgiveness that was going to be provided through His blood.

In the same way, Christ died for the sin of all people on the cross for all who would ever be born. Those who are alive today were not present at the death of Christ. This means that Christ has provided the means to forgive sin that has not been committed yet when a person confesses and repents of their sin. This is why John encourages people to confess their sins and God is faithful and just to forgive them of all their unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Forgiveness is given for that which was confessed and all that was forgotten and/or what was done in ignorance. The confessed and repentant heart of the sinner does

not commit sin that leads to death because they have felt the weight of conviction, turned in repentance, and rejoice in the forgiveness through faith in Christ Jesus. This is not a license to sin, but an assurance that salvation is not something that needs to be repeatedly entered into but through sanctification of the Holy Spirit makes people sensitive of their sin against God and their longing to avoid doing anything that is against righteousness.

Praying for those in Christ is to pray they would be horrified by their sin, grow in the need to please the Lord in all they do, speak, and think, and endure in greater love for God than the things of this world. Believers need to recognize Christ as Lord over their lives so that He and not their feelings and desires are in complete control of all decisions and thoughts. It is for those without Christ that we pray for them to come to know Jesus the Christ first as their Savior because they have recognized their sinfulness, and then as Lord of their life to submit to His control.

### *Praying for the Lost*

1 John 5:17, NKJV

*All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.*

Sin that does not lead to death can only be possible if Christ has already paid the penalty of the sin which is confessed and repented of in Christ. This means that sin which is embraced, chased after, and given into is unrighteousness and will destroy the physical body and cause the soul to be eternally condemned to hell since it has neither been acknowledged as sin nor repented of in dependency upon the shed blood of Christ.

Everyone is dead in their sins prior to coming to faith in Christ Jesus. This is due to mankind being made in the image of Adam after mankind's rebellion against God (Genesis 5:1-2). Adam's sin caused the image of God to be marred and corrupted in all who would come after him. Mankind was then hopelessly separated from their Creator due to their sin.

God introduced the horror of sin by demonstrating to Adam and Eve in the first sacrifice of an animal that provided clothing for them physically but also revealed death which would eventually take them due to their sin. All of creation has been caused to suffer because of mankind's rebellion (Romans 8:20-22). There can be no understanding of God's love, forgiveness, grace, and mercy until a person comes to know the weight of their sin, feel the shame of their rebellion, and acknowledge their hopelessness, and see their need for a Savior.

Apostle Paul proclaimed that he only preached Christ and Him crucified in his ministry. Paul spoke about many things in his preaching and teaching, but salvation of souls through the forgiveness of sins by the grace of God through Christ's shed blood was the foundation of all he did and said. The problem in the twenty-first century church is that Christ's shed blood, His suffering on mankind's behalf, and the call to die to self in order to live for Him is lost in the narrow focus on God's love, mercy, and grace. These things are stripped of power and authority when God's wrath and judgment upon sin is removed due to its harshness and graphic, non-political correctness.

Christ crucified means that the wrath of God on sin as well as the hope in Christ for the forgiveness of sins is equally presented each time God's Word is expounded upon.

All of Scripture is God-breathed which means it is focused upon Him rather than people. The Bible is written to people to point them to God by revealing the horror of sin, forgiveness in Christ Jesus, and the joy that awaits those who turn to the Lord to make Him first priority of their lives and the reason for them to live. When the Scripture is seen as a self-help book, used to acquire ammunition to prove a personal point, or in order to justify a position which is to satisfy oneself the Bible loses its power in the person's life. The Bible is to change, modify, and transform the one who reads it instead of as a tool to glorify self.

All unrighteousness is sin. Those who practice it will certainly not inherit the kingdom of God. Apostle Paul lists some, but definitely not all acts of unrighteousness when explaining the works of the flesh to the believers in Galatia.

*“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21, NKJV)*

The continual acting upon sin without regret, remorse, or shame is the sign of an unrepentant heart where Christ does not reside in and is not known by Him. Shame, regret, and despair over sin is the conviction of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The one who does not belong to Christ cannot be expected to know these things except when they are convicted by the Spirit of God who calls people to turn to Christ for forgiveness (John 6:44, 16:8-11). It is through the conviction of sin and the weight of sorrow over sin which is the method by which the Holy Spirit draws people to placing their faith in Christ to find forgiveness in Him by His grace through faith.

The focus in teaching, preaching, and witnessing is revealing the holiness, righteousness, and justice of God in comparison to the sinfulness and self-serving attitude of mankind and the reconciliation that Christ has given so that forgiveness before God the Father can be known. This means God's people share with others the glory of God in all they do and say by confessing their sinfulness and the joy of salvation through faith in Christ's shed blood that makes atonement for sin before the righteous, living God. Condemning the world is God's place. His people are to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal Him through their lives in full obedience to His commands and submission to His will over their desires.

The one who is not in Christ is destined to die in their sins forever separated from the One who created them to live eternally with Him. The Messiah, Jesus, God's one and only Son who came into the world full of grace and truth came to give life to all who will believe on His name to save the world from the wrath of God and not to condemn the world (John 3:16-18). Jesus is the One who bridges the divide between God and mankind to bring them together again to walk together as they once did in the Garden of Eden.

No one else has died for the sins of humanity, but Jesus the Christ (Romans 6:10-11). No one else is God in the flesh, but Jesus the Christ (John 1:1-2, 10:30, 17:5). No one else has given us His Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing His promises, but Jesus the Christ

(2 Corinthians 1:20-22). This is why Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation in all the world. There is no other by which a person can be saved from the wrath of God since only God can provide the atonement needed to be able to live eternally with Him in His kingdom. Therefore, as the writer of Hebrews pleaded,

*“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said:*

*“Today, if you will hear His voice,  
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” (Hebrews  
3:12-15, NKJV)*

God’s people are called to follow Christ’s lead in how He lived in complete surrender to the Father even to the point of death on the cross as a common criminal. Are we giving the Spirit full reign to lead us even unto death?