

Praying With Confidence and Compassion

Text: **1 John 5:14-17 HCSB** Now this is the confidence we have before Him: whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. **15** And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked Him for. **16** If anyone sees his brother committing a sin that does not bring death, he should ask, and God will give life to him--to those who commit sin that doesn't bring death. There is sin that brings death. I am not saying he should pray about that. **17** All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin that does not bring death.

Introduction

1. Rapidly approaching the end of his epistle, John has a few words on the subject of prayer -
2. This is not the first time he has broached this subject, for he has already mentioned...
 - a. The value of confessing our sins, which is done in prayer - 1 John 1:9
 - b. Our Advocate in prayer, Jesus Christ the righteous - 1 John 2:1
 - c. One reason why we receive what we ask in prayer - 1 John 3:22
3. In his final words on this subject, John does two things:
 - a. Expands upon a theme in prayer already introduced (praying with confidence)
 - b. Brings in another theme in prayer that is harmony with the tone throughout his epistle (praying with compassion, which consistent with his teachings on brotherly love)

As we examine his words in verses 14-17, we shall endeavor to take note of what else John has written, and use this as the basis for this study which we call "Praying With Confidence And Compassion".

First, let's consider how we can pray with confidence our prayers will be answered...

I. Praying with confidence (14-15)

A. Requires asking according to God's will...

1. This is the point emphasized in 1 John 5:14-15
2. Confidence in prayer is not based upon some assumption that we have "carte blanche" in regards to prayer...
 - a. Some may improperly conclude that we do from Jesus' statements
 - **John 14:13-14 HCSB** *Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.*
 - b. But even Jesus' own example illustrates that answer to prayer depends upon whether or not it is in harmony with God's will.
 - **Matthew 26:39,42 HCSB** Going a little farther, He fell facedown and prayed, *"My Father! If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will."* **42** Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, *"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, Your will be done."*
 - c. Paul learned this same lesson when he prayed about his "thorn in the flesh"
 - **2 Corinthians 12:7-9 HCSB** especially because of the extraordinary revelations. Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so I would not exalt myself. **8** Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times to take it away from me. **9** But He said to me, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."* Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me.
3. However, the more we learn God's revealed will (i.e., the Word of God)...
 - a. The more likely we will pray according to His will

b. The greater confidence we can have that our prayers will be answered accordingly

B. Requires keeping God's commandments...

1. This was stressed in
 - **1 John 3:22 HCSB** and can receive whatever we ask from Him because we keep His commands and do what is pleasing in His sight.
2. Even if we are asking something that would normally be within God's will for us...
 - a. If we are not keeping His commandments...
 - b. ...can we really expect God to favorably answer our prayers?
3. As Peter quoted from the Proverbs:
 - **1 Peter 3:12 HCSB** **because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their request. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.**
4. The righteous, of course, are those who "do those things that are pleasing in His sight"
 - **1 John 3:22b HCSB** and can receive whatever we ask from Him because we keep His commands and do what is pleasing in His sight.
5. Especially in regard to believing in Jesus and loving the brethren, two commandments given to us
 - **1 John 3:23 HCSB** Now this is His command: that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as He commanded us.

C. Requires abiding in Jesus, and His words abiding in us...

1. This was taught by Jesus Himself, and recorded by John in
 - **John 15:7 HCSB** **If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you.**
2. This should also help to clarify any misunderstanding from taking John 14:13-14 in isolation from its context
3. These words of Jesus actually summarize what we have already seen John to say...
 - a. Confidence in prayer depends upon keeping the commandments, but keeping the commandments is the key to abiding in Jesus!
 - **1 John 3:24a HCSB** The one who keeps His commands remains in Him, and He in him. And the way we know that He remains in us is from the Spirit He has given us.
 - b. Confidence in prayer depends upon asking according to God's Will, but if Jesus' words abide in us, won't that help us know what God's will is, and what is proper to ask of Him?

Therefore, if we learn the words of Jesus, keep His commandments and thereby abide in Him, we will know what is in harmony with God's will and pray accordingly. In this way we can have the "confidence in prayer" of which John writes!

But from an apostle to whom the command to "love the brethren" was a recurring theme, we should not be surprised to find him teaching also about...

II. Praying with compassion (16-17)

A. For a brother...

1. This epistle of John has been one in which John has stressed "brotherly love"
2. He has told us that we "ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"
 - **1 John 3:16 HCSB** This is how we have come to know love: He laid down His life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers.
3. He has said that if "one sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

- **1 John 3:17 HCSB** If anyone has this world's goods and sees his brother in need but shuts off his compassion from him--how can God's love reside in him?
- 4. Certainly, then, we should be willing and ready to pray for our brethren, especially when we see them...

B. Sinning a sin not unto death...

1. This is a difficult passage, one that raises several questions...

- a. What is the "sin not unto death" versus the "sin unto death"?
- b. What is meant that "He will give him life"?

Whatever conclusions we draw should be in harmony with the rest of the scriptures, and with other principles revealed therein, just as we do not draw conclusions about praying with confidence based upon John 14:13-14 alone

2. While open to further consideration, my present understanding of this passage is this:

- 1) John says in 1 John 5:17a, "all unrighteousness is sin", therefore any sin is not to be taken lightly
- 2) But there is sin "not leading to death"
 - a) That is, sin which does not progress to the point in which one experiences spiritual death, or separation from God
 - b) As indicated by James, sin does not produce "death" until it is "full grown" –
- **James 1:15 HCSB** Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.
 - c) Sin which does not produce (lead to) death would therefore be sin "repented of"
- 3) Sin "leading to death", producing spiritual death and separation from God would be sin "unrepented of." The Corinthians were so stubbornly persistent in their rebellion that God had finally had to take them home.
- **1 Corinthians 11:27-30 HCSB** Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. **28** So a man should examine himself; in this way he should eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. **30** This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep.

This is the same policy He held with Adam and Eve:

- **Genesis 3:22-24 HCSB** The LORD God said, "Since man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, and also take from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever." **23** So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. **24** He drove man out, and east of the garden of Eden He stationed cherubim with a flaming, whirling sword to guard the way to the tree of life.
 - a) We cannot expect God to forgive one who refuses to repent. Therefore, in order to be able to pray according to God's will, we should never ask God to forgive those who are unrepentant in their sin. We should instead ask God to do whatever it takes to break their hardened hearts so that they might repent and be saved from further consequences.
 - b) So John writes with some understatement: "I do not say that he should pray about that"
- **1 John 5:16d HCSB** If anyone sees his brother committing a sin that does not bring death, he should ask, and God will give life to him--to those who commit sin that doesn't bring death. There is sin that brings death. I am not saying he should pray about that.

C. God will give him life...

1. If the "death" in this passage is "spiritual death", it is natural to assume the life is "spiritual life"
 - a. The "life" which God will grant our penitent brother in answer to our prayers could also be described as "forgiveness"
 - b. This forgiveness is a crucial element of the "eternal life" to which John has referred throughout this epistle.
2. Thus the promise offered in 1 John 1:9 to the child of God who penitently confesses his own sin in prayer is offered in 1 John 5:16 to the penitent brother when prayer is made on his behalf by another member of the family of God
 - a. One might ask, "Why bother to pray for a penitent brother if his sins will be forgiven anyway as taught in 1 John 1:9?"
 - b. One answer might be found in
 - **James 5:16 HCSB** Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The intense prayer of the righteous is very powerful.
3. I would like you to consider the following verses:
 - **1 Peter 4:8 HCSB** Above all, keep your love for one another at full strength, since **love covers a multitude of sins.**
 - **Proverbs 10:12 HCSB** Hatred stirs up conflicts, but love covers all offenses.
4. What does this mean? Should I disregard sin? No. Should I be willing to cover up other people's sins? Absolutely not. What this means is that we should be willing to allow love to act as a lubricant. We should allow love to smooth away the consequences of all the petty little transgressions that occur between us regularly. But the transgressions covered are not only the other persons'. Our own sins are covered when we love and forgive someone else. Did not the Lord teach us...
 - **Matthew 6:12 HCSB** **And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**
 - **Mark 11:25 HCSB** **And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing.**
 - **Ephesians 4:32 HCSB** And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.
5. So in praying compassionately, with forgiveness in our hearts for our brothers and sisters, yet without contradicting God's revealed will, we will find the path that will not only lead others but ourselves to spiritual life, psychological peace and interpersonal communion.

Conclusion

1. The privilege of prayer is a wonderful blessing, especially when we do so with...
 - a. Confidence
 - b. Compassion
2. Are we fulfilling the requirements to be able to pray with confidence?
 - a. Abiding in Jesus, and letting His words abide in us?
 - b. Keeping His commandments and doing the things pleasing in His sight?
 - c. Asking according to God's Will?
3. Are we praying with compassion?
 - a. Praying not only for ourselves, but for our brethren in need?
 - b. Praying for brethren overtaken by sin, but who have demonstrated that their sin is not one leading to death?

As we all need the fullness of God's blessings in our lives, let's encourage one another to do whatever we can to be able to pray with both confidence and compassion!