

**Subject: *Straight Talk about Prayer***

**Scripture: *1 John 5:14-17***

The hallmark of the Christian faith is certainty. The book of First John is all about certainty or being sure of things. The key word is know, and with knowing comes assurance and confidence. In First John we know the truth about Christ. We know the truth about believers in Christ and unbelievers. We can have assurance of eternal life and with that comes the assurance that God hears and answers our prayers.

One night a little boy was kneeling with his mom and dad as he said his bedtime prayers. The child's grandparents were visiting and sitting downstairs in the living room. Suddenly the boy started praying at the top of his lungs: "Dear God, please bless me with a Spiderman bicycle. God, you know the one I'm talking about. It's red, white, and blue and it's on sale right now for \$79 at Wal-Mart." The boy's father leaned over and whispered, "Son, you don't have to talk that loud when you pray. God is not deaf." The boy said, "I know, but Papaw is." We have the wonderful promises of God like this one in ***1 Peter 3:12*** *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers.*

**1. The confidence we have in prayer**

One of the greatest facts is that God hears and answers prayer. Prayer can do anything God can do, and God can do anything.

- R. A. Torrey: "Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God's infinite grace and power. All that God is, and all that God has, is at the disposal of prayer."

The only thing that lies outside the reach of prayer is that which lies outside the will of God. We want to pray in a way that honors and pleases God. A small factory had a big problem when an important machine broke down. Nobody in the plant could get the machine running, so an outside expert was finally called in. This man looked the situation over, then took a tool and gently tapped the machine at a certain spot. It started running as if nothing had ever happened. When the repairman sent his bill for \$200, the plant manager hit the ceiling and demanded an explanation. Within a few days he submitted an itemized bill as follows: tapping machine – \$1; knowing where to tap – \$199. We need to know how to tap into the blessings of God through prayer.

The word in 1 John 5:14 translated "confidence" is found three other times in this letter: once in connection with Christ's second coming (2:28); once in connection with our relationship to God (3:21); and once in connection with the day of judgment (4:17). The word can be translated confidence, boldness, freedom of speech, and it describes the childlike attitude we have in coming to our heavenly Father. It is the word used in ***Hebrews 4:16*** *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* The truth is God is more ready to hear than we are ready to pray.

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear;  
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer;  
Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear;  
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

**2. The conditions we meet in prayer**

Our text says we can ask anything according to God's will. This fits in with other scriptures that tell us how to pray. There are certain conditions we must meet for our prayers to be answered.

- We pray in Jesus' name  
*John 14:13* And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. We pray in His authority, for what meets His approval, and for God's glory.
- We pray in faith  
*Matthew 21:22* And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Pray and believe and you'll receive. Pray and doubt and you'll do without.
- We pray in obedience  
*1 John 3:22* And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.  
*James 5:16* The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.  
*Psalms 34:15* The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

God answers prayer when we pray according to His will. That means we are in God's will and we ask for things that are in God's will.

- We pray with the right motives  
*James 4:3* Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

When we pray according to God's will it means we recognize that He is a sovereign God who is on His throne. We surrender our desires to His will. We also recognize that God is infinitely wise and good and we trust Him to do what is best. Someone said: "God's will is what you would always choose if you knew all the facts." Prayer is not bending God's will to fit our well. How can we pray according to God's will?

- We pray in line with God's Word  
*John 15:7* If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.  
The early church prayed like this, *Acts 4:24-31*.

We know it is God's will for us to be saved.

*1 Timothy 2:4* Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

We know it is God's will for us to be sanctified and set apart from sin.

*1 Thessalonians 4:3* For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.

We know it is God's will for us to be submissive to authority.

*1 Peter 2:13* Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; *1 Peter 2:15* For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

We know it is God's will for us to have wisdom.

*James 1:5* If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

- We pray in complete dependence on the Holy Spirit  
*Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

### **3. The concern we have in prayer**

In 5:16-17, John gives an example of prayer. It is a kind of prayer known as intercessory prayer, praying for another person. This kind of prayer is one of our highest privileges and one of our greatest responsibilities. This is prayer for a brother in Christ who sins, and the distinction is made between a sin unto death and a sin not unto death. Verse 17 reminds us that all sin is serious and offensive to God even though all sin is not unto death.

What is the sin unto death? It is not a particular kind of sin, but a sin that God judges immediately with physical death. In the Old Testament book of Numbers (15:30), we read about presumptuous sins (defiant, arrogant sins). Anyone guilty of a presumptuous sin was cut off or put to death. David prayed that God would keep him from presumptuous sins (Ps. 19:13). We know that God sometimes struck someone dead for their sin. We have the example of Ananias and Sapphira who lied about the value of some land they sold when they brought their gift to church (Acts 5). We have the example of some in the Corinthian church who were dead because they abused the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11).

The concern we have in prayer should be for the spiritual needs and well being of others. Our supreme concern should be for God's will to be done, as in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." When we don't know what God's will is we can always pray like Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, *Matthew 26:39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Someone may object that whenever we pray, "If it be your will," that shows a lack of faith. But it actually shows that we trust the Lord to know and do what is best. The Lord is not looking for us to advise Him, but to trust Him in prayer.