

## The Will of God in Prayer (1 John 5:13-17)

### How can I be assured of my salvation?

1. He walks in the light as God is in the light, and is the light (1:5-7)
2. He sees his sin, confesses it, and repents of it (1:8-10)
3. He abides in Jesus and walks as He walked (2:1-6)
4. He loves the brethren in word and deed (2:7-11; 3:14-18)
5. He does not love the world (2:15-17)
6. He practices righteousness considering Christ's return (2:28-3:3)
7. He sins less, not sinless (3:4-7)
8. God's seed abides in him, not the devil's (3:8-10)
9. The world hates him because of God's righteousness in him (3:11-13)
10. His heart (conscience) does not condemn him (3:19-22)
11. The Spirit of Christ (Holy Spirit) dwells in him (3:23-24)
12. He listens to the truth in growing discernment (4:1-6)
13. He loves God and His saints because God's love is wrought through him (4:7-12)
14. He confesses that Jesus is the Son of God (4:13-16)
15. He has no present or future fear of punitive judgment from God (v.17-18)
16. He believes that Jesus is the Christ (5:1)
17. He loves God and obeys His commandments (5:2)
18. He overcomes the world (5:4-9)
19. He has been given eternal life in the Son (5:10-11)

### **20. He prays to God according to His will, submitting to that will when revealed (5:14-15)**

#### A. Pray to God because He knows and understands (v.14):

- The apostle John is encouraging His readers to have confidence (v.13) in the life they possess in Jesus Christ (v.11-12). He has exhorted his readers to practice righteousness so they may have confidence when Jesus returns (2:28) and future confidence for the day of remuneration (4:17).
- This confidence is "before Him" or "toward Him." The "Him" most likely speaks of the Father, as Jesus taught His disciples how to pray (Matt. 6:9-10; 26:39).
- The "asking" refers implicitly to prayer but can also indicate the believer simply "talking to God," not talking "with God." This Greek for "asking" communicates a sense of urgency in the attitude of the suppliant.
  - It refers to a petition of one who is lesser in position than He to whom the petition is made when asking something from God (Matt. 7:7; James 1:5; 1 Jn. 3:22), as a child from a parent (Matt. 7:9-10), as a subject from a king (Act. 12:20), and as a beggar from a passer-by (Acts 3:2).
- The child of God must be confident that God hears and understands what he asks.
- Because of the work of Jesus Christ, we have freedom of speech, cheerful courage, boldness, and assurance that God knows everything thoroughly (Ps. 139:1-4).
- Unlike mankind, who is burdened, frustrated, annoyed, and impatient with habitual and continual requests, God is not.

#### B. Pray to God according to His will (v.14-15):

Theologians distinguish two kinds of "wills" from God, although God only has one will.

#### *The Desired (Revealed) will of God:*

- This is all that reflects the moral, eternal, and unchanging character of God (including positive commands).
- God wants/wills/desires that our minds be: renewed to discern His will (Rom. 12:2), wise and understanding (Eph. 5:17), filled by the knowledge of His will (Col. 1:9), informed of what commands to follow (Rom. 2:18), and growing in sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3; 5:18).

#### *The Decreed (Sovereign) will of God:*

- Everything that comes to pass (Prov. 16:1; 21:1; Isa. 46:10; Dan. 4:35; Acts 4:27-28; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:5, 11; 1 Pet. 3:17; 4:19).

While Jesus instructed His disciples to ask for anything and promised He will do it (Mk. 11:24; Jn. 14:13-14), it must be in Jesus' name. This is not a request or prayer formula, but means according to God's will.

- Sometimes, our requests are intrinsically selfish, with no concern for the glory of God and the good of others (James 4:1-4).
- Other times, God may withhold that which He had promised to give because potentially there is unbelief and disobedience in the request, or the request has become an idol (Ps. 37:4; Ps. 66:18). While He hears God-fearers (Jn. 11:41-42) and the broken and contrite (Ps. 32:1-5; 51:1-12), there is no guarantee that the lifestyle itself will merit favorable requests before God.

There are times when God will not positively grant the requests of His children for reasons reserved for His good pleasure alone (Ps. 103:11; Isa. 55:9-12).

- We must recalibrate our will with His will, even when we believe God's revealed will is our will. The perplexing manner of this assurance of "giving" is that He promises to grant the requests according to His will (v.15).
- While at times it may appear as though His will of command conflicts with His will of decree, we must defer our will (even if ours submits to His will of command) to His will of decree. Prayer is not about us changing God's mind but about Him changing ours.

#### C. Pray to God for His intervention with saints living in unrepentant sin (v.16-17):

- John entreats His readers to pray for the saints who profess to be in Christ yet live in outward, rebellious sin. "If anyone" (v.16) implies the priesthood as all believers and the requirement that all believers pray for God's intervention.

#### *What is the sin that leads to death? It means either:*

- Physical (Num. 18:22; Deut. 22:26; Isa. 22:14; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 5:5; 11:29-30): it cannot be this since John has not mentioned anything about physical life or death. In John's first letter, every mention of life has been eternal life (1 Jn. 1:1, 2; 2:25; 3:14, 15; 5:11, 12, 13, 16), which is also its primary referent in John's Gospel (Jn. 3:15, 16, 36; 5:24, 39, 40; 6:40, 53, 54; 14:6; 17:3; 20:31).
- Venial (forgivable) and Mortal (unforgivable) sins: the Catholic Church does not possess the authority to determine which sins can be forgiven.
- Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Mk. 3:28-30): this was only operational during Jesus' ministry, as men ascribed His miracles to be empowered by demons.
- Lawlessness (1 Jn. 3:4-9): the sin of deliberate rejection of God's authority.
- Apostasy (Heb. 6:4-6): the abandonment of faith after partaking in the Holy Spirit (on the verge of salvation).

The "sin that leads to death" refers to secessionists in the churches of Ephesus (to whom John is writing) who professed faith only to deny the person and work of Christ, then departed and caused division in the surrounding community (1 Jn. 2:19) as apostates.

Eternal life is what the believer possesses both entirely and partially (1 Jn. 5:11-12). While it is a gift apart from works (Matt. 19:16; Rom. 6:23), it requires sacrifice to keep and maintain (Matt. 19:29) and must be taken hold of (1 Tim. 6:12). It is also spoken of as being in the future (Matt. 25:46).

While eternal life is complete in Christ, there are degrees (functionally) of that life. To this end, the saints are to pray for professing believers living in unrepentant sin. God will give them life (v.16), using the prayer of the saints as one of many mechanisms to bring about repentance.