

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John 5:14-17**

Chapter 28- The Confidence That We Have in Him

258 Asking According to God's Will- Part 2

WAOY Thursday 10/02/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today we are going to continue our new section of our study and look again at what John taught about "The Confidence we have in Jesus Christ"- so let's open our Bibles and read **1John 5:14-17** again together:

14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

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 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and *God* will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to 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.

Now on the last broadcast- we were analyzing very closely what John taught us in verse 14- so I want to read that verse again together:

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

Now last time, we saw how that prayer is a fundamental part of Christianity and we looked at a very vivid example of just how the early believers prayed. And on today's broadcast- I want to look at the contrast between how these early Christians prayed and how we pray today by discussing a very important issue regarding prayer.

I have been deeply troubled for a number of years with the way in which we pray. It seems that very subtly- prayer has morphed into

something different in our day than it was when the Church began and please permit me to explain what I am talking about.

As you read the Bible and you examine how the people of Scripture prayed and then you examine 2,000 years of Church history and see how people prayed and then look at how we pray today- you see a vast difference in both the substance of our prayers and the objective of our prayers. And I believe that this difference centers around what John says here in verse 14:

... if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

You see, dear friends, the qualifier here is that what we ask must be in accordance to God's Will- not simply whatever we want or whatever we think would be good or whatever would personally benefit us. Doing God's Will in God's Way so that God would be glorified was the *dominating* motivation for prayer in both the Scriptures and in the first 1900 years of Church history.

But over the last 100 years or so- that goal and that objective- has changed into whatever pleases us; whatever benefits us; and whatever brings us more of what we want- and I think that that objective in prayer is arrogant, dangerous, and sinful.

First of all, we have to understand that prayer- like every other aspect of God- is not about us- it is about God. Prayer is worship and as worship- prayer should be done in God's Way to God's Glory. And all too often today it seems like prayer is thought of as being nothing more than a tool for us to get what we want out of God- regardless of what God's Will is and regardless of who is glorified through it.

It should be elementary to say that anything that glorifies Man is not God's Will and so according to John- anything that we pray that glorifies Man will not be answered- precisely because it is not God's Will and never will be.

God answers prayers that are in accord with His Will that are prayed out of an earnest and sincere heart- because prayer is all about us seeing God move so that God's Will will be done on earth just as quickly and just as surely as God's Will is done in Heaven.

We have to know, dear friends, that prayer is not about trying to talk God into doing something that His Word says is not His Will. And prayer is not about us trying to twist God's Arm into doing something

that He has already said He won't do, simply because we really, really, really want Him to do it.

Prayer is all about God doing a miraculous and supernatural work inside of us to the point that we love Him and that we genuinely desire what He desires and we love what He loves and we pray to see God's Will manifested on earth.

Prayer is about God doing in us whatever He needs to do so that we will no longer want what things that are contrary to God's Will- but that we will naturally and normally want what God wants and we will be so captivated about God's Will that we will earnestly desire to see God's Will come to pass down here on earth and so we pray to that end. And here's the kicker- we will desire God's Will to be done *regardless* of how that might affect us personally. That is because the only prayers that God answers are those prayers that are in accordance with His Will.

And the mistake that we make, many times, is to *presume* about what God's Will is. We have a tendency to think that simply because we see something as being good- that God does too and that is not always the case. Many times we think that because something will benefit us personally- that it is automatically God's Will and that is just not true.

And a very famous and popular verse of Scripture comes to mind that concerns this subject that we need to look at. So let's turn and read **Psalms 37:4:**

Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart.

Now many times this verse is quoted- what is emphasized is the last part- **He will give you the desires of your heart.** And so when we teach that God is going to do whatever is in our hearts with no qualifiers- many people then are led to believe that whatever is in their heart- God will grant it for them or to them- regardless of whether or not it is God's Will. What a deal! Can you just imagine all the things that a person can desire in his heart? And God is going to give all of that to me? What a deal!

I have even heard this verse quoted by some to say that God will give them things that are sinful and that are wrong. Still others say that you don't even have to be saved and God will give you whatever

your sinful heart can lust for.

So, by emphasizing the *last* part of this verse to the expense of the *first* part is a classic case of taking a verse of Scripture out of context and testing it to mean something that it doesn't mean. And anytime we do that- dear friends- we misuse and we misinterpret and we misapply what God is actually saying. And the Bible says that is sinful.

In reality- the most important part of this verse is not the last part- but the first part- let's read that part again:

Delight yourself in the Lord...

Now just what does that mean? Is this verse saying that as long as I give God some lip service and tip Him a quarter on Sunday Morning during the song service- that I have fulfilled my end of the deal and now I get whatever my heart craves? Is that what the psalmist was teaching in this verse? Hardly.

The word that was translated here into English as "delight" is the Hebrew word, *anag*, which means: *to be happy about; to take great delight in; to be clean and to prepare oneself for pleasure*. So, we are to be happy about something. What are we to be happy about? The Lord. And our delight in the Lord is to such an extent that we become clean and that we prepare ourselves for eternal pleasure.

So for anyone to delight themselves in the Lord is more than just an attitude or something that is up and down or something that is temporary- but rather to truly delight ourselves in the Lord is to go through a transformation that causes us to be happy and to take great delight in Him.

But what happens to our delight and happiness when God says, "No" to us? When we find out that what we really want is not God's Will- where does our delight go then? Do we pout like a spoiled child? Do we rebel like those who don't love Jesus? Do we get down and discouraged because God's Ways are not like our ways- as though we didn't already know that? If any of those things are the way that we react- then I suggest that we really haven't delighted our self in the Lord, at all.

You see, my brothers and sisters, delighting in God is to relish Him- to actually delight in God- not just what God does for us. So if the only thing that makes you happy about God is the good that God does

for you- then you won't last five seconds if God requires that you suffer for His Glory or that you go through a season of persecution or that you pay the ultimate price of martyrdom.

It is very problematic in our American culture that when we speak of the goodness of God or the blessings of God- we almost always talk about money or material possessions or health- rather than eternal spiritual blessings and internally joy and peace. But I suggest to all of us that delighting in the Lord is to value the Lord; it is to hold Him in very high esteem; it is to place worth upon Him that supersedes any value or any worth that we place on ourselves or anything that this world has to offer.

To truly delight in the Lord will allow you to say, "*Take this whole world, just give me Jesus*" and if you really delight in the Lord- your greatest fear will be that you may sin against Him- that you may displease Him; that you may not give Him all honor and glory- not that you might be asked to do something that is temporarily uncomfortable or that may cost you something.

To delight in the Lord is an acknowledgement that we are sinful and He is holy and we understand all too well that we deserve His wrath against our wickedness and it is only by Mercy that He saved us- not because we earned it and it is an acknowledgement that we came into this world naked and we will leave this world naked and that this world is not our home- and nothing that we possess in this life is eternal or lasting except Jesus and that we have a home in Glory Land that outshines the Sun!

So since we understand that- whatever our gracious God may require of me- whatever demands He may make on my life; whatever He would ask me to do; however much it may cost me; or however much of this world's goods I may lose in the process- what difference does it make as long as it is for His Glory?

To delight in the Lord is the same thing as delighting in God and delighting in God's Will- and so that delighting begins to change me and I no longer seek after what glorifies me- I now seek to glorify my precious Lord- who washed me and saved me and purchased me soul. So as I delight myself in the Lord- the Lord changes me and I no longer desire things that are not His Will- regardless of whether that benefits me personally or not.

And this change in me may be quick- but it may not be quick. This change may be slow; it may take days or weeks or months or years or even an entire lifetime. It took John nearly his entire life to be the man that he was when he wrote this Epistle. John was a fighter and a fisherman when Jesus first called Him. John was not easily touched nor was he gentle. He and his brother James had a nickname that everybody knew them by before Jesus called him- they were called, “The Sons of Thunder”. And people didn’t call him that because he was loving and sweet. John wanted a lot of things that were not God’s Will and that were wrong- even sinful- just like we do- but by God’s Grace- John learned how to delight himself in the Lord.

And John learned how to love and he learned how to be kind and how to be godly. It wasn’t quick and it was painful- but as he delighted himself in the Lord- the desires of his heart changed into that which was God’s Will and by the end of his life- John was that holy and godly man and God answered his prayers.

So that should give us all great courage today- that as we delight ourselves in the Lord- God is changing our hearts to seek after what God wants and to love what He loves and to hate what He hates. And in that condition- after we are changed- God will do according to those sanctified and transformed desires and Christ will be glorified in us.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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