

## Full Confidence Before the Throne

1 John #13 --- 1 John 5:14-17

*I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority. This is good, and pleases our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.*

Well church, I'm fairly sure you've heard of a "Late Bloomer." But I know for certain that you've heard of and know of a "Late Arriver." You are listening to him right now. "Derrick, you have a dentist appointment at 10:15." "I'll be there, honey. Don't you worry." "Derrick, I know you'll be there. But the objective is to be there at 10:15, not 10:30." When habitual "Late Arrivers" give you assurances that they will be on time, it would not be natural to have full confidence that they will, in fact, be on time, would it? It would be natural to have absolutely, positively, no confidence whatsoever that they will arrive when they are supposed to arrive. And you have a better chance of finding the Ark of Covenant underneath a trash can at Humiston Park in Vero Beach than you do of having of them arriving early!

To doubt is to have no confidence in someone or something. Our doubting nature is conditioned by our environment and our experiences. It's difficult for people to have confidence in others when they have been let down time and time again. John's audience was not that different from us. They lived during a time of intense persecution at the hands of four Roman Emperors. Their environment might have even conditioned them to think God didn't hear their prayers for deliverance. They also lived during a time of great apostasy. They learned from experience that not all who confess Jesus are actually confessing the Jesus of the Bible. Consequently, they had been let down time and time again. So, in the next to last passage in 1 John, the disciple whom Jesus loved had a message for all of those who had little to no confidence left when it comes to their environment and experience. It is this: do not let your doubts cloud your confidence in God. Because unlike your preacher at the dentist office, God always arrives on time. He will never let you down. And the best way to prevent your doubts in people from extending to your Maker is to pray with full confidence and assurance in light of the fact that God is faithful. And because He is, our prayers will be answered.

This is not the first time John has broached the subject of confidence in prayer. He's already told us in 1 John 3:21 that if our conscience doesn't condemn us, we can have full confidence before God. But it is the last time he will broach the subject in this epistle. Consequently, it is a complete picture of what praying with full confidence before the throne looks like. Today, from 1 John 5:14-17, you will see that praying with full confidence has an individual component when it comes to you and your needs, and it has an intercessory component when it comes to others, most especially for those living in a habitual lifestyle of sin.

*<sup>14</sup> This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. <sup>16</sup> If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that you should pray about that. <sup>17</sup> All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.*

### The Individual Component of Full Confidence Before the Throne

#### 1. It Has a Specific Appeal --- According to His Will (14-15)

- **Praying for a Different Brother:** (1) I once heard a story about a Godly mother who took her daughter with her to Sunday School. (2) The Sunday School Teacher taught on 1 John 3:21-22: "If our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask." (2) When it was over, the mother asked her daughter three questions in light of the lesson: (i) "Did you ask God for something specific when we prayed at the end?" "Yes. I did," the daughter replied. (ii) "Did your heart condemn you while you asked God for it?" "It most certainly did not," she replied. (iii) Curious now, the mother asked eagerly, "what did you ask God for without your heart condemning you?" "A different brother."
- **In Our Prayers, God Listens for Something Specific:** (1) In verses 14-15, there is a conditional conjunction that occurs in both verses that tie them together: "if." (2) In these verses, there is also one phrase that occurs in both verses: "he hears us." (3) Put them both together and you have "if" (this is done then) "he hears us." (4) So, what goes between the "if" and "he hears us?" "If – we ask anything according to his will – he hears us." (5) Therefore, in every prayer that you pray God listens in a specific way for something very specific: thy will be done!
- **Therefore, We Pray with Confidence in a Very Specific Way:** (1) It's the specific way that Jesus taught his disciples to pray with confidence before God. (2) (i) **Exaltation:** "our Father, who art in heaven..." (i) **Submission:** "Thy kingdom come..." (iii) **Requests:** "give us this day..." (iv) **Protection:** "lead us not into temptation..." (v) **Exaltation:** "for thine is the kingdom..."
- **Therefore, We Apply the Lord's Prayer in a Very Specific Way to Our Prayers:** (1) Jesus told his disciples to pray "like" this. (2) **Exaltation:** "Lord Jesus, I worship you today. You are set apart. (ii) **Submission:** "Lord Jesus, in your kingdom, there is forgiveness. Help me to forgive. (iii) **Requests:** "Lord Jesus, I ask you specifically for this because I feel like this is a daily bread issue for me. (iv) **Protection:** "Lord Jesus, deliver me from this temptation and this situation because I don't want my life to start becoming defined by pursuing evil. (v) **Exaltation:** "Lord Jesus, I worship you today. You are set apart. (3) That's what it means to approach the throne of grace with confidence knowing God will hear us.

## 2. It Has A Specific Realization --- Whenever We Ask. Whatever We Ask. We Know. We Know. (14-15)

- **The Prayer of a Confederate Soldier:** (1): “I asked for strength that I might achieve; I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey. I asked for health, that I might do great things. I was given infirmity, that I might do better things. I asked for riches, that I might be happy. I was given poverty, that I might be wise. I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men. I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God. I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life. I was given life, that I might enjoy all things. I got nothing I asked for – but everything I had hoped for. My prayer was answered, I was most blessed.
- **The Fourfold Recipe for Being Assured of God’s Faithfulness While You Are in the Process of Praying:** (1) The greatest prayers are those that appeal to the will of God while being assured of God’s faithfulness. (2) One of the greatest lessons about prayer in all of the Bible is right here in v14-15. It’s the fourfold recipe for being assured of God’s faithfulness. It doesn’t center around what God “hears.” It centers around what we “know.” It’s (i) whenever we ask (if we ask); (ii) whatever we ask; (iii) we know; (iv) we know.
- **Whenever We Ask; Whatever We Ask; We Know; We Know Implies That “No” is an Answer. If It’s No, He’ll Answer With Something Better:** (1) Abraham prayed that Ishmael would become the son of the promise. God said no because he had something better: a line of descent through Isaac. (2) Moses prayed earnestly to cross the river Jordan to enter the Promised Land. God said no because he had two things better: a young leader named Joshua and a better promised land for the aged Moses. (3) David prayed earnestly for the joy of building a temple to the Lord. God said no. He had something better: David to plan it and Solomon to do the work. (4) Jonah prayed earnestly that he would die. God said no. He had something better: Jonah to learn compassion and write it down in a book that would become 1/66<sup>th</sup> of the Word of God. (5) The Demonic of the Gadarenes prayed he could travel around as a disciple of Jesus. The Lord said no. He had something better: Go home to his friends and tell them about Jesus. (6) Paul prayed earnestly to be healed from his thorn in the flesh. God said no. He had something better: the all-sufficient goodness of his grace in moments of weaknesses.
- **Therefore:** “No” is an answer because He has something better. (2) “Slow” is an answer. For those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength and mount up with wings like eagles. (3) “Go” is an answer. He answered Jabez’ request directly. He did the same with Simeon. He’s done it with you. Why? Whenever We Ask. Whatever We Ask. We Know. We Know. That’s why.

### The Intercessory Component of Confidence Before God

#### 1. It Has A Specific Impetus --- Our Eyes (16)

- **Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory:** (1) That’s a great song, isn’t it? (2) It’s caused many Christians since it was penned to intercede for others to see that glory, particularly those engaged in something they know they shouldn’t be engaged in. (3) Your eyes are the impetus for prayers on behalf of someone else. (4) It’s God’s way of telling you to intercede for that person and don’t stop until there is a resolution.
- **Intercession for Others Starts in a Very Specific Way:** (1) It starts with the eyes according to v16: “when you see a brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death.” (2) Jesus said the eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. (3) That means intercessions for others won’t work unless your eyes are full of light first. If they are full of darkness, you won’t feel the need to intercede. But if they are, you know that you must.
- **Intercession for Others Means Taking What You See and Doing Something About It:** (1) But what you do about it is not what you think. Our instinct when we notice a brother/sister starting to explore a dark path is to confront. We do that in love because we care. But John says when you see that “pray (intercede)” and “God will give them live.” (2) One is a command, and the other is a promise. How God restores that individual is in his sovereign hands. There might be a time when you have a conversation. He might do it in another way. But your first responsibility is to intercede.
- **Where Intercession is Most Effective:** (1) John tells us to pray when you see a brother or sister involved in a sin that “doesn’t lead to death.” That’s one of the most difficult statements to understand in the NT. (2) Think of it this way: Ananias and Sapphira’s sin in Acts lead to death because it was (a) willful; (b) continuous; and (c) unrepentant. They were proud of it. Such people are in very dangerous territory in terms of mocking the holiness of God. (3) “Sins that don’t lead to death” is better understood as someone involved with something both you and that person know he/she shouldn’t be involved with. Those are the individuals who need to become the primary targets of your intercessions.

#### 2. It Has a Specific Reason --- Compassion For “Brother” and “Sister” In Sin (16)

- **Helzberg Diamonds:** (1) Nothing says I’ll love you forever like a Helzberg Diamond. (2) Appealing to God on the behalf of another sure does.
- **Why Compassion Is Important for Intercessions:** (1) It’s the ultimate application of the call to love: (2) 1 John 3:20-21 is the first of two passages in the book on praying with confidence. This one is the second. Both have the same introduction: “this is the confidence.” (2) But here, in the second to last passage, it extends to others. John does this for a reason: Love for neighbor, for the Christian, must be expressed in intercessions for others. This is the ultimate neighborly application in the whole book.
- **Who Compassion Extends to in Our Intercessions:** Two words in v16: “brother” / “sister.” We are our brother and sisters keeper. And the way we “keep” them is to intercede.
- **How Compassion Works in Our Intercessions:** (1) Intercession takes time. It requires a pause from other things to intercede for someone else. (2) Intercession is an admission. “God I can’t change this person. I know I’ve tried. But you can. And you will, I know it because you are faithful. (3) If we do that for our brothers and sisters flirting with disaster, I’ll assure you the gates of hell will never prevail against us.