

Boldness in Prayer

I John 5:14-17

Last week we looked at the evidences that prove we have eternal life. John told us that we have proof that eternal life is available because of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies within in Jesus' water baptism and crucifixion. John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus identified himself as the Messiah, the Holy Spirit confirms who Jesus is today in our hearts, and finally God identifies Jesus as His Son and gives his Son authority to tell us what to do.

Why is this important? Because if Jesus was who he said he was, and he was able to fulfill Old Testament Prophecy, then he is capable of giving eternal life to whoever he wants. Either Jesus was merely another martyr or all of the events that he was able to accomplish were not coincidences stacked upon each other, but were part of his divine assignment, uniting mankind with God, with the gift of eternal life.

Not only is eternal life a reality but for those of us who the Apostle John tells "HAS" God's Son, they have the assurance that eternal life is waiting for them. We saw that the word, "has" identifies one who follows, one who holds to, one who find necessity for, or one who realizes their need for Jesus Christ in their life. There will be a day when many of us will know the reality of eternal life. We will experience it. What incredible days we have in store for us in the future.

This morning John continues on in **I John 5:14-17** and says:

¹⁴ And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. ¹⁵ And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

¹⁶ If you see a Christian brother or sister sinning in a way that does not lead to death, you should pray, and God will give that person life. But there is a sin that leads to death, and I am not saying you should pray for those who commit it. ¹⁷ Every wrong is sin, but not all sin leads to death.

John, last week, had just finish telling us how we can have confidence in having eternal life. This morning he wants us to have confidence that our prayers are not only heard but answered as well. The word confident in verse fourteen is the same word that he has used in the past in regards to God's forgiveness, God's love, and God's gift of eternal life. It means to have a boldness, or an assurance that is open and seen. John is telling us that we can be confident that God will listen to us.

1. Confidence that we will be heard.

Micah, when talking about the sad condition that Israel was in stated in **Micah 7:5-7**:

⁵ Don't trust anyone—not your best friend or even your wife! ⁶For the son despises his father. The daughter defies her mother. The daughter-in-law defies her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household. ⁷ As for me, I look to the LORD for his help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me.

As close as some of our relationships with our spouse or friends may be, we can have the most confidence in God, especially when it comes to him hearing our requests. Unfortunately, many today don't know whether to trust God or not. They come to this conclusion based on the failures or discrepancies of human relationships. They think that God will not hear them simply because there have been people in the past who would not listen to them.

David understood the reality that God would listen to him. The book of Psalms is proof of that. In **Psalm 31:22** we read his words:

²² In sudden fear I had cried out, "I have been cut off from the LORD!" But you heard my cry for mercy and answered my call for help.

There are times when we don't feel like God is listening to us. In fact, we may think that we have done something wrong or that God is angry with us and has turned his back on us. But there are a few things to consider when you feel God is not listening. Listen to David's words in **Psalm 66:16-20**:

¹⁶ Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me. ¹⁷ For I cried out to him for help, praising him as I spoke. ¹⁸ If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, my Lord would not have listened. ¹⁹ But God did listen! He paid attention to my prayer. ²⁰ Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer and did not withdraw his unfailing love from me.

David uses the word "fear" here is translated in the Hebrew to mean reverence, respect, or honor. I think another definition can be a humble and honest acknowledgement. Do we consider who we are talking to? Do we realize how inadequate we are in relation to God? Do we understand our fallen condition and how we need God's help? I believe that God answers those who NEED Him.

David also tells us that he praised God. The idea of worshiping God can be defined as "placing worth or value upon" God. The Hebrew word here can also be translated as "to lift up, to exalt, or to place priority upon." Worship or praise can be as simple as a few words spoken, but also as complicated as living our lives in such a way that we show our value of God. I believe that God answers the prayers of those who VALUE Him.

Finally, David points out to the importance of his confessing his sin. Confession is the acknowledgement that we have fallen short of what we are suppose to do. I believe that God answers those who are HONEST with Him.

As you pray do you consider these three areas? Are you coming to God because you need him to answer you, are do you feel obligated to do so? When you come to God in prayer are you asking him for things that you want to see Him do, or do you value his input into your life? When you come to God are you willing to be honest and exposed before him, or do you only want to talk or deal with certain things and shut other areas out?

David points out to us that God heard him. Have we prepared ourselves in such a way that God will hear us? If you have, then you can be sure that he will not only hear but that he will answer. That lead us to my next point.

2. God Listens to His Own Will.

What is the purpose of God's will? The purpose of God's will is that in all things that he will be glorified. That he will be seen as he truly is and be given due credit for what he has done. In **John 14:13-14** we read Jesus' words. He says:

¹³You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, because the work of the Son brings glory to the Father. ¹⁴Yes, ask anything in my name, and I will do it!

*⁷But if you stay joined to me and my words remain in you, you may ask any request you like, and it will be granted! ⁸My true disciples produce much fruit. This brings great glory to my Father. **John 15:7-8***

*⁷"All who claim me as their God will come, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them." **Isaiah 43:7***

Our whole purpose in life is to bring glory to God. As God, he deserves all that we can give him, even the very lives that we live.

As we come before him in prayer, we can be confident that he will hear us especially if it will bring God honor and glory. Unfortunately, what we may see as an opportunity for God to be glorified, may also cause us to turn away from God.

The Word of Faith Movement would have us believe that we receive what we ask for only if our faith is strong enough. If we lack financial security, then we lack the faith to receive it. But can we identify today that sometimes money, materialism, popularity, fame, promotions can cause us to take our eyes away from God and thus cause us to bring more honor and glory to ourselves? Sometimes the best place for us is in a place of need. Sometimes the will of God for us is that we remain reliant upon his provision.

God will listen to us when we come before him with something that he wants for us. But it has to line up with God's plan for our lives. This morning we can be confident that if

we seek God, he will cause his will to take place. That leads us to verse 15 where John tells us:

And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

But John continues and addresses the praying for a Christian brother.

3. Pray For Each Other

He talks about praying for the brother who is sinning in a way that does not lead to death. Obviously, all sin leads to death unless there is the granting of forgiveness. In **Exodus 23:21** we read of God giving Moses instructions and it gives us a glimpse of God himself. He tells Moses:

²¹Pay attention to him, and obey all of his instructions. Do not rebel against him, for he will not forgive your sins. He is my representative—he bears my name.

Rebellion here results in no forgiveness. This messenger could very well have been Jesus Christ because it tells us that this messenger bears the name of God. The writer of Hebrews tells us in **Hebrews 6:4-6** of people who remain in rebellion. He says:

⁴For it is impossible to restore to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come ⁶and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people to repentance again because they are nailing the Son of God to the cross again by rejecting him, holding him up to public shame.

*²⁶Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received a full knowledge of the truth, there is no other sacrifice that will cover these sins. **Hebrews 10:26***

I want you to notice that John does not tell us that we can't pray for those whose sin is leading them to death, but what he is telling us is that we shouldn't expect much change from those who are living in opposition to God. We shouldn't give up on them because there is a chance that those in rebellion will change their ways. In fact, James talks about it in **James 5:19-20**:

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back again, ²⁰ you can be sure that the one who brings that person back will save that sinner from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.

But John's main point in this verse is that we should pray for each other because sin does have an effect on us. In **James 5:13-16** we read:

¹³ Are any among you suffering? They should keep on praying about it. And those who have reason to be thankful should continually sing praises to the Lord. ¹⁴ Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And their prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make them well. And anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results.

John alludes in I John 5:16 that our prayers for each other will result in forgiveness. In what we just read in James the prayers of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results. Maybe there is a connection here. But John makes it clear that we are to pray for each other and up lift each other in prayer.

Finally in I John 5:17 we read that not all sin leads to death. Sin tends to come in varying degrees. Although God sees all sin as wrong, he doesn't automatically throw eternal death at every wrong that we do. In **James 1:14-15** we read of sin that is allowed to mature.

¹⁴ Temptation comes from the lure of our own evil desires. ¹⁵ These evil desires lead to evil actions, and evil actions lead to death.

¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:14-15 NIV)

The New International Version points more to a growth of sin. If we are not careful and don't take control of sin in our lives, we may eventually find ourselves in a place where we rebel against the things of God, and it is then that we may find that we are living in spiritual death.

Conclusion

So this morning John is talking to us about the importance of prayer and the confidence that we can find in a God who will answer our requests in light of what he has planned for our lives.

God will listen to us only because we show that we need him, that we value him, and that we want to be honest with him. Those of us who find ourselves in a place of dependence and reliance can be assured that God wants to hear us.

But God doesn't give us anything that can harm us and take our eyes off of him. He grants us the things that are more valuable than our financial security or our being comfortable. He allows things to come and develop eternal character and integrity. Things that we will be able to take with us as we go on into eternity. But we can find confidence that if we pray for God's will to take place, it will.

Finally, John doesn't just talk about us praying for our own needs, but also for the needs of others, especially when it comes to the forgiveness of our fellow believers. We are to lift each other up in prayer, especially when it comes to the effect of sin. Sin is a danger to God's church, and we must always be on guard. We need to pray that God will protect us and help us not to get trapped in a place of rebellion against God.

Also for those who have fallen completely away from God, we need to pray in hopes that they will want to come back to God, or that circumstances will bring them back. When we pray it is not only about ourselves, but for others as well. When we pray God will listen to us and he wants to see us blessed by his plan for our lives.