

***IF WE ASK ANYTHING?!!!*****1 John 5:13-21****(Read 1 John 5:13-21)**

**Intro:** When Sheila was 4, we drove to California for BIC General Conference. We stopped here in Ashland on the way so that we could attend the wedding of Keith Dohner. He was marrying Deb Hawk who we didn't know, but if Keith was marrying her she had to be a keeper – turns out that was an accurate assumption.

Anyway, our trip to California was very cool even if we only got to see all the incredible landmarks on our route like Mount Rushmore, Yellowstone, Grand Teton, the California Redwoods, Grand Canyon and other great places at a kind of, “Oh look at that would you!” pace as we flew by them. Conference was at Azuza Pacific University and we had a wonderful time of fellowship with the body of Christ.

The next Spring, on her 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, we told Sheila we would go to any restaurant she wanted. This is a tradition we still carry on and that is why Kathy and I hover just above poverty level. But on that first time in May of 1989, when I told Sheila we would take her anywhere she wanted, she asked? “Anywhere?!” And when I said yes, she said, “Then let's go to that Mexican restaurant that was right across the street from Azuza Pacific University.” Well I LOOOOOVE Mexican, and I love my daughter, but that was over 3,000 miles away. So, I had to qualify then and every birthday since, that it is any restaurant within reasonable driving distance no matter how much we'd like a trip to Cali, or crave the delectable food.

Our text for today says that if we ask anything according to God's will, we will have what we ask of him. That's a good thing for Christ Followers to know – especially today when we are having a time of healing prayer. So, as we look at it, let's look at the qualifications John has on what “Asking anything” means. And it's not because of the human limitations I had when Sheila made a very large request – it's because of what God's will is and how we too can add limitations.

Here we are at the finish line of First John. You have been patient fellow journeyers as we carefully trekked through this little letter. It took time because it does indeed have a big message. As I've gone through this I have mentioned in practically every talk for almost three months that John has been addressing the hellish heresy of Gnosticism. Let me just say it again – one of the major tenants of the Gnostic lie is that its adherents have special knowledge that sets them apart. As you recall, John has debunked these teachings and now his response in these final verses is what true believers know. And this is . . .

**Knowledge you can live by**

- Let me list them for you – this is what we know as Christ Followers:
  - v. 13 We KNOW we have eternal life. Eternal life comes through Jesus Christ and in no other way. Jesus made a way to know the Father, and it is only through him.
  - v. 14 We KNOW we can have confidence in approaching God. The word for “confidence” originally meant freedom of speech and later it came to mean any kind of confidence. In other words, God is waiting for us to come to him with ANYTHING.
  - v. 14 We KNOW that God hears us. The basis of prayer is the simple fact that God listens to our prayers.
  - v. 15 We KNOW that whatever we ask in his will we know that we can have what we ask of him. And it must be in accordance with the will of God. Jesus, as he sweat drops of blood, prayed, "Not as I will, but as you will .... Your will be done" – notice he didn't pray, "Your will be changed." So, as you come for prayer today, remember, no matter what you are asking, to consider, “Is this God's will?”
  - v. 18 We KNOW that anyone born of God does not continue in sin.
  - v. 19 We KNOW that we are children of God.
  - v. 20 We KNOW that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding. It is true knowledge.
  - v. We KNOW that he gave us this understanding us so that we would know him who is true.
- This is life-giving knowledge as opposed to the false teaching straight from the father of lies – the evil one. So, when you doubt what you know, look to the one who will steer you straight.
- In a way, this has been a summary at the beginning of my talk, but I wanted to make sure you got it. All you need to know if you get nothing else I've said for the past several months is – Jesus is God's son and he is the only way.
- Now, some thoughts on what John says about prayer here. First . . .

## **Obedience is a condition of prayer**

- John told us earlier in the letter, *Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.* 1 John 3:21-22 Look at that, we receive whatever we ask because we keep his commandments. So, remaining in Christ is a condition of prayer. He records Jesus in another place as saying, that if we abide in him and his words abide in us, we will ask what we will and it will be done for us (John 15:7).

## **Prayer is not just talking to God, more so it is listening to him.**

- C. H. Dodd writes: "*Prayer rightly considered is not a device for employing the resources of omnipotence to fulfil our own desires, but a means by which our desires may be redirected according to the mind of God, and made into channels for the forces of his will.*"
- George Mueller wrote, "*Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of God's willingness.*"
- And while it seems like a no-brainer, we need to constantly be reminded . . .

## **Prayer must never be selfish.**

- That's why as John talks about this amazing gift of prayer he goes on to single out for special attention the prayer of intercession for the wayward person who needs praying for – it is not prayer for ourselves; it is prayer for others. Oh yes, we need to pray for ourselves, but NEVER to the exclusion of others.
- John points out the person who is straying. Yes, pray for the ill and pray for your own ills, but pray for the person who is struggling and losing the battle with sin? We need to pray for them too!
- But it doesn't end there. Just because we have prayed for that person does not mean our job is complete. Work to bring your prayers to fruition. If you see a person walking down the wrong path, seek to bring them back. If your friend was walking toward a cliff and you knew they would fall to their death if you didn't stop them, you'd do all you could to prevent it, right? Talk to God about the person and then talk to the person about himself.
- One commentator pointed out the fact that prayer can be limited, using the example that we might pray for a sick person, but if that person disregards the wise counsel of doctors or even simple common sense, and continues in an unhealthy lifestyle, our prayer will be frustrated.
- And now, you've probably been wondering. In fact, I've already been asked about it . . .

## **What does sin that leads to death mean?**

- We've always been taught that sin is sin, right? So, what gives here? William Barclay points out that Jewish tradition taught that there were two kinds of sins. He writes, "*There were the sins which a man committed unwittingly or, at least, not deliberately. On the other hand, there were the sins of the high hand and the haughty heart, the sins which a man deliberately committed, the sins in which he defiantly took his own way in spite of the known will of God for him.*" He goes on to point out that the sacrifices brought for unwitting sins were effective in bringing atonement, but for the sin of rebellion (which is essentially what deliberate and haughty sin is), rendered sacrifices worthless. I would add that the problem is ongoing, unrepentant rebellion. Such a person would not be interested in bringing a sacrifice.
- What I'm saying is, rebellion is the sin that leads to death.
  - When Jesus was taken from the Garden of Gethsemane – it was because he was betrayed by Judas. We look with disdain on Judas. He's the one who got Jesus killed right? Right, in a way. Later he experienced horrific remorse and took the 30 pieces of silver he has sold his Lord out for and through it at the feet of Jesus's accusers. Then he went and hanged himself.
  - A few hours later, in the courtyard of the high priest's house while the joke of a trial was going on inside, Peter denied that he was Jesus's friend three times. Just like Judas, he experienced horrific remorse. The scripture says that he went out and wept bitterly. Did he go kill himself? No, he stuck it out and in the end Jesus graciously restored him. He dealt with his sin – Judas did not. Dealing with your sin leads to restoration, rebellion leads to eternal death.
- It is also suggested often that the very thing John has been arguing about all through this letter, the fact that false teachers we saying that Jesus never came in the flesh and that he was not God the son. In fact, he calls these teachers the antichrist. (1 John 4:3). Once again, this is a case of open, persistent rebellion. You cannot

get away with it. (Tell about climbing Daddy's cherry tree). My intentional rebellion ended in punishment – my sin found me out.

- This is how Barclay puts it, “*So one kind of sin results in remorse and shame and as it's repented of, redemption. The other results in . . . death. Plain and simple. “So long as a man in his heart of hearts hates sin and hates himself for sinning, so long as he knows that he is sinning, he is never beyond repentance and, therefore, never beyond forgiveness; but once he begins to revel in sin and to make it the deliberate policy of his life, he is on the way to death, for he is on the way to a state where the idea of repentance will not, and cannot, enter his head. So, it would seem that a sin leading to death is when a person has given in to sin and has refused to listen to God and to follow after the world. It is to reject God.”*”
- Then John makes another statement that is puzzling. He says in verse 18 that *anyone born of God does not continue to sin*. What does he mean? Who is that perfect? Not me. Not you. The point is . . .

### **The Christ Follower is freed from the power of sin**

- That word remorse comes in here again. When sin happens, the Christ Follower knows it must be dealt with. That is to say, in Barclay's words, “*A saint, as someone has said, is not a man who never falls; he is a man who gets up and goes on every time he falls.*” We make a choice each day to serve God or ourselves and John would point out that each day it gets to be more of a habit of holiness.
- John ends with a tiny but loaded sentence. . .

### **Keep from idols**

- I'm not sure you remember, but John was probably in Ephesus when he wrote this and in Ephesus idols were EVERYWHERE! The biggest one was to the goddess Diana and evidence of worship to her was everywhere. Her temple was one of the wonders of the ancient world and what was practiced there was immoral to say the least and included sexual immorality and the practice of the occult. John says in verse 19 that the world is under the control of the evil one and that was very much the case in Ephesus. John's abrupt reminder certainly had this in mind.
- But he also knew human nature and what this also means to keep from any object, person or practice that results in false devotion. Bishop Wescott wrote “*An idol is anything which occupies the place due to God.*”
- What do you worship in place of God? Is it money? Is it reputation? Is it pornography? Is it politics? Is it food? Is it drugs? Just because I didn't mention your idol doesn't mean you're off the hook. If you know you're hooked on an idol, repent of it. Now!
- Keep yourselves from idols.

**Conclusion:** It's time to end this talk and get on to prayer. Here are some things to remember from John's teaching as you come for prayer or as you pray in your seat, or any time at all:

If we ask ANYTHING according to his will, he hears us and if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. ANYTHING!

- **Clear things up** – unconfessed sin is a major obstruction to prayer – so if you feel you've praying to an empty sky, what have you not offered up?
- **Remember that you need to pray in his will** – Warren Weirsbe says “*There are times when our only prayer is 'Not my will but yours be done.'*”
- **What are you praying for?** Paul says in Philippians that God supplies all our needs. What are our needs. Again, in Weirsbe's words, “*God has promised to supply all our needs not our greeds.*” And he goes on to say, “*If we are obeying his will and really need something, he will supply it in his way and in his time.*”
- **Come for prayer to one of the four stations.** We will have oil for anointing. Come for any need. Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Psychological, for a lost friend who needs Jesus. ANYTHING! Come and pray. Amen.